

MINUTES
City of Geneva
Council Meeting
October 13, 2014
7:04 p.m.

Jeff Piotrowski opened the Council Meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Roll Call – Jeff Piotrowski, Howard Anderson, Mike Shupska, Susan Hagan, William Buskirk, and David W. Per Due

Absent – Tim Miller

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was said and prayer was offered by Phyllis Dunlap, Clerk of Council.

Motion was made by Susan Hagan to approve the minutes of the September 22, 2014, September 29, 2014 and October 6, 2014 Council Meetings, seconded by Mike Shupska. Roll call, 6 yeas.

Department Presentation – Water Department – Dave Gilbert, Presenting

The new equipment was ordered. The trailer has been received. The mini-excavator should be received within the month. Jobs utilizing the new equipment are already lined up and ready to go.

All of the budget lines are coming in healthy. The reports prepared by Ms. Stuetzer make it easy to review and assess the budget. Mr. Gilbert was able to shift used funds associated with the AMI to the water main break line.

The City received \$300,000 at 0% interest for the AMI project; the money will be available after July 1st. The total project is estimated at \$500,000. The City will put in for the balance of the project, \$200,000 at low interest. The project will move forward next year. Mr. Pearson will talk about this project in a committee meeting. The money will be available after July 1st.

It is the Water Department's ten year anniversary this month.

Mr. Gilbert distributed a list of projects completed since 2004. The department has done one or two projects every year except for 2005, the City's first year of operation. The Department was new, Mr. Gilbert was new, and the City was getting an assessment on the system. The Route 20 water main had just been done. All of the projects were done to make the budget tighter, to save money in the long run, and to move the department forward.

In 2015 the department will be taking on the AMI, Elm Street water line (the department's biggest project so far), and the Harpersfield Booster Station.

The City has been hit every two years with a major bulk water rate increase; major meaning from 7% to 22%. Recently in years when there is no bulk water rate increase they have added on a systems improvement charge (SIC). The charge can be 3 to 4%. Aqua does not need to go to PUCO to add a SIC. It is a rate increase to offset infrastructure improvements.

From 2004 to the present The City's costs for bulk water have increased 67%. The City's water rates have increased 43% in the last ten years. Mr. Gilbert is not saying that that is not even. The City is staying ahead of the curve. The rates that we charge for water can't coincide 100% evenly with the rate increases for bulk water. There is a study that goes with that. It is continuing. The City would like to avoid any big increases.

The mini-excavator is a Bobcat E35. The cost with the trailer was \$65,000.

Mr. Buskirk requested a copy of the water department list of projects with the cost and the amount of line replacement included (4 inch line to 8 inch line, etc.).

Mr. Pearson stated that he has requested a utility meeting; there are a number of items to discuss. Jeff Piotrowski will call Mr. Miller regarding scheduling the meeting.

The cold storage building, the two vehicles obtained all coincide with taking work from contractors and bringing it in house. This includes the purchase of the equipment. The City was spending \$45,000 a year easily on the smaller jobs that the new equipment will allow the department to do.

Mr. Per Due stated that a few years back there was a referendum in the city to buy the water company. The promise to the citizens was that the rates would be lowered. The water rates have gone up. Mr. Per Due acknowledges the increase in bulk water but questions why the rates continually increase. Would the City have been better served not buying the system and have Aqua fix these problems and take care of the system.

Mr. Gilbert stated no. The referendum was before Mr. Gilbert tenure. Ten years of operations, ten waterline replacements. Mr. Gilbert does not believe that Aqua would have invested that much money into the system over that time period.

Mr. Shupska stated that the argument is that the City does not know what Aqua would be charging the City right now. We know what we have; we don't know if it would have been higher had we stayed with Aqua. Aqua can have one major thing and they go to the PUCO to request a rate increase.

Mr. Buskirk stated that from the time the referendum was initiated to the time the process was completed Aqua did not have any rate increases. Every place else did.

Mr. Pearson came in just as Council decided to acquire the water system. There is a difference between a private company and a public. Council sets the rate. What is out of the City's control is the bulk water rate. The City has to buy bulk water. Aqua will continue to come back with bulk water increases. PUCO gave the private utilities the right to do the SIC and the City will continue to see these. Aqua tells the City this will continue.

