

WORK SESSION of the OLEAN COMMON COUNCIL

Tuesday, February 7, 2017 – 5:30 p.m.

Police Training Room – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Aldermen Gonzalez, Witte, Andreano, Dougherty, Crawford, Smith, and George.
Others: Mayor William Aiello; Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr., City Attorney; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Bob Bell, Fire Chief; Jeff Rowley, Police Chief; Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary; Keri Kerper, Senior Account Clerk Stenographer; Sue Cooper, City Forester, and Mary Kay Worth, Olean Rotary Club.

Alderman Gonzalez began the Work Session at 5:30 p.m. and asked that the record show that all Council members were present.

Discussion Items

1. Olean Rotary Club Presentation – Silent Policeman Monument

Ms. Worth began by stating that she is the immediate past president of the Olean Rotary Club, and she has been a member for 19 years. She stated that the Rotary Club has had a vision for quite some time of doing something for the Walkable Olean project. After much discussion, the monument is what they feel would be their best contribution to the project.

After giving some background as to how the idea came about (the City had a monument such as this between 1920 and 1950), she stated that she has come together with Mr. Windus and Mayor Aiello to discuss placing a monument in Lincoln Park, and together a formal proposal was put together.

The proposed monument would be placed in the corner of the park at the State and Union Streets intersection, with an underground foundation, a 2 foot high base, and a five foot high “masterpiece”. The “head” of the monument would consist of an 18 inch bronze rotary wheel to give the monument its Rotary Club seal. She stated that while most monuments such as this are made in a factory or warehouse and then are delivered, this one will be placed (cement, brick and stone), and will be carved on site. The carving will take approximately 750 hours to be spread throughout several months, 3 or so days a week for 3 (plus or minus) hours at a time.

This adds a “cool” factor to the monument, as people can come and watch the carving as it occurs. All carvings would be scheduled.

She continued in stating that the base will have one piece of each of the four pieces of the “Rotary Test” carved into it, while the top of the monument will have arrows pointing to various cities throughout the world in raised lettering. Brick pavers that surround the monument will match those that are already in place throughout the streetscape, and will be “sold” as a part of the fundraiser for the monument.

She stated that the timeline, pending approval for this project, is approximately 10 months. The plan is to begin in May with the site preparation, and then finish the monument by September with an October dedication.

Alderman Gonzalez stated that this sounds like an awesome idea, and a great attraction for the City. He questioned where the funding would come from. Ms. Worth replied that the project will be funded entirely by the Rotary Club. The only assistance they ask for from the City, besides permission to use the location, is for City workers to aid in the digging and pouring of the foundation and base. She stated that the Rotary Club is also looking into setting up a maintenance fund to keep the monument in good repair as time goes on.

Alderman Witte asked if the Lincoln Park sign and Santa Clause house will have to be moved, which Mayor Aiello responded they will not. Only a drinking fountain will need to be relocated.

Alderman Crawford stated that he also thinks this is a great idea. He questions if this will create any dangers or driving problems at that roundabout. Ms. Worth stated that there was a conversation regarding that, and Chief Rowley added that it is purely speculative that there would be an issue. This monument is not like a bright, flashing LED sign that will distract people’s attention when they are driving.

Alderman Gonzalez stated that he really likes the novelty idea of this, although it is really functional, in a way. Ms. Worth stated that this will be national news.

Alderman Crawford questioned why it is not being placed in front of the City building, and s. Worth stated that there is not only a time capsule in front of the City building, there is also not enough room. There are already so many monuments in the park, so it seems like a great place to add this. They also intend to work with the Chamber of Commerce to update the kiosk in the park.

Ms. Worth continued in describing the Rotary Club performing some work on the gazebo that they had installed in the park some time ago, to go along with the monument project. This will be visited at a later date. Alderman Gonzalez stated that this gives us an opportunity to look at the design of the corner, and revisit the layout of the park as a whole.

After some discussion regarding security for the monument (both for the carver and materials during construction, as well as to prevent graffiti and vandalism in the future), it was the general consensus of the Council to authorize the Rotary Club to use the corner in the park for the installation of the monument.

2. Funding Application for City-wide Tree Inventory

Ms. Kerper stated that they are interested in applying for a \$50,000 grant from the DEC to fund a tree inventory throughout the City. This will allow us to collect information on the trees in subways, right of ways and City parks such as species, locations, and conditions, and then compile the information in an electronic database. Once the information is recorded, the City can move forward with the creation of a sustainable management plan. The application is due March 1st, there is no local match, and the City is given 2 years to complete the inventory, if they are awarded the funding. The inventory will also aid the City in going to the DEC for additional funding in the future for associated projects.

