

# THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

## JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

### REGULAR COUNCIL WORK SESSION

October 14, 2021 – 6:00 PM

Cornell AgriTech Campus, Jordan Hall  
630 W. North Street  
Geneva, NY 14456

Presiding – Steve Valentino, Mayor

#### 1. ROLL CALL

Present: Clr. Regan, Clr. Camera, Clr. Gaglianese, Clr. Noone, Clr. Pruett, Clr. Burrall, Clr. Pealer, and Clr. Salamendra

#### 2. 2022 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Mayor Valentino said he would like to go around to each councilor to come up with a consensus on what direction they would like to give staff. Clr. Regan said that at a very minimum she would like to keep the budget at a 0% increase or to even go down 1%. Clr. Salamendra said she agrees with Clr. Regan.

Clr. Pealer said he feels the budget is conservative, but he is concerned with the services we are providing our residents not being funded well enough. He referred to all of our parks and the green space being added to downtown this year, and he wonders how the city will keep up with maintenance with a lack of funding. He said he would like to hold the tax rate at what was presented, and he puts the creative and innovative challenge to staff to improve our services with what they have.

Clr. Camera said he would like to see a 3.7% reduction or to cut \$700,000 from the proposed budget.

Clr. Burrall said he would like to keep the budget flat, with anything less than zero being a bonus.

Clr. Noone said he would like the budget to stay as is and for the city to focus on rebuilding capital which is long overdue.

Clr. Gaglianese said he feels the budget is conservative and responsible and would like to keep the budget as is, but if it were lowered, he would like to see money go to Recreation and services for the YMCA.

Clr. Pruettt said that if the city is looking to remain stable and rebuild infrastructure, council needs to set up goals to do that. He said the budget needs to be reduced by \$350,000, and council and staff need to look at revenue opportunities.

Asst. City Manager Blowers told council that if they want to go from the proposed 3.7% increase back to zero, that would be about \$289,000.

Mayor Valentino said that for a while, the city was having 3 and 4% increases because they knew they needed to invest in infrastructure in order to grow and get us to where we are today. He said that we also need to look at succession planning and a vision to see what challenges we will face. He said he does not want to make decisions on a conservative basis to take the city in a negative direction or leave a future council with a double digit increase in one year. He said he would support a neutral tax rate, but he is okay with the 3.7% increase. He said he has never wanted to increase taxes, but he does support council's vision.

Clr. Pealer said that one of the reasons he supports the budget is because the cost of living has jumped historically with a 6% increase. He noted that 3.7% is under the cost-of-living rate.

Mayor Valentino said that it looks like the majority of council is asking for a zero percent increase in the budget. Clr. Gaglianese asked for clarification that a 3.7% increase in the budget would mean roughly \$64 per household per year, and staff agreed. Mayor Valentino said that the City Manager will come back to council with a revised budget, and council will have the opportunity to add or remove items with a majority vote. City Manager Gerling noted that staff has already come down \$2 million so she feels it will be difficult to come back with another \$700,000 cut. Mayor Valentino said they appreciate the professional direction staff will provide.

When Clr. Regan questioned "Other Economic Assistance" in the budget, City Manager Gerling said she will get that information for council. She also questioned the ice rink costs going up, and Mr. Blowers confirmed and noted that the revenue went up the same.

Clr. Camera said he is not comfortable with giving staff a number and would like to help the city managers focus on some things, give them guidance and talk about realignment. He said there is another way to deal with succession planning noting that there are 18 firefighters who have watched the fire chief and another position does not need to be added since there is a pool of people to choose from to replace the chief. City Manger Gerling asked to clarify that succession planning is not the reason for this new position. She said that the goal is a larger picture with our code enforcement strategy.

Clr. Camera next suggested that instead of hiring two MEA positions and two code enforcement officers, that maybe the city only hire one of each. He said that he is not sure how effective the current code enforcement office operates, noting that he is trying to streamline things with the registration of landlords with a resolution on the next agenda. He said he has serious problems with what he feels is staff hiding

the marina project in the capital projects list. Mrs. Gerling explained that there are no capital projects budgeted in 2021 because of COVID-19, noting that what is in there is what council passes budget wise. She said what she is hearing from Clr. Camera is that he would like to see in the capital projects budget that we anticipate going into construction for the marina in 2022 even though we do not need any funds for it at that time.

