

SYRACUSE TOWN COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

March 16, 2010

Brian Woody, President, called the Regular Meeting of the Syracuse Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Other council members present were Cassie Cowan, Bill Musser, and Paul Stoelting. Town Manager Henry DeJulia, Town Attorney Mike Reed, and Clerk Treasurer Julie Kline were also present.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Brian asked for comments from the public on agenda items. There were none.

The minutes of the February 16th meeting were presented. Paul moved to approve the minutes; Bill seconded. Three voted for the motion; Cassie abstained. The motion carried.

Claims #256 through #368 were presented for payment. Cassie moved to approve the claims; Paul seconded. There was no discussion; motion carried.

Representatives of MACOG spoke to the council. Sandra Seanor, Executive Director, and James Turnwald, Senior Planner, updated the council on the progress of funding for the Industrial and Technology Park at U.S. 6 & S.R. 13. Mr. Turnwald reported a grant was submitted for disaster and recovery funds in July 2009. EDA reviewed our project, and we did not get funded through the disaster funding. EDA did suggest we apply instead through their regular economic adjustment program, which we did. The project is still under review. It is not known when we will hear if our grant was approved. Mr. Turnwald spoke to the EDA representative, and all she could advise was that we provided all the information that they needed. Mr. Turnwald explained that typically EDA funding is 50% federal and 50% local; the disaster program would have been eligible for 70% federal and 30% local. The Economic Assistance Program can be higher than 50%; we are requesting 70% due to the number of jobs lost. We have no word if EDA will approve a 70/30 funding. Henry said he heard we might not hear anything until August. Mr. Turnwald stated the worst case scenario is that we will know by October.

Councilman Siegel arrived during the MACOG presentation.

Sandra Seanor advised the EDA is the most methodical and the slowest. She feels it is a good sign that we were allowed to apply for the regular EDA funding. Cassie asked if we are approved, how long will it take to get funds. Ms. Seanor explained we will not receive money. We are required to expend funding and do the preliminary engineering and right of way acquisition. Typically we have two years to get that accomplished. Once everything is in place, we will get reimbursed. Cassie confirmed that we will have to pay the bills throughout the entire project; we will then get reimbursed for the federal portion of the project. Ms. Seanor advised typically that is the way it works. EDA will walk us through all the requirements. Larry asked if there was any way we can be advised of the contingencies now; Ms. Seanor agreed to take a look and let us know. Typically we would not want to spend anything before we receive a notice to proceed. She advised we must be very careful about right of way acquisition; the EDA is very specific about the way it must be done. Larry asked if easements are considered right of way; Ms. Seanor stated it could be. Mr. Turnwald and Ms. Seanor agreed to take a look and talk to the EDA to determine what the town can do and not have a problem. Larry noted some of the right of way may be donated; he asked if that is a problem. Ms. Seanor advised it can be; the federal government may consider it as coercion. She again agreed to look into where we can start, and what we should not

start. Paul questioned the amount of the grant. Mr. Turnwald advised we applied for \$2.1 million for infrastructure improvements; the amount would depend on what grant rate they agreed upon. Mr. Turnwald advised if we are funded, we can expect between 50 % and 70%. Ms. Seanor explained that during the review, they may ask us to revise the application. The percentage would be determined from the revised application. The EDA can also say it is a good project, but they can't fund it until next year. Mr. Turnwald discussed specifications and changes; they will either fund the project at a respectable amount or turn it down. The town will know by October 2010 or before if the project is funded. From there we would proceed to the preliminary engineering design, right of way, and environmental phases.