Alderman Gonzalez asked if this is to trees what the LISC grant is to zombie properties, to which Ms. Kerper replied that yes, it is. Ms. Cooper stated that the last time a tree inventory was done was in 1986, and it is all in book form. We have wanted to do this for quite some time but haven't had the funding.

Alderman Crawford asked if we know what kind of program we will use for this inventory, and Ms. Cooper replied that there are several different inventories available to use. She stated that there is an estimated 4000 plus trees in the City, with 100 miles of streets and many parks to inventory. Most of these trees are maple. It is important to collect the species of trees so that when there is an invasive species, such as the ash borer beetle which is wiping out ash trees, we can be on top of the situation.

Alderman Witte questioned if, when this is done, will there be notation of where trees in the subway have popped up sidewalk slabs. Ms. Kerper stated that this is a part of this inventory, to document and see where safety concerns are.

Ms. Cooper stated that she will be retiring sooner or later, and this will greatly aid a new person with the transition.

There was clarification that this inventory is for trees in the subway, City right-of-ways and City parks only, not trees which are on private property. Also, the funding is for inventory only, not maintenance or removal.

Alderman Crawford questioned who would do the survey, and Ms. Kerper replied that it would be an outside firm found through an RFP. Alderman Gonzalez asked if the City Forester would maintain the database after it is created, to which Ms. Cooper replied that yes, she would. Ms. Kerper added that this is competitive funding, and Council approval is required to apply.

A PL and Resolution will be introduced at the February 14, 2017 meeting for a vote.

3. North 2nd Street Directional Changes

Alderman Dougherty stated that the Council has heard safety concerns regarding the 100 block of North 2nd Street, and he proposes a change in direction to move traffic from West State Street north to Laurens Street, rather than dumping traffic onto West State Street from North Second. He stated that this will eliminate the issues with the blind spots at the end of the roadway, and no parking will need to be eliminated. He stated that he has canvassed the neighborhood and has found that a few residents were concerned that this will increase traffic.

However, the street is about a 2 to 1 ratio of residences to businesses, so the increased traffic could mean increased business.

Alderman Witte questioned if the Stroehman's trucks would be able to navigate the corner at Laurens Street. She stated that a "No Parking Here to Corner" sign may need to be installed to allow the trucks the room to turn. Mayor Aiello added that a sign has already been placed near the Bartlett House, and agrees that this may need to be looked at.

Alderman Andreano questioned if the parking would need to be moved to the opposite side of the street, and Alderman Dougherty replied that there is already parking on both sides of the street.

Chief Rowley stated that when the issue of the blind spots on the corner first came up, he wondered how many actual incidents had actually occurred. After researching, he found that since 2013 there have been no accidents at the intersection related to people coming off of North 2nd Street onto West State Street.

Alderman Gonzalez stated that you have to make sure the neighborhood isn't the only voice you listen to. Two years ago, the neighborhood was canvassed before STOP signs were placed at North 4th Street and Coleman Street, and although the neighborhood agreed with the sign, the rest of the City wanted to riot. Alderman Witte stated that change is difficult for some people.

Alderman George stated that, if there were accidents at the intersection, he could see the validity behind the change. With no accidents, he doesn't feel the change is needed.

Alderman Andreano asked why we went to the extreme of changing the direction of the roadway, versus eliminating a couple of parking spaces. Mayor Aiello stated that the Stroehman's trucks already are going up the street the wrong way, as the yeast needs to flow downward when it is being delivered.

Alderman Smith stated that he has spoken with the Chamberlains (the owners of Chamberlain Home Realty, with a business on the corner of North 2nd and West State), and they are very

bust, and cannot afford to lose parking. He stated that he would not support a resolution to remove any parking spaces.

Mayor Aiello stated that maybe we should put the idea out to the public, and see what sort of public comment and feedback we would receive.

Alderman Smith stated that he first thought that this was a good idea, when it was brought up. Now that he thinks about Alderman Gonzalez's points, he really has to think about it. Alderman Crawford stated that this seems like the strategic thing to do; however, people don't like change. Alderman Dougherty stated that he just wanted to bring this up, to get people thinking about the idea, and go from there. He was commended for thinking outside the box.