Clr. Camera said he loves the idea of flattening out Bicentennial Park and moving the Farmer's Market there. He said we could put up signs for cars driving by, and he feels they will come to the market and even downtown. He said he saw that in the 2026 capital improvement budget there is \$5 million set aside to flatten the park, and he feels it can be done for \$100,000 to \$200,000. Next, he said that he wondered if we should realign the Recreation Department and ONI to an office called "Office of City Life" that could include recreation and beautification. He added that he would like to see an additional \$25,000 in the budget to cut down dead trees on our main streets. He said he would like to see one super department including recreation to art to history that can create efficiencies by involving other offices that do these types of activities.

When Clr. Pealer asked about ONI and the GNRC, City Manager Gerling explained that Liz Toner coordinates the neighborhood programs as part of ONI, and City Manager Gerling oversees Economic Development along with Mr. Blowers. She noted that community development and neighborhood development can all grow at this point. Clr. Pruettt said that council needs a long range or 5-year plan started in January or February noting that one of council's objectives is beautification, and cutting down the 250 dead trees on the Shadetree Committee's list would be a good start. Mrs. Gerling said that when cutting down trees, staff takes care of the ones presenting safety concerns first, and they would also like to address pruning to help trees last longer.

Clr. Gaglianese reminded everyone of council's decision to cut back on the funding for tree removal last year noting that there are consequences down the road like needing to add more money now to catch up. Clr. Burrall said that dead trees can become a liability noting that it can cost \$5,000 to \$6,000 to remove one tree. Clr. Salamendra said she is glad to see more money for trees in the budget, but she agrees with other councilors that it could be more.

Clr. Pealer said he would like to reprioritize money to DPW to take care of green space and especially the downtown DRI area. Clr. Burrall said he feels this is a wonderful opportunity to subcontract out for the care of our green spaces since this is a seasonal task. Clr. Burrall then asked about the 305 Main Street property being in the capital improvement program, and asked why the city is hanging on to this property. City Manager Gerling explained that we do have the property on the market, but in the meantime, staff has had a request to clean up the back parking area as it has become an eye sore. She said that cleaning it up could make it more attractive to developers.

Clr. Camera said that one of the things he is on the record for is focus and he feels there are signature derelict properties in or city that staff needs to focus on.

Clr. Pruett said that he would like to see someone with a mental health or drug addiction profession background on the police department roster. Police Chief Passalacqua explained that his department currently uses the County Mental Health and is looking at other avenues. He said that discussions began a year ago to see if we could bring on a staff member, but it comes down to funding. He added that his department is looking into grants. He said that they also have the ability to face time on an iPad with professionals at any time. City Manager Gerling said that the Police Collective has the idea of working with mental health professionals on their agenda so there is more information to come. Clr. Salamendra said that she feels the city needs an independent person to be available in person because she feels the iPad idea is not sufficient. She said she does not want people with mental health issues to be under the direct supervision of the police department. When Clr. Camera mentioned Seneca Falls also using an iPad for professionals to communicate with individuals, Chief Passalacqua said that it has been working well. Clr. Camera said that we should definitely look at contractor opportunities for these situations.

Clr. Burrall asked about the parking enforcement line item, and Chief Passalacqua said that it is not a civil service position. Clr. Burrall said he would like to see the data of revenue generation from parking enforcement. City Manager Gerling said she will check the numbers and get the information to council.

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION

**ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Salamendra; seconded by Clr. Camera**

**MOVED THAT council move to executive session at 7:29pm to discuss a personnel matter**

**ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Clr. Pruett, Clr. Burrall, Clr. Gaglianese, Clr. Noone, Clr. Regan, Mayor Valentino, Clr. Salamendra, and Clr. Camera**

**Nay – Clr. Pealer**

**MOTION CARRIED**

4. ADJOURNMENT

**ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Noone; seconded by Clr. Gaglianese**

**MOVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 8:55pm**

**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

*Lori Guinan*

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City Clerk