Turkey Creek Township Fire Territory Chief Mickey Scott spoke to the council about the purchase of a tanker. Mickey explained the history of fire territory. Six new staff were added; as of November 1, 2009, our ISO rating has been reduced from a six to a four for the Town of Syracuse. Brian advised that the council wanted Mickey here to explain the purchase of the tanker. He questioned if tankers have to be replaced every ten years. Mickey advised the average lifespan is ten years. Brian asked if the fire department would use tankers even if hydrants were available. Mickey answered yes. Cassie expressed concern that the vacuum tanker could collapse our water lines. Mickey advised the vacuum would be used if drawing water from a pool or pond. In town, the pressure of the water tower would be used to fill the tanker. Larry asked if the fire truck could be driven to the lake to pull water from there; Mickey responded the ground is too soft. Larry discussed structure fires from 2009. Larry stated that Mickey's report for 2009 lists 26 structure fires; all but 8 of those fires were assists for other fire departments. Larry added the 2010 tax levy for the fire territory is \$209,000.00 more per year than the levy for the whole town. Cassie noted EMS service is included in the fire budget. Mickey added the firemen are cross trained so they also work EMS. He was asked about EMS revenue; Mickey stated it is about \$300,000.00 per year. Larry discussed higher property taxes due to the fire territory, and the fire department's access to mutual aid. Mickey noted a straight tanker is the same price. Larry stated the fire department has the opportunity to lower the tax rate and keep people in their houses; the economy is hurting. Brian stated the average proposed expense for equipment replacement is \$542,000.00 per year. He realizes \$87,000.00 was not enough, but \$542,000.00 is excessive. Brian went on to state the council and taxpayers are uneasy because the fire territory won't compromise on expenses. He discussed replacing tankers in twelve years instead of ten, for example. Brian provided a spreadsheet with a twelve year tanker replacement and some other changes; the total was \$5.3 million over 20 years. Cassie pointed out we are here tonight to discuss the purchase of a tanker. Paul noted the equipment replacement schedule has the purchase of four tankers in twelve years. Discussion followed on the number of actual structure fires that were on Mickey's report; it was noted 2/3 of the calls were assists. Brian stated you propose to spend \$10.8 million in 20 years, and you have no willingness to compromise. There were more comments on replacing equipment. Cassie explained we always needed the equipment; we did without or bought used. She asked if we can eliminate some equipment since this is such a good tanker. Mickey stated ISO requires 3 engine companies for 3,500 gallons per minute. Discussion returned to taxes and levies. Paul questioned if we buy this tanker, are we replacing or adding new. Firemen were present and spoke about fighting fires and running out of water in two minutes. Cassie suggested we move on to discussion on the tanker and have a discussion with the advisors at a later date about equipment replacement. Brian disagreed and stated it is our chance to have Mickey explain and answer our questions. Town Attorney Mike Reed advised the budget is approved by the fire territory board. The budget then goes

to the township board for approval. However, he believes purchases from the Equipment Replacement Fund have to be approved by both boards. This board has to approve it or it doesn't get done. Larry again pointed out taxpayers are hurting and asked the fire department to consider this. Brian Richcreek explained the problems he has fixing old equipment. The availability of mutual aid and length of time for other departments to respond was discussed. Bill stated we need to do this at another time; he asked Mickey why he was so adamant about discussing the equipment replacement schedule. Mickey agreed to meet and discuss the equipment replacement schedule. Brian stated this is the first time you (Mickey) said you will be willing to discuss this. Larry stated if there was an equipment replacement schedule that everyone agreed upon, we wouldn't have to have this discussion. Paul noted you can't always go by a schedule; equipment fails at a different rate. He suggested a schedule that is reviewed annually.

Bill stated there is no reason to continue the discussion and keep saying the same thing. Paul stated we should vote on the tanker and plan to meet with the fire and township advisory board during the next two months. He has concerns about what appears to be a bloated budget.

Cassie made a motion to purchase a 2010 vacuum tanker at a cost of \$257,601.87. Paul seconded. Five voted for the motion; none against.

Brian thanked Mickey for his willingness to compromise; he also recognized Brian Richcreek's efforts to maintain the equipment.

TOWN MANAGER

Town Manager Henry DeJulia reported our new website will be up and running tomorrow. He advised we are thinking about having an open house at the new water plant during Municipal Government Week, which is May 10-14. We would like to have the Open House on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. He also reported we are looking to put up about 45 banners.

Henry discussed the spending limit for department heads. He would like to increase the spending limit without council approval to \$1,200.00. He noted our department heads are doing a good job with spending responsibly. A lot of the purchases are \$900.00 to \$1,100.00. Larry commented that departments have tried to get around it in the past, such as a computer and monitor purchased separately, so each is under \$750.00. He asked if Henry's approval would be required. Henry agreed it could be. Brian noted he currently does not have a problem with any department spending of about \$1,000.00. Paul moved to give department heads the authority to spend up to \$1,200.00 on new purchases; Cassie seconded. Brian asked Henry if he feels he needs to see these purchases; Henry suggested he could approve purchases over \$1,000.00. Paul amended his motion to allow departments to spend up to \$1,000.00 without approval; purchases up to \$1,200.00 can be made with town manager approval. Cassie seconded. Five voted for the motion; none against. Motion carried.

Henry provided a handout on trash guidelines and asked for council input. Paul asked if the requirement for containers is needed; do we have to eliminate the stickers. Discussion followed on options the council would like to include; the council would like several options for bidding.

