

PUBLIC SAFETY

Tuesday, March 3, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

Police Training Room – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Witte, Vice Chairman Dougherty, Alderman Panus, Alderman Gonzalez, Alderman Crawford, Alderman Smith, and Alderman Anastasia. Others: Mayor William Aiello; Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr., City Attorney; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Jeff Rowley, Police Chief; Tim Richardson, Fire Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Witte called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, February 18, 2020)

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2020 meeting was made by Alderman Witte, seconded by Alderman Gonzalez. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Discussion – Extend No Parking, East Oak Street (Anastasia)

Alderman Anastasia explained that a resolution was passed a few weeks ago to install a “No Parking Here to Corner” sign twenty feet from the intersection on the corner of East Oak Street and Walnut Street. He explained that he feels that the sign should be moved an additional twenty five to thirty feet from the intersection in order to solve the issue of a constituent having a difficult time backing out of his driveway.

Alderman Witte asked if this issue should be sent back to the Police Chief and the Department of Public Works. Mr. Ring explained that moving the sign would eliminate approximately one parking spot. Mr. Ring asked if Mr. Anastasia has spoken with the people that park in the area, and Alderman Anastasia responded that he has not. Mr. Ring explained that he would take another look at the area, and Alderman Gonzalez noted that the change would require a new resolution as well as a republication of the resolution before it can be voted on.

Alderman Anastasia will submit a PL and resolution for the signage change.

b. Discussion – No Parking, North 6th Street (Anastasia)

Alderman Anastasia explained that he had a constituent contact him regarding North Sixth Street between Wayne Street and Dresser Rand. HE explained that it is twenty feet wide, and that all of the surrounding streets (Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh) have no parking on both sides of the street, while this one does not. He explained that he feels that an emergency vehicle would not be able to get through if it needs to, and he would like to have no parking on both sides of the street for the entire length of the street.

Mayor Aiello explained that he looked at this last year with Alderman George, and that some of the residents were not in favor of eliminating parking because there would no longer be parking for their visitors. He explained that he thought that this issue was solved with no parking on one side of the street.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that Fifth and Seventh Streets are used for ingress and egress for Dresser Rand employees, but not Sixth Street. He explained that Dresser Rand should not factor into traffic issues on the street.

Mr. Ring explained that parking should only take up seven or eight feet, which would leave twelve to thirteen feet of roadway which, he explained, is still a pretty big lane. He noted that he has seen vehicles parked on North Seventh and Eighth Streets, and Alderman Anastasia responded that he is sure that there are signs for no parking on either side.

Mayor Aiello explained that about a year ago, the City started having the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and DPW Director do a study for any signage requests and come back to the Council with a recommendation. He explained that he thinks that the Council should continue doing that. He noted that this has been discussed previously, and he feels that a recommendation should be provided as to how to handle this situation.

Alderman Panus asked if the City keeps a record of how the layout of the signage in the City should be, so that if something is stolen or missing, the City knows to replace it. Mr. Ring responded that all of the regulatory signs in the City are listed in the Code of Ordinances, which can be found online. Alderman Anastasia asked if it is possible that a sign was there but has been knocked down since and needs to be replaced, and Chief Richardson mentioned that there was a sign leaning when he was there, so it possibly needs to be put back up.

Alderman Witte requested that Chief Rowley, Chief Richardson and Mr. Ring look into the situation and come back to the Council with a recommendation.

c. Discussion – Crossing Guard, North 17th Street at Washington Street (Smith)

Alderman Smith explained that this is a request that he received from a constituent who lives in Ward 6. He explained that currently, there is a crossing guard at North 15th Street and Washington Street, but not North 17th Street and Washington Street. He explained that he does not know if the additional crossing guard is needed, but he wanted to bring it to the Council for a discussion.

Mayor Aiello explained that there has never been a crossing guard at Seventeenth Street. He explained that when the City downsized on crossing guards, it was decided to put one at Fifteenth Street because it is a much busier intersection, and most kids that do walk, walk that way. He explained that he has spoken with the Police Chief and the school, and they have not indicated that there is an issue or a need for an additional crossing guard. In addition, the school has not requested anything in this case, so he does not feel that the City should add a crossing guard here. He explained that there is a good system.

Alderman Witte asked how many crossing guards there are, and Chief Rowley explained that there are two. Alderman Witte explained that at the grade schools, there are only students through third grade, and a lot of kids get picked up. In addition, if they walk at that age, it is usually with an adult. Chief Rowley explained that Eastview has been asking for two crossing guards, and if we add one here, then the principal at Eastview will be asking for crossing guards as well.

