



City Council Minutes The City of Cortland

February 6, 2007

Council Meeting #3
February 6, 2007
Regular Business Session
City Hall
7:00 PM

Present: Alderman VanGorder, Terwilliger, Cobb, DeCarlo,
Quail, Feiszli, Partigianoni and Michales

Staff Present: Director of Admin. & Finance Andrew Damiano and
Corporation Counsel Lawrence Knickerbocker

Acting Mayor Feiszli calls the third Common Council meeting of the year to order at 7:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Acting Mayor Feiszli extended condolences to Mayor Gallagher on the death of his brother, Jimmy. She also extended condolences to the family of Gary Carpenter, who was a twenty-eight (28) year veteran of the City Police Department.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Dexter was present to speak. He thanked people for the recent turnout at the Water Works for Santa Claus and those citizens who donated over six hundred (600) stuffed animals that were given out the four (4) nights that Santa was at the Water Works. He also thanked the Zonta Ladies for lending their elves to assist in distributing the stuffed animals. He thanked Santa Eric and Santa Bill for volunteering their time. He thanked a resident on Cedar Street who collects and rehabilitates the stuffed animals that are distributed. He was sorry there was no snow this year. He left a few lights up this year, because he wanted to have people see them with some snow. They will be down by spring.

Minutes of January 16, 2007

RESOLUTION #11 OF 2007 - Approve the minutes of January 16, 2007.

By: Alderman Terwilliger
Seconded: Alderman DeCarlo

Approved: Ayes - 8
 Nays - 0

Bills were reviewed and received.

Ward 1 - Alderman VanGorder

She also extended her condolences to Mayor Gallagher and his family and the Carpenter family. She has had a fairly busy few weeks. They have just finished touring the Police Station and there are some things that need to be addressed both there and at the Fire Station. It was a good experience for her to see what they are going through and having to deal with every day. She has been working on setting up the community clean up. Mr. Partigianoni and she were judges for the presentation at the Girl Scout Council event. There was a good turn out. She had a few calls about crows. People went out with pots and pans and that does work. It seems silly, but it works. She received a call regarding a complaint on 281 and West Main Street. It was noted that the light was blinking at night and was a dangerous situation. Mike Preston has now changed that back to a working light at night because there were some near misses at this intersection. She plans to have a Ward meeting sometime in March to discuss the 281 project and the effects on some residents in the area. She is also working on putting together an exploratory committee for the Master Plan. Susan Feiszli and Tom Michales will be on that committee and that will be discussed later.

Ward 2 - Alderman Terwilliger

It's finally been snowy and she noted that in her Ward the sidewalks have been kept cleared. She did receive a call regarding two (2) properties West Court that had been changed to student housing, she has spoken with the Code Office.

Ward 3 - Alderman Cobb

She has not received any calls regarding crows. She did receive a call from a gentleman about his taxes. He was quite shocked. She noted that the County taxes and school taxes had increased. She also received some calls asking about what was going on behind TOPS. Surveyors had been seen and there was concern that something was going to be happening in that area. She came to the conclusion that it was surveyors surveying the Water Works as part of the expansion project of Rt. 281.

Ward 4 - Alderman DeCarlo

He extended his condolences to the Mayor's family and the Carpenter family. He did tour the Police Station today and he encouraged the City and County to work together on that. He did receive a few calls from people in the City concerned with the way that the County Legislators worked and asked if the City would consider working with them on some of these projects so that things are not just brought to the front and dumped, so to speak. He noted that the City Council would look into that and look into what could be done together.

Ward 5 - Alderman Quail

He extended his condolences to the Gallagher and Carpenter families. There was a meeting with the Fifth (5th) and Eighth (8th) Wards. The general consensus was that there was a call for not so much a Master Plan, but a strategic plan. The City should be working with the County more to see if some services can't be consolidated.

Ward 7 - Alderman Partigianoni

He announced that February is VFW Month and it's the 75th Anniversary for the local post. At one time, he believes that the VFW in Cortland was the biggest post in New York State with over one thousand (1,000) members. He attended the Sweet Sensation and it was a full house. He was one of the judges. He noted that the professional award went to Amelia's and the amateur went to Mary Turturro. He received a call regarding the Riverside shopping mall. It is in receivership and in a trust and he is hoping that things will improve there.

