

THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

August 22, 2024 – 5:30 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 Brennan, Clr. Lavin, Clr. Pealer, Clr. Grimaldi, Clr. Gillotte, Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Moraco, Clr. Whitfield

Absent:

2. DISCUSSION

A. Marina Project

City Manager Hendrix opened the Marina Project discussion by explaining that the Marina is part of the Downtown Revitalization Project (DRI). She shared that the City was awarded the DRI in the first round of submissions and explained the initial planning, funding, and the State's role. She further explained that marina plans and discussions date back to 1958, and noted studies done over the years related to the addition to a marina. City Manager Hendrix referred to a 2018 Market Feasibility Study, and shared that the City has bonded for \$1.5 million, and has grant awards of \$2.1 million to fund the project, and noted that federal funding is available via the Boating Infrastructure Grant. The next steps for the project included working with Edgewater in the design and engineering phase. Approval from the DEC and Army Corps of Engineers was received in 2023 for the project. The RFQ was just released, after refinement of the design due to pricing increases since its conception.

Greg with Edgewater reviewed the goals of the project to include the marina being a public resource accessible to everybody, an extension of Long Pier, performing a complete market analysis, and complete marina design and permitting. He noted the focus on durability, sustainability, safety and ease of maintenance of the finished project. He highlighted public accessibility, including ADA accessibility to