

THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL
JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

JULY 18, 2024 – 5:15 PM
City Hall – Second Floor Conference Room
47 Castle Street
Geneva, NY 14456

Presiding – Steve Valentino, Mayor

Watch the livestream on the City of Geneva's YouTube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/cityofgenevany>

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Clr. Lavin, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Moracco

Absent: Clr. Brennan, Clr. Pealer, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Whitfield

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Grimaldi

MOVED THAT council move to executive session at 5:19pm to discuss proposed, pending, or current litigation, and discussion regarding the medical, financial, credit, or Employment History of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-4 absent)

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Lavin; seconded by Clr. Petropoulos

MOVED THAT council exit executive session at 7:04pm

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. PROCLAMATION- Princess White's 90th Birthday

4. DISCUSSION – Strategic Plan

Mayor Valentino opened the discussion recalling the Council Retreat where general guidance was provided, with the next step being to drill down for goal systems and a level of accountability for staff.

City Manager Hendrix noted that the Strategic Plan was prepared by a facilitator, and that Council is looking to give more support behind proposed actions, keeping in mind Time, Resources, and Money. She reviewed the five areas of focus, noting that number five turned into a "bucket" area.

Councilor Petropoulos lead with Quality of Life concerns, relaying that he's dealt with personal instances where his property was urinated on, as well as theft of services, which has been reported to the police. After visiting some businesses on Castle Street, he reports some of the same concerns plus unwanted noise. He reported that the complaints are all related to younger able-bodied males that should be in the workforce. Councilor Petropoulos advised that the Police Department suggested posting no trespassing and no loitering signs, allowing them to make arrests. It would also be helpful for commercial tenants to pressure code related to some downtown landlords who aren't keeping their properties up. Councilor Petropoulos shared that he'd like to see City Management and Economic Development reduce poverty by 2-10% by the end of year or by a period specified by Council. He suggested that this can be accomplished by better marketing, more job outreach, fighting drug trafficking, and passing quality of life laws to discourage bad behavior. He'd also like to see more tourists coming to downtown businesses, and mentioned some business owners noticing that people loitering are discouraging visits to their downtown businesses. He brainstormed some ideas, and will be meeting with BID later in the month. He'd like to see improvement to signage and the City's image. He additionally stated that people think Geneva is a welfare town and that image needs to be changed immediately. He'd like to see the Beat Cop position unfrozen, and a revitalization of neighborhood initiatives, and get tourists to cross 5 & 20. Councilor Petropoulos also shared some complaints he's received about Section 8 housing above downtown businesses. He further shared that Geneva needs to lose the image of being a giant slum with a pretty lake.

Mayor Valentino clarified for the group that to establish goals, a majority focus needs to be developed on certain ideas.

Councilor Morocco shared that he's not opposed to Section 8, but wondered how tenants who break all the rules and destroy rentals still stay in the program, just move around to different rentals. City Manager Hendrix shared that there are legalities regarding housing, and shared ways the City can influence some decision making linked to Councilor Grimaldi who is a non-voting member of the Geneva Housing Authority Board, and that the City Manager has three appointments to that same board. Discussion followed.

City Manager Hendrix suggested looking at population-based performance measures and city-based performance measures. An example would be reducing poverty, as a population-based performance measure because the City can't do that alone, it takes other stakeholders.

Councilor Petropoulos wondered about 24 Seneca and what's happening with that space, is the agency who wanted 150 parking spots still interested? City Manager Hendrix shared that that buyer is no longer interested and has moved on, and that building is close to being, or may already be sold. Councilor Petropoulos then shared that he met with someone interested in opening an arcade or gaming lounge downtown, and he's looking for locations. Councilor Petropoulos took him to look at several buildings downtown. He then shared that Economic Development needs to concentrate on bringing businesses downtown, because businesses will help the poverty level. Mayor Valentino advised the group that for businesses looking to locate downtown there are resources for them, including meeting with Director of Economic Development and Planning David West, and BID President Catherine Price.