Ward 8 - Alderman Michales

He extended his condolences to the Gallagher and Carpenter families. He was involved with the joint Ward meeting last Thursday night. It was hosted by Ron Van Dee, Dan Quail and himself. It last a good hour and a half and the residents attending felt that their questions were answered by the three (3) there. If anything came out of that meeting, it was that the City and County need to work closely together on some of these projects. He believes that in the forthcoming months, you will see that happening. There are a couple of committees forming now that will involve both City and County members. He also had a concern from a business owner on Central Avenue on a drainage issue and that is being looked into. Public Works has now been informed and will be looked in to. It's a situation where there's a piece of property in between and no one is sure who owns it. Perhaps some sort of committee needs to be formed. He also toured City Hall tonight with Police Chief Nichols and it was quite an eye opener, not realizing that the police have been working in these cramped spaces. There are also some security issues that need to be addressed. He is looking to schedule a Ward meeting on February 21. It may be rescheduled for March, but he is working on the February date currently. It will be at 7:00 PM, location to be discussed and announced. Perhaps it could be at City Hall.

Ward 6 - Alderman Feiszli

It's late, but the bus shelter has been purchased. The County attorney has written up the agreement, which has been given to Scott Schrader. There might be a few changes and the shelter is sitting at the County Office Building right now and it will be installed when it is warmer and concrete can be poured. It will be installed by the bus station on Grant Street. She wished it was installed right now, but it will be installed by next summer. She participated in the Girl's Day Out program at SUNY last Saturday. She attended the awards program for SUNY Cortland students whose newsletter design had been selected for the Cortland Celtic Cultural Association. The submissions were

wonderful and informative about the event. It was a great idea to have the College involved in this. She spoke with the possible buyer of the vacant gas station at the front of Holiday Inn. He is open to working with the City to remove the building. She also spoke with Bernie Thoma, so hopefully more information will be given later in this meeting.

During the work sessions, the Council has spoken about this building and the need for repairs. She has asked Bernie Thoma about the possibility of grant monies and asked him to look into this. Mr. Thoma noted that there were grants through NYSERDA to assist municipalities in retrofitting facilities, but he is not sure what is available currently, but he will continue to research this.

She has also received a lot of phone calls and concerns about suggestions for City Hall and the Fire Station and the plans. They asked for better communication between the City and the County. There is a group called Cortland Cities, Towns, Villages and Schools that meets after every legislative meeting and she spoke with Sandy Price, who is the co-chair. She has agreed to have more discussion on sharing municipal services and buildings. She has also spoken with Chief Nichols, who is also interested in having discussions with the County as far as the Police and Sheriff's Departments sharing the same building. She asked Bernie Thoma about grants for shared municipal services.

Mr. Thoma indicated that such a grant has been around for a couple of years. It encourages entities to merge and consolidate services. A study needs to be done and an application filed. Alderman Feiszli noted that there will be a meeting on February 22, immediately following the legislative session and perhaps this could be discussed there.

Alderman Feiszli asked Lloyd Purdy to discuss the proposed grant application and she believes that the City Council needs to pass a resolution of support for this application.

Item No. 2 - Presentation by Lloyd Purdy of the Downtown Partnership regarding a proposed grant application.

Lloyd Purdy noted that the Downtown Partnership would like to apply for a grant on behalf of the City. It is a Preserve America Grant. Last year the City of Cortland was recognized as a Preserve America community and this enabled them to apply for some matching funds grants for historic preservation. The Partnership is putting together an application to pursue a matching funds grant for further funding. A resolution of support is needed for them to apply. It was noted that if approved, the funds will come to the City and they will have to act as the administrator for those funds. It is a National Park Services Grant. There is also the possibility that the funds might flow directly to the Downtown Partnership, but in any event, there will be no direct administrative duties assumed by the City. The award of this grant could potentially bring more business and businesses downtown. This also will get the College more involved.

RESOLUTION #12 OF 2007 - Consideration of a Resolution supporting the submission of a grant application to the 2007 Preserve America Program by the Cortland Downtown Partnership and further authorizing the Mayor to execute the necessary documents.

By: Alderman VanGorder
Seconded: Alderman DeCarlo

Approved: Ayes - 8
Nays - 0

Item No 1 - Discussion regarding the 2007 Community Development Block Grant application.

Ann Hotchkin and Bernie Thoma were present to make the presentation. Each year, there is an opportunity to apply for Block Grant development funds. They get input from the Council on various projects and then apply by the application deadline in April. They will come back in March for actual approval. There has been discussion that Block Grant funds should be utilized in the South End of town since the funding entity that gave money for the strategic plan there, is also the funding entity for block grant funds. Thoma has drafted a proposed budget, potential activities for that area, including a lot of work on housing (which came out in the strategic plan) and some other projects. Thoma is not looking for approval at this meeting, they are here asking for the Council's thoughts and direction.

