

MINUTES
City of Geneva
Council Meeting
April 25, 2016
7:00 p.m.

Tim Miller opened the Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call – Tim Miller, Susan Hagan, David W. Per Due, William Buskirk, and Mario Butera

Absent: Philip Cordova, Wm. Lucas McDaniel

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was said and prayer was offered by Rev. Alex Zell, Peoples Church

Motion was made by David W. Per Due to approve the Minutes of the April 11, 2016 Council Meeting, seconded by Mario Butera. Roll call, 5 yeas. Motion passed.

Presentation – Fire Department – Chief Dale Arkenburg Presenting

Tony Boyd of City Church has agreed to be the Fire Department Chaplain. The Fire Department has not had a Chaplain since Rev. Walker of People's Church left. Rev. Boyd has agreed to come to the scenes when needed and to assist with Firefighter stress.

A large joint training was held on April 17th at the Training Center. Forty-five firefighters and Explorers attended. A wide variety of topics were covered including water rescue, water supply, auto extrication and more. The training went very well.

Geneva Fire is heavily involved with the Ashtabula County Water Rescue Team. There was a training this past weekend that Geneva Fire attended at the YMCA in Ashtabula.

The staffing decrease being talked about with the Coast Guard is of concern. The Coast Guard intends to evacuate Ashtabula after boating season and staff this area out of Erie and Fairport. This will put a lot of strain on local Fire Departments.

Classroom at the training center is moving along well. The classroom should be available in July. There is a lot of volunteer time that goes into the Training Center. A lot of firefighter acquired vehicles are used in trainings. Saybrook Fire built the picnic tables at the Training Center.

Inspections and preplanning is ongoing. This year as this is being done information is being entered into the CAD System.

One of the Firefighters has been helping with the AMI Project. The project is going very well. A great deal of information has been gathered by having a Firefighter participate and having him walking the neighborhoods. Hazards have been identified along with other useful information.

The Shoreline Project, a large shoreline restoration project at Geneva-on-the-Lake, Geneva State Park cabin area is complete. Chief Arkenburg was a part of the pre-con meetings.

The City is working on a dry hydrant project in the Padanarum area as it is un-watered. Chief Arkenburg is working with the Township to try to get some possible dry hydrants out there. They are looking into grants. The issue is that you have to get into each persons property and get access to their ponds.

The waterline project in the City is going well. This project will increase the flows into the City; we will have plenty of hydrants in that area. It will help the overall water supply situation.

Chief Arkenburg is working to get SOP and alarm cards updated. Karen, Administrative Assistant in the Fire Department is doing a fantastic job.

The Fire Department will be utilizing their EMS \$1,500 grant to purchase backboards and trauma equipment. The Fire Department applies for this grant annually. It helps to keep medical equipment on the trucks.

Chief Arkenburg has applied for a grant in the amount of \$98,000 from the State of Ohio to add a third floor to the training tower. Representative Patterson informed the Chief that by May 19th we may hear something.

Chief Arkenburg is also applying for a \$20,000 grant to purchase 1,000 smoke detectors. This is a federal grant which requires a match. The match will come out of the donation line.

Chief Arkenburg is looking into new software in order to get away from paper and pen. Chief Arkenburg has evaluated four software packages. The software should allow the department to track things in a more efficient manner.

The ladder tuck broke down yesterday. It was a minor repair on the hydraulic line which was repaired by one our Captains. It was out of service less than twenty-four hours. The City tries to do repairs in house when possible either using Will over at the Street Departments or gentleman in the Fire Department; it is much more cost effective.

The RNC coming to Cleveland will have impact on us. There is a one hundred mile radius of impact.

The dry hydrants need a yearly flushing. Extreme cold can crack some of the housing. They are pretty reliable and do not need a lot of maintenance.

Citizens –

David Cook
400 Garfield Street, Geneva, Ohio

Mr. Cook wanted to know why he did not have a price list for Waste Management. A contract was just negotiated. Mr. Cook is a bag user. The bags went up considerably a few months ago. Now he is being asked to pay \$3.00 for recycling.

The price list is included in the proposal. Mr. Starkey will provide the list to Mr. Cook.

Mr. Cook stated that some trees had been cut down in front of his house by the City Street Department and he was promised the stumps would be removed.

Mr. Starkey stated that they would be removed; City is looking at the budget and may have to come back to Council with an appropriation. Worst case the stumps would be ground next year.

The City worked with First Energy's Arborist and removed eight (8) trees. Tim Bittner has given Mr. Starkey a price on the stump removal.

Mr. Cook stated that everything Council does is an emergency. When you read that in the paper it appears that the City is not prepared. When it is an emergency, citizens can't come and comment.

Mr. Miller explained that as Council only meets twice a month, three readings would take a month a half and then it would take thirty days for the legislation to be enforced. It would take two and half months for something to go into effect. Items that affect citizens' taxes, sewer rates, etc. are done by three readings; items such as contracts that are time sensitive are done by emergency.