Mayor Aiello asked if the constituent stated what issue is causing this request, and Alderman Smith responded that the constituent has not indicated that there is a problem, or if there was an accident or near accident. He explained that the school is between Fifteenth and Seventeenth Streets, and he thinks that the constituent feels that the Seventeenth Street intersection is being neglected. Alderman Smith explained that he can understand the concern but that a majority of the kids go east, not west. He would like to see a study to get an official answer.

Alderman Crawford explained that Fifteenth Street is probably busier than Seventeenth Street in terms of traffic. Alderman Smith explained that it is because there is a light at Fifteenth Street. He noted that the crossing walk stripes are gone on Seventeenth Street by Washington, and Mr. Ring has already put in a work order to have those applied.

Alderman Crawford asked what the cost for a crossing guard is, and Chief Rowley responded that it is \$30 per day. Mayor Aiello explained that once we establish a crossing guard position, it has to be manned. He explained that if there is not an employee for that position or if they call in sick, a police officer needs to fill the position. Chief Rowley explained that it is very difficult to find people to do the job. Alderman Crawford asked what hours they work, and Mayor Aiello responded 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on school days.

Chief Rowley explained that he will have the department look into traffic incidents in the area, as well as talk to the school and work up a study for presentation to the Council.

d. Discussion – Four Way STOP, South 13th Street at West Henley Street (Smith)

Alderman Smith explained that this request came from a constituent on the West end. He explained that there is currently a two way stop at this intersection, and Henley Street does not have to stop. Alderman Smith explained that he lives at the end of the street so he is very familiar with the area and travels it several times per day. He explained that this person has made this request for two years, and although it is the only request regarding this intersection he has received, the gentleman is persistent. He explained that it is a difficult intersection because people move pretty quickly in that area on Henley Street, and it is a tight intersection as well.

Alderman Smith noted that Fourth Street, Seventh Street and Thirteenth Street have lights and a lot of traffic because of the lights, but only Fourth Street and Seventh Street have four way stops at the Henley Street intersection. He noted that the four way stop is located at Eleventh Street and Henley, although there is not a lot of traffic coming from Eleventh Street. He explained that it is possible that the four way stop is on the wrong block and may need to be moved from Eleventh to Thirteenth Street.

Alderman Smith explained that there are upsides to making this change, especially since it is often difficult to turn off of Thirteenth Street onto Henley. He explained that the change to a four way stop would solve this issue. He explained that the downside of changing the intersection to a four way stop is that it's just another stop on Henley Street, with one very close by on Eleventh Street.

Alderman Witte asked if this is near the entrance to Niagara Mohawk, and Alderman Smith explained it is a little further down the street. Alderman Dougherty explained that he can't believe that this hasn't been brought up sooner, because cars really seem to whip down that stretch of roadway.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that if you are on Thirteenth Street trying to turn onto Henley, it is often difficult. Alderman Smith explained that there is a storm grate on there on Thirteenth Street, so if you are on Henley trying to turn onto Thirteenth Street and there is a vehicle there, you hit the storm grate. He noted that although DPW tried to fix this a little while ago, it is still nothing that you would want to drive in.

Alderman Crawford asked if the next step is to request a traffic study, and Alderman Smith responded that it might be prudent.

Alderman Witte asked if there is parking on Thirteenth Street near its intersection with Henley Street that could be changed to make the intersection easier to navigate, and Alderman Gonzalez responded that there is not. Alderman Witte explained that it is logistically not a wide street.

Mr. Ring asked that the Council keep in mind that STOP signs are not to slow down traffic and should not be used for traffic calming purposes. He explained that the primary focus here is whether or not cars can get out, He explained that there are a lot of stops on Henley Street, which creates a lot of noise. He noted that people also tend to roll through stops when there are a lot of them, potentially making them more dangerous.

Alderman Gonzalez asked if it would make sense to remove one of the four way stops to move it to this intersection, and Mr. Ring explained that both intersections should be analyzed.

Chief Rowley explained that he supports Mr. Ring in what he says. He explained that he looks at data, and typically he does not agree in installing signs or making changes unless the data supports it. He explained that he will not support a change because one person wants it. Chief Rowley explained that he will do a study on this intersection, but he feels that there is a rare occurrence that there is an incident in the area. He explained that the data would need to show that there is a need for the change in order to make one.