Alderman Partigianoni appreciates the work that Thoma has done for the City. He is pretty upset with the letter that he received from Thoma outlining a proposal to transfer funds from the East End Community Center to a location in the South End, at what was the Third Rail. He spoke with Bernie Thoma and noted that it was a bit presumptuous on their part to not speak with him prior to this. It was noted that this had been discussed by the steering committee and Alderman Partigianoni inquired as to who was on this committee. Mr. Thoma indicated that it was Alderman Quail, Mayor Gallagher, Howard Lieberman, etc. Mr. Thoma indicated that the discussion was about what was needed in the South End and the fact that the building currently being used in the East End was not owned by the City. Alderman Partigianoni noted that the East End Center is currently fully funded and not to try to take programs out of the East End. Mr. Thoma indicated that typically these grant applications concentrated on a certain area of a community. This time it was decided, after the strategic plan, that there was clearly a need in the South End. Mr. Thoma noted that once the application was approved, the money would have to be used in the geographic area that was outlined in the application. The funding source expects the City to use the money in the area that was applied for. He noted that the building was chosen not only because something needs to happen to it, but it's in the area of concentration. A concern was expressed about acquiring another building that needed to be maintained and the additional long-term costs for utilities. It was noted that a building was targeted so that it didn't just sit there.

There was discussion regarding the EPS Grant for rehabbing Beaudry Park. Mr. Thoma indicated that this wasn't eligible, but they did write a grant to try to increase the size of the recreation building. Alderman Partigianoni indicated that the Third Rail was an eyesore and he felt that the City taking on more of these buildings was out of line. Mr. Thoma noted that he was here to give Mr. Partigianoni an opportunity to voice his opinion of the planned application. Alderman Feiszli noted that she would like to see more money to help develop small businesses. Mr. Thoma noted that with the

downtown grant, they had received more requests than they had money for. They used up all of the money that was awarded. He did note that there were not a lot of businesses in the South End or spaces to put business, so he was unsure if they wanted to bump that amount of money up.

Alderman Partigianoni inquired if the \$100,000 on the application was for acquiring the Third Rail building or also for renovations. Mr. Thoma noted that the Block Grant would just be used for the acquisition. It was asked if Beaudry Park were listed on the application as a location for a community center, would it make the application less competitive. Mr. Thoma noted that his feeling was that it would impact the application and it was his recommendation that it not be done. It was noted that after talking with the Code Office, that more funding in this area would benefit in the long term. The \$10,000 in the grant application would go for the Code Department to be able to spend more time and resources in the South End, enforcing code issues. It was asked if home ownership would be increased in this area. Mr. Thoma felt that it would be increased by helping the tenants purchase the buildings they lived in, creating more owner occupied residences that would be better maintained.

Alderman Partigianoni called for a resolution to have Thoma Development remove the \$100,000 item from the 2007 Community Development Block Grant application to purchase the Third Rail building and to explore other ways to enhance the South End area.

Alderman Quail noted that he sat through the strategic planning process and he is lukewarm about taking this structure over because he is not in favor of taking structures off of the tax rolls. He thinks that this is a diamond in the rough and noted that the owner is not currently paying taxes and owes three years back taxes.

It was felt that the Council should have Thoma Development apply for the full \$600,000 and focus on the housing. Mr. Thoma indicated that they would be putting some ads in the local paper to see if there was interest from small businesses in that area and perhaps more money would be allocated in the application for them. Mr. Thoma also noted that he was anticipating putting in a HOME Grant to fund owner occupied homes in the South End. This grant would focus more on rental properties. He would come back before the Council in late March or early April with a finalized budget for their review and approval.

Item No 3 - Discussion regarding the scheduling of a Community Clean Up Day (Alderman Van Gorder)

Alderman Van Gorder thinks it will be Saturday, April 28. She has spoken with Vicki Delaney, chair of the Design Committee for the Downtown Business Partnership and they're in charge of the parking lots, too. They'll probably meet at the Armory, have T shirts for everyone and be very similar to last year. They'll see what kind of response they get, but the Armory seems to be a better place than the Youth Bureau, because there was not only available parking, but a place to store the garbage collected until it could be disposed of. She has contacted Chris Gregory who was so helpful last year in getting high school students to volunteer and she contacted someone about having

students & fraternity members from the College help out. So it will be April 28, just in the morning, 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Item No. 4 - Continuation of discussion regarding the City's facilities needs.