POLICE

Police Chief Tony Ciriello presented his monthly report and discussed the calls for service.

Tony announced that McDonald's will no longer have a cruise-in on the Friday night before the car show. Kiwanis would like to use the uptown for the cruise-in. Main St would be closed between Harrison St and S.R. 13 on Friday, May 14. Tony added the chamber would like to have a Business Expo at the same time. Tony has no issue with the request; he asked for council input. The council had no problem with the request.

Tony discussed Forest Park. He has concerns about the two way traffic on that narrow road. If the council has no issues, he would like to work with Mike Reed on an ordinance to make it a one way street. He also noted that this small subdivision has four different street names; he would like to rename it with one road name. Tony would like to pursue this with the Post Office. The council had no objection to Tony checking into this.

Bill asked if everything is done with the paving in Forest Park. Jeremy advised some areas just need to be reseeded. Larry asked if there are street lights there; there are none.

Tony announced that the Wawasee boy's basketball team won their sectional game on March 6th. He thanked the firemen for the parade escorting the team. Tony advised he was invited to participate in a program on March 26th at Middle School.

PARK

Park Superintendent Chad Jonsson made several announcements. There will be an Easter Egg Hunt for middle school students on Friday night, March 26. The Easter Egg hunt for the elementary age children will be on Saturday, March 27 at 10:45 a.m. On June 5, an elementary fun and fitness festival is planned; the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lion's clubs are assisting with planning for the event. It will be held at elementary school.

Chad distributed a sign up sheet and guidelines for the community garden and asked for council input. Bill asked how many spaces there will be; Chad advised 8 to start with. The spaces will be 10' X 10'. Cassie asked about water; it is not provided. The council had no problem with Chad's request.

PUBLIC WORKS

Public Works Superintendent Jeremy Sponseller announced a demonstration backhoe will be delivered tomorrow. He would like to bring final pricing to the council next month for consideration. Larry asked what will happen to the backhoe we have now; Jeremy advised it will be traded in.

Jeremy discussed the purchase of a new copier for public works. The present copier was purchased used in 2003; we have a maintenance contract with Sands that is \$800.00 year. Jeremy has a quote from Sands for a new copier for \$4,350.70. The maintenance contract on the new unit is only \$280.00 per year, and Sands has agreed to raise the warranty from five years to ten years. With the new copier, we will also be able to print from the computers, which will save on cartridges. The copier will also be able to send and receive faxes. Paul moved to approve the purchase of a new copier for \$4,350.70 with a ten year warranty and \$280.00 annual maintenance; Bill seconded. Five voted for the motion; none against. The motion carried.

CLERK

Clerk Treasurer Julie Kline advised she received documents from SRF to close out our SRF loan; she asked for authorization for the council president to sign the

documents. Paul moved to close the SRF loan and have Brian sign the documents; Larry seconded. Five voted for the motion; none against. The motion carried.

Julie discussed the rate for the Cumulative Park Fund. Due to adjustments made by the DLGF, our levy has been reduced from a levy of \$18,398.00 in 2004 to \$14,779.00 in 2010. If we do not raise the rate for the fund, we will not be able to make our Community Center lease payments in a few years. She advised she talked to the DLGF; he suggested we adopt an ordinance with a rate of .015, but advertise for a levy of \$20,000.00. Larry asked what happens when the lease is paid; does the Cumulative Park fund continue? He was advised it will continue until the council changes the rate. He expressed concern that the council at that time won't know that was established for the lease payment and the levy will continue. Julie suggested we could put language in the ordinance that the fund is established to make the lease payment. Paul noted it can be used for other projects. Bill stated we are certainly going to know when the Community Center is paid off. Brian suggested lowering the levy for the park fund by \$5,000.00. Paul made a motion to re-establish the Cumulative Park Fund with a tax rate of .015. The advertised levy is to be \$20,000.00 and language is to be included in the ordinance that it is for the Community Center lease. Cassie seconded. Four voted for the motion; Brian voted against. The motion carried.

TOWN ATTORNEY

Town Attorney Mike Reed had nothing further to report.

DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

Stan Insley noted that census forms were just mailed out; he suggested the council encourage everyone to fill out their form.

Susan Myrick asked where the community garden will be located; she was told it will be where the old water plant was located on Dolan Dr.

OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

None.

Paul moved to adjourn the meeting. Bill seconded. Five voted for the motion; none against.

The Syracuse Town Council adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

ATTEST:

Brian Woody, President

Julie Kline, Clerk Treasurer