Alderman Crawford explained that every time this comes up, people think that speeding is a huge issue, but when a study is done it is found that traffic is only traveling 30 to 35 miles per hour and only appears to be moving faster. Alderman Smith explained that, just to clear the air, the gentleman who brought this to his attention has never brought up speeding. He explained that he has only brought this up because it is a difficult intersection when cars are trying to turn onto an off of Thirteenth Street.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that the uniformity with the two other streets with lights and four way stops is the biggest selling point to him as to why this is a good idea. He noted that it may be muddying the waters to remove the four way stop at Eleventh Street. Alderman Smith explained that if it wasn't an issue from department heads that it is a safety issue, he would be in support of moving the four way stop from Eleventh to Thirteenth Street.

Alderman Crawford asked if Alderman Smith knows what the other resident's opinions are, and Alderman Smith responded that he has not polled or knocked on doors, but that he lives in that area and experiences the situation every day. Alderman Crawford explained that he didn't know if other residents would be upset with the change.

A study will be performed to determine the need of a four way stop at this intersection.

e. City-Owned Blighted Properties

Alderman Crawford explained that residents on Washington Street keep asking about 1013 Washington Street, a previous meth house that experienced a fire around two years ago, which the City now owns. He passed around photos of the structure taken earlier in the day. Alderman Crawford explained that he is wondering what is going on with the three properties that the City took ownership of from the County. HE explained that feral cats are going in and out of the basement in this property, and the windows have been kicked in a broken, which has opened the structure to elements. He explained that the structure is in rough shape and he is relatively hopeful that the Council will continue its fight against blight. He would like to see how the Council feels on moving forward with tearing the structure down.

Mr. DiCerbo explained that an asbestos study has been done, and it will cost approximately \$1,500 to do the abatement. Alderman Gonzalez asked when the City took possession of the property, and Mayor Aiello responded that he believes that this is the house that was taken along with the East Elm Street and South Fourth Street properties. Alderman Gonzalez asked if the City can at least board up the broken windows on the structure, and Mayor Aiello responded that it could be done.

Alderman Crawford explained that part of the reason that he is bringing this up is because the City received a pretty favorable bid to demolish the Buffalo Street structure after the fire, as there is a company in town doing a number of other demolitions for the County land bank. He asked what the cost for the demolition of that property is, and Mr. DiCerbo responded that it is at \$33,000 right now, which includes the air monitoring costs.

Alderman Crawford explained that the company is still in the area doing work for the Land Bank, so perhaps it makes sense to get bids on demolishing this structure, or all three. He understands that the City has a limited budget that was depleted by the Buffalo Street demolition, but he would like everyone's thoughts on how to approach this. He questioned how much is left in the demolition account.

Mayor Aiello explained that he will get together with Capt. Jennings to see the asbestos information, then seek out bids to get the structures demolished. He noted that he will also get the amount left in the demolition account from Mr. Saradin tomorrow.

Alderman Witte asked what the possibility is of getting the \$33,000 back that the City has paid for the demolition of the Buffalo Street property, and Mr. DiCerbo responded that he is optimistic. He explained that the City is taking a different approach in this situation, and there are some assets there to leverage. He noted that timing may not be what the Council would like, but the City is in a position to recover this time around.

Alderman Panus asked how the City determines what needs to be done, and Mayor Aiello responded that Code Enforcement has an inventory. He noted that there is not a plan for every blighted property. Alderman Witte asked what was going on with the City-owned property in Ward 7 that the Land Bank wanted to obtain from the City to rehab, and Mayor Aiello responded that the Land Bank determined that it would not be worth their time, and the City still owns the property and needs a plan for it moving forward.

Mayor Aiello noted that he will have an inventory put together and sent out to the committee members.

Alderman Smith explained that with blighted properties, it is not always that just the squeaky wheel gets the grease. He explained that the City has made plans, but it is hard to do a plan every time, for every property. Alderman Panus explained that he likes seeing that old properties that are beyond repair are being taken away.

Alderman Crawford explained that the City has a demo budget that was built into last year's budget, and the Council works with the Mayor and City Attorney. He noted that the City previously demolished all City-owned blighted properties and got them off the plate, so the Council and Mayor selectively chose three houses to ask for from the County last year to demolish ourselves. He explained that the fact that this demolition company is in town might make it beneficial for the City to get bids on all three of these properties.

Alderman Gonzalez asked if the \$98,000 put into a Capital Fund has been depleted, and Mayor Aiello responded that it is. Alderman Dougherty noted that the City took three houses from the County last May, and that the tax auction will be coming up again with another set of houses that the Council may want to consider. Mayor Aiello explained that he had spoken with the County and advised that the City wanted to get everything cleaned up before taking on additional properties.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Witte, seconded by Alderman Dougherty. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:10 p.m.