Andy Damiano noted that the Mayor had put this on the agenda, so that it could be continued to be discussed. A number of the aldermen had toured the Police Department and had verified the need. There has been a lot of discussion regarding partnering with the County. The Mayor and he have both made overtures about that possibility, to certain County representatives about that possibility. It is certainly an idea that should be explored, but it won't address the Fire Station issues, but there are other possibilities where partnering will work.

No matter what we do, it will cost the City money. A number of Aldermen have contacted him to talk about the money issues. The hard part is that not knowing what the City is doing and how much money it will need to borrow; it is impossible to give real numbers. He has done a generic concept of how the project might be done, how it might be phased and how the borrowing for such a project could be phased, so the Council could see how this project would impact the budget over a period of time. He distributed them and went over the document with the Council. He noted that he did not identify specific projects, but the financing scheme would be a phased borrowing; borrowing the money as it is needed. Over a course of about three (3) years, we can issue a series of bond anticipation notes for which you pay interest only and you can continue to roll those notes over on an annual basis until you can determine your total project and then you roll all of those notes into one bond issue and then you start paying principal and interest. In 2008, 2009 and 2010, in all likelihood, there will be interest only expenses incurred. The way he foresees it, they would issue a bond issue in 2010 and the first payment would be due in 2011, and if that borrowing is around seven million, he estimates based on current interest rates which can change, will be about a \$500,000 annual debt service, once the full amount is borrowed.

The actual debt service currently on the books; some of which retires in 2010 and 2014, reduces the debt service dramatically. Then he has projected what the phased borrowing would do to the existing debt and has given the estimated total debt service and indicated what the change in the debt service would be in the last column. What's remarkable is that barring any additional borrowing, the City could actually see for the next ten (10) years, having the debt service go down, because of the retiring. The message he is trying to send is that if this is done in a planned, phased manner in which the City very strategically does their borrowing and planning, we can do these projects with a minimal impact to the budget. He wanted the Council to focus on the need not the money, so he tried to show them the impact. He also cautioned the Council that there might be some additional borrowing to pave streets, purchase equipment, etc., but what this demonstrates is the impact that these large projects will have on the budget and to have you focus on that. He felt that this is affordable.

It was asked if grant applications would be looked into and Mr. Damiano noted that they certainly would be. It was also noted that the City should not duplicate County services. The biggest question the Council has to answer is whether they want to build a new fire

station or renovate the existing one. Once that question is answered, the rest of the pieces can fall together a bit easier. Mr. Damiano stated his opinion, that the Community understands the need for a fire station. The current one has been serving the community for over ninety (90) years and has done a great job, but for the past twenty or thirty years, they have struggled to use it. This is an opportunity to build a new fire station. The opportunity doesn't come very often, but there seems to be willingness among elected officials at this table and the City has the ability financially to make it happen. This might be the window of opportunity: the community understands the need, the Council understands the need and there is a driving force behind it moving it forward. There have been estimates and proposals sent out in October, that outlined proposed renovations and additions to the old fire station and a proposed new fire station. It all depends on what you want to build. You have to identify your needs and decide how elaborate you want to be with what to include. His numbers are average numbers for the size station the City needs.

Alderman Partigianoni noted that he was against an addition to the fire station before and he still wasn't crazy about it now. This is a historic building. Alderman Michales noted that they would have to come up with ideas on how to use the existing station. It was also noted that there didn't seem to be a site where they could build a new fire house. It was noted that a decision on a final plan needs to be made. Mr. Damiano noted that one property was being discussed as a potential site for a fire station, but the City doesn't have permission from the owner to make that public. There are currently tenants occupying that site and the owner doesn't want to lose them if the site is not chosen. It would be made public if it was decided to give an option on the particular property. It is a possible location that might work. The ideal location might be the old Cortland Savings Bank parking lot, but the reality is that it is not available. If it were, they are demanding a huge sum of money. It was noted that they did not want to go with eminent domain. They didn't want to aggravate people and it was noted that this was not the only site. If it was, then that might be an option they might consider. It was noted that this is a complicated issue.

Adjournment

By: Alderman DeCarlo
Seconded: Alderman Cobb

Approved: Ayes - 8
Nays - 0

I, JOHN O. REAGAN, CITY CLERK OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND, NEW YORK DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT SAID RESOLUTIONS WERE ADOPTED AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND, HELD ON THE 6th DAY OF FEBRUARY 2007. I FURTHER CERTIFY THE FOREGOING RESOLUTIONS WERE PRESENTED TO THE MAYOR IN THE TIME REQUIRED.

JOHN O. REAGAN - CITY CLERK

MAYOR THOMAS GALLAGHER