Councilor Gillotte would like to see a focus on fiscal stewardship, and requested information to educate Council ahead of time, and shared concerns about the budget process following what happened with the School District. He'd like to see Castle Street cleaned up in the area of Media's. He'd like to see a better way to address trees in the City, and take care of them before they fall down. City Manager Hendrix shared that there are about 900 trees on the City's tree inventory set to be taken down in the next 12 years. Councilor Gillotte went on to suggest that he'd like to see staff take care of the communication gap without too much stress to existing workloads, and wondered how to incentivize. He also suggests partnering with the school and hospital to attract people to Geneva, and

wondered how to get them involved. He also wondered how to help Director West with his position, maybe to map out how to help with the abolished position.

Mayor Valentino would like everyone to consider Tax Rate as staff is working on the budget. He'd like to give some direction to staff. City Manager Hendrix shared that a budget goal will be lower than it has been in the past ten years, in a sustainable fashion. She noted that the budget team is looking at revenue opportunities.

Councilor Lavin said that he believes it's misleading to have a tax rate discussion this year due to the assessment, and that he'd like to talk levy due to Geneva's unique situation, keeping as close to zero as possible for the year. He'd also like to see more shared services opportunities explored. He noted that new doctors' offices are moving to the town, and wondered if they will use water and sewer, and further suggested limiting their access to water and sewer.

Councilor Grimaldi explained the tax levy, which should be created after the budget is done.

City Manager Hendrix explained that the budget begins with mandated costs (health care, retirement, salary). If you want to hold a budget flat, what can you live without?

Councilor Lavin then wondered why we keep a rink or parks and rec when they run a deficit and suggested selling the rink to Hobart. City Manager Hendrix shared that the rink hosts events and the summer rec program and wondered if the rink went private how public access would be preserved. She also explored partnership models and private relationships to support the rink. Mayor Valentino advised that if Council wants to make the rink a goal, that can be done, noting that it's already in process. Councilor Lavin countered wondering if we even need the Economic Development Center, to which Mayor Valentino noted that's an LDC issue. Discussion followed. Councilor Lavin then moved the discussion to home building which he states no body can afford to do in Geneva due to tax rates. Mayor Valentino advised that the reason is tied to the cost of construction, not taxes. Mayor Valentino stressed that he does not want to create a see saw effect on tax rates, rather a sustainable tax rate. More discussion followed related to the tax rates and shared services which moved into town water usage.

Mayor Valentino asked the group how they're going to get to goals for staff. Councilor Lavin proposed a goal of 10% reduction of the tax levy. Councilor Grimaldi explained that you can't do the levy first. You need a budget to work with, and then the levy can be addressed.

City Manager Hendrix explained what the budget book will look like, including requests that didn't make it into the budget, where cuts were made, work plans and how additions to the budget are tied into goals. Councilor Petropoulos said he wants to keep the budget simple, better communication, leave the fluff out, focus on goals, and concentrate on attracting tax payers to the City. City Manager Hendrix explained the budget handoff when it leaves the City Manager and becomes Council's budget. Discussion followed.

Mayor Valentino explained that he sees the city heading in the right direction as it continues to move forward. He'd like to see the focus on where the city is and where it's going, adding that he doesn't want Geneva to be a distressed city with a lake. He proposed focuses on Economic Development and Code Enforcement. Discussion followed.

City Manager Hendrix reviewed Council direction and will keep all five areas, putting more focus on economic development and code enforcement.

Councilor Moracco wondered where money goes that isn't spent on snow removal and salt. City Manager Hendrix explained that less salt is purchased, and overtime still occurs even without the snow removal.

Councilor Lavin circled back to the rink, suggesting the Canandaigua model where the rink is leased for \$1 per year and privately run. Mayor Valentino reminded Councilor Lavin that the Canandaigua rink is heavily subsidized.

5. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Moracco
MOVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 8:16pm
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-4 Absent)

Nicole Tillotson

City Clerk