Bill Baker
440 Blaine Street, Geneva Ohio

Mr. Baker asked that prior to the Items of Considerations that Council explain the three readings. Mr. Baker also suggested that it be on the Agenda.

When students attend, Council does make an attempt to explain the process.

Mr. Baker complimented the Fire Department.

Mr. Miller read a proclamation for Arbor Day.

Mr. Starkey will be planting a tree out by the covered bridge with Andover Bank on Arbor Day.

City of Geneva did receive a letter from State Senator Cafaro regarding the City of Geneva's recognition as a Tree City USA awardee.

Items for Consideration of Council –

Ordinance No. 3189. An Ordinance Amending Geneva Codified Ordinances Section 1040.09(b) and (c) Rates and Charges for the Geneva Water System. First Reading

Gary Hydinger and Dave Gilbert have done a lot of work and looked at projects coming up as well as revenue and other funding sources and developed a rate system that they believe is fair

for the citizens. Mr. Buskirk has also been involved in the discussions. The City has a lot of No Feasible Alternative requirements that the City must begin to address.

No Feasible Alternative is a requirement of Ohio EPA. The estimated cost of the plant restoration is eight to twelve million dollars. The West Main sewer project, sewer part alone is estimated at over two million with the entire project being estimated at close to seven million dollars.

The City's goal is to soften this over several years versus being mandated to do it and having a large increase.

Mr. Per Due stated that he cannot and will not support this. When Mr. Per Due came on Council he stated that he would not vote for any tax increases or rate increases.

Just a few years ago, the City had the second highest rates in the State. At the time the water was purchased from Aqua citizens were told that water rates would be reduced, they have never gone down. Mr. Per Due stated that water and sewer rates are high. Mr. Per Due further stated that he has nothing but good things to say about David Gilbert and Gary Hydinger.

Mr. Hydinger stated that with the projected water rate increases the City will be in the low 70th percentile in the State. The City no longer has the second highest rates in the State. Other communities have been raising their rates faster than Geneva.

When the water company was taken over, there was never any promise that the sewer would go down.

Mr. Per Due stated that the City of Geneva is closer to Lake Erie than ninety percent (90%) of the State. The City does not have to ship water. If the City is getting water from Lake Erie, the rates should be lower. No-one has seen a reduction in their water rates since the City took over.

Mr. Per Due agreed that sewer rate reduction was not a part of the campaign to take back control of the water. However, water rates were promised to decrease by Council in office at that time. No-one in the City of Geneva has seen a reduction in their water rates.

Mr. Buskirk asked that the City put on the website the EPA Rate Study so citizens can see the history of rates for various communities, the No Feasible Alternative Study, and the Ordinance with the breakdown and a copy of the rate history that was handed out showing the rates for water and sewer over the last twenty years.

Mr. Buskirk stated that one of the reasons our rates were so high is that previous City Councils did not listen to recommendations by the Ohio and Federal EPA and a Decent Decree was issued forcing the City to make certain improvements by a deadline or face substantial fines. The City is attempting to be prudent with taxpayer's dollars by planning the improvements and funding options and presenting them to EPA, and trying to keep citizens aware of where the rates will be.

Mr. Per Due agreed with a lot of Mr. Buskirk stated however, the previous Council told citizens that rates would go down, citizens were lied to. When buying the Water Company citizens were told rates would decrease.

Mr. Buskirk stated that the people involved in the purchase acted in good faith. Mr. Buskirk stated that he came on Council shortly after the purchase. There were some mistakes.

Ordinance No. 3190. An Ordinance Amending Geneva Codified Ordinances Section 1042.325 to Apply Local Rates to Users in the JEDD Areas and to Increase Rates. First Reading

Mr. Starkey stated that JEDD II has a higher rate structure than JEDD's I and III. This Ordinance will bring all the JEDD's parallel.

Ohio EPA requires that the City justify why the City is charging different rates.

The thinking is that the City is getting a percentage of the income tax levied by the JEDD Board and so most people are contributing to the City and so should get the same rates. JEDD II paid a lot of money to install the sewer line.

Mr. Buskirk stated that the negotiation for each of the JEDDs was different but as time goes by and things are paid off, they become more alike.

Mr. Hydinger stated that everyone is charged a certain charge based on the size of meter they have and then based upon the bulk water rates. Because of this despite the fact that the rate increase of the bulk water is four percent (4%) the net increase in the monthly user fee for the water goes up only one or two percent (1- 2%) for those at the lower end of the user rates. None of the rate increases in water actually amount on a monthly basis to a full four percent (4%) rate increase. With regard to wastewater, those people on the lower end who use one or two units of water will see a decrease in the sewer bills per month and it is not until 2020 that they will see a return to the rates they are currently paying. Those people on fixed incomes will be affected least by both of the rate increases. This was intentional.