This is a county-wide issue. What is the county going to do to make water instead of buying it? The Commissioners are attempting to start that discussion with Aqua. As long as we are a customer, we will continue to see these rates increase. Some of the discussion at the utility committee is to lay this out. What are we going to do about buying bulk water?

Mr. Per Due stated that the Council put out to the citizens that they would get a reduction in rates. It passed by a very slim margin. Rates have gone up.

Mr. Shupska stated that we do not know what the top rate of Aqua would have been and therefore the comparison cannot be made.

Council at that time may have overpromised.

Mr. Piotrowski stated that the key is taking it in house; when the City did not have control of the water, the City did not know what kind of investment Aqua would have made in the community. Because the City controls the water department we have the projects.

Aqua will assess the SIC regardless of whether the improvements are in Geneva or in some other community.

Aqua is reactive. Geneva is proactive. Aqua will fix the break. When Geneva has a water main break consideration for replacement of the line is made.

Mr. Piotrowski commended Mr. Gilbert on a great job.

Lake County has an interconnection with Ashtabula County's waterline. The City is surrounded by Ashtabula County. The City does not have a waterline directly to Lake's system. We don't have our own water tower. The County has checked with Lake. Lake County cannot provide the amount of volume the County would need to pull on a regular basis. The County uses them in an emergency.

The difference in the cost between Lake and Aqua is unknown.

Every plant, wastewater plant or water treatment plant has to have capacity and reserve. They can't exceed that without EPA requiring improvements.

Mr. Pearson can bring Council up to speed on the subject in the committee meeting. What the County is doing. Initially the County was purchasing water from Ohio American which was then purchased by Aqua. The City can talk with Commissioners and inquire regarding their long term plans to curb those costs.

Mr. Per Due stated that his comments were not directed at Mr. Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert is doing an excellent job.

Mr. Shupska stated that the County dropped the ball. The County could have purchased Ohio American.

Ms. Hagan stated that the list of improvements completed is very impressive.

Citizens – None.

Items for Consideration of Council –

Resolution No. 3296. A Resolution Supporting the Passage of the Ashtabula County Metroparks 0.5-Mil, 5 Year Operating and Improvement Levy.

Susan Hagan stated that she highly supports this.

David Per Due stated that he cannot support a tax increase.

Roll call on passage, 5 yeas, 1 nay. Resolution No. 3296 duly passed.

Resolution No. 3297. A Resolution in Support of Ashtabula County Senior Services Levy.

Mr. Piotrowski stated that the City has our own Senior Center which will benefit from this levy.

Mr. Per Due stated that he cannot support a tax increase.

Roll call on passage, 5 yeas, 1 nay. Resolution No. 3297 duly passed.

City Manager's Report –

Mr. Piotrowski will contact Mr. Miller regarding scheduling a utility committee meeting.

Leaf collection will begin this month.

The structural people are scheduled to take a look at the fire cisterns.

Mr. Pearson will schedule Ken Johnson to discuss the public access channel. Mary Zapetelli will also be invited.

The Health Department has notified the City of new home sewage treatment regulations which will be in effect January 1, 2015. The new regulations will be required if the system is upgraded or a new one installed.

The Seniors have asked the City if we are willing to put a video in support of the senior levy on our website. Susan Hagan, Jeff Piotrowski, Howard Anderson are in favor.

Trick or treat is scheduled from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Unfinished Business – None.

New Business – None.

Payment of Bills - None

Committee Reports -

Safety Committee – Susan Hagan reported that Chief Dudik gave a highly enthusiastic report regarding the new CAD. The committee recommended the City Manager write a letter to the County Commissioners express the City’s interest in participating.

The County has proposed a central CAD at each PCAP. Each jurisdictions police, fire and the public EMS services would be eligible to receive software for five (5) mobile CADs. The City’s cost would be the yearly maintenance.

Citizens – None

Council meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Recorded by: Phyllis Dunlap
Clerk of Council

President of Council

Clerk of Council