4. Elimination of Permit Fees for Projects Under \$50,000

Alderman Crawford stated that he just wanted to bring up this topic for a preliminary discussion. He stated that it is a bothersome issue to some of our residents, that they feel nickel and dimed when making improvements to their property (by the charging of a permit prior to the work). For example, the City requires that residents take care of the sidewalk on their property, and on top of that, we charge a fee when work is being done to repair or replace it.

He continued in stating that he has gotten the average amounts of permit fees collected, and over the past few years the average amount is between \$40,000 and \$50,000. He is not sure how much of this is attributed to projects under \$50,000, but he doesn't feel that it is a material amount.

He added that when some improvements to a property will increase the assessment and taxes, the permit fees seem like "double dipping" and he is trying to eliminate the nickel and diming of residents.

Alderman Andreano stated that she likes where this is going. She has a neighbor who refuses to make repairs to their home because they don't want to pay the permit fees. Alderman Crawford added that he doesn't think that we should get rid of permits altogether, as it is

important for Codes to make sure that repairs and changes are safe. He would just like to see the elimination of fees.

Alderman Witte stated that she went through this when she was mayor. Our fees are lower than other municipalities, and you have to have fees. She can understand where Alderman Crawford is coming from, but although the monies coming in from fees does not seem like a lot, it is when you are trying to balance a budget. Alderman Gonzalez added that we need more funding in Codes, not less. Alderman Witte stated that people aren't going to volunteer their services to work for the City. If we eliminate fees, the lost revenue will end up being shifted to the taxpayer in one way or another. The money needs to come from somewhere.

Mayor Aiello stated that there is a lot of misconception out there, that painting your house will increase the assessment. This is simply not true. Painting a house or putting on a new roof will not raise your assessment or taxes.

Alderman Smith stated that he thinks the Council will be surprised how much of the money actually comes from smaller projects. You don't see a lot of higher cost projects going on throughout the City.

Alderman Andreano stated that she feels that the fees are an issue and we need to look at them.

Alderman Crawford will complete more research regarding the fee income and how much is comprised of small projects, and bring the topic back to the Council at a later date.

5. Parking Permits During Snow Events

Alderman Crawford stated that he has been approached a number of times by an active family who owns a property without a driveway. They travel a lot, and when they are away for 2 weeks or so at a time, they cannot move their vehicles and receive numerous tickets when there is a snow event. He wonders if we should convenience them rather than inconvenience them. They were told they need to find an alternative place to park.

He continued in stating that it makes sense that we give people in this and similar circumstances a special permit, so when they go out of town, when they have no driveway and no access to a driveway, they can park in the street. He added that in addition, when there are no cars at home, it opens up the door to burglars and vandals who see the family isn't home for an extended period of time.

Alderman Gonzalez questioned why we have snow event rules in effect, and Chief Rowley stated so we can plow the snow in the roadway. This is a prime example where the neighbors get upset because the car prevents the plow from clearing the entire roadway, and there is a giant pile of snow blocking the way. It is important that we are able to clear the street. If you allow permits to these people, then everyone will want one for one reason or another. You might as well get rid of the law.

Alderman Gonzalez questioned if a permit allowing them to park on the roadway would open the City up to liability issues. Mr. DiCerbo stated that it could, and if we were to issue permits such as this, we would need to make sure that they include an indemnification agreement to hold the City harmless if something happens to their vehicle.

Chief Rowley stated that we write a lot of parking tickets during snow events, and he does not hear about this as a City-wide issue, and he does not see this as an issue. You can't change the rules because of one person.

Alderman Gonzalez questioned if someone was going to Florida for a week, could they park in the War Vets parking lot? Mayor Aiello replied that they could not. Alderman Gonzalez recommended possibly issuing a permit for that.

Mayor Aiello stated that he feels that this could open a can of worms. We went through the snow event ordinance with a fine tooth comb and changed it, hopefully for the better. He stated that perhaps we should look into changing the amount for a snow event parking ticket, or possibly consider alternate parking in the City. Alderman Andreano stated that she agrees with the idea to try alternate parking, but she had spoken with Mr. Windus who had advised her that it was attempted about 6 years ago and it didn't work.

There was discussion regarding families today having more than one vehicle, and rentals throughout the City increasing over past times. It was decided to allow the Council to consider the issue and come back at a later date.

Work session ended at approximately 6:55 p.m.