Mr. Hydinder stated the water and sewer rates are an inherited rate structure. It is unknown why the water and sewer rates are almost exactly same. Mr. Per Due stated that this may be part of the problem; citizens are paying too much for one or the other if they are both the same.

Mr. Buskirk stated that it is an odd coincidence that the rates are almost the same.

Ohio EPA publishes a statewide report on water and sewer rates. The latest report is from 2014. Further discussion was had regarding the report. The City will be a couple percentage points higher than the average. The City's water and sewer rate will put the City at the low 70th percentile. The City will put this on line for the citizens to review.

Mr. Gilbert stated that those communities that are landlocked pull water from an Aquifer which still must be treated.

The City does not have to pump it from the ground but has other challenges such as the Zebra Mussels.

The City does not produce their own water, the City must purchase water. The bulk water is going up each year. This is the one item in the budget the City has no control over.

Utilities are always a monopoly.

All public water systems have to meet the same regulations. Lake County's water is cheaper because they have their own water intake. They are getting their water directly; they do not have to buy it. It should be noted that water is getting more costly to treat the water.

Resolution No. 3353. A Resolution Authorizing the Acceptance of the Bid of Phil Miller Construction for Sidewalk Repair and Replacement in the City of Geneva, and declaring an emergency.

This is the sidewalk program. City approved \$40,000 for this program it will be a 50/50 split City/Homeowner. Also included is \$20,000 approved by Council to complete the sidewalk between Eastlawn and Eastwood to complete that stretch. There was a second bidder. This is the low bidder. Contract is based on square foot. The program is first come first serve but will target areas that are in the worst shape. If the public does not take advantage of it, the City can look at doing sidewalks.

Motion by David W. Per Due, seconded by William Buskirk to declare Resolution 3353 an emergency measure. Roll call, 5 yeas. Motion by David W. Per Due, seconded by Mario Butera that the rule of law requiring certain Resolutions be read at three separate meetings be waived and suspended and Resolution No. 3353 be placed on the final roll for passage. Roll call, 5 yeas. Roll call on passage, 5 yeas. Resolution No. 3353 duly passed.

Resolution No. 3354. A Resolution Opposing the Proposed Limited Operations of the United States Coast Guard Station-Ashtabula.

Roll call on passage, 7 yeas. Resolution No. 3354 duly passed.

City Manager's Report -

Amanda has been working with the Land Bank on demolition properties. Demolitions are moving forward, there are three on the list which are projected to come down in late summer, early fall. There is only one that could be done sooner.

The purchase agreement has been signed for the West Main Street property. The buyer is looking into acquiring other property. Nothing has been submitted to the Planning Commission as yet.

Unfinished Business – None.

New Business –

Mr. Miller reminded Council that the Annual Cemetery Board meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. prior to the next Council Meeting on May 9th.

Payment of Bills – None.

Committee Reports – None.

Citizens –

Bill Baker
440 Blaine Street, Geneva, Ohio

Aqua was purchased in 2004. Mr. Baker stated it was his understanding that the purchase of the water company was designed to save money; it has not. Mr. Baker asked if it was cheaper to purchase our water from another source. Mr. Gilbert stated that the only other source is Lake County.

All of the bulk water rate increases have not been passed onto the citizens over the years. The City has absorbed costs.

Mr. Gilbert stated that the biggest item is that between 1994 and 2004 there were no capital improvement projects completed by Aqua. Since taking over the water, the City has completed numerous capital improvement projects. Every year the City has been able to at least one project.

One of the reasons the City purchased the system back was that Aqua was not making improvements to the system.

The first three bulk water increases were absorbed.

Mr. Per Due stated that the City overpaid for the system.

Discussion was had regarding the No Feasible Alternative Study which deals specifically with Wastewater and the mandate that Wastewater Treatment Plants may not have any blended flows. A study was done to determine what changes would need to be done to address this. The City hired CT Consultants to do the study. The report was sent in to EPA for approval. The City is trying to modify it somewhat. Mr. Hydinger went over the phases of that plan. It will take six years to implement the study.

The Automatic Meter Reading, capital improvements to the water system, bringing more work in-house have all been factored in to the new rates.

Mr. Buskirk gave some history on the water system and costs that were locked in. The largest variable is the bulk water rate. The City owned the water company up until 1964 and then sold it. There were substantial increases in the rates year after year with no improvements. The City then took the water system back. Over the course of time other areas were raising their rates when Geneva was not. Other communities are now being mandated to make improvements.

Ms. Hagan suggested that the Chairman of the Utility Commission schedule a public hearing to discuss the water and sewer increases so that the public can come and ask their questions.

Mr. Buskirk suggested the last meeting in May prior to the third reading of the Ordinances. This will allow the City Staff to gather information to respond to questions.

The Cemetery meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. prior to the next Council Meeting.

David W. Per Due made a motion to adjourn. Susan Hagan seconded the motion.

Council meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Recorded by: Phyllis Dunlap
Clerk of Council

President of Council

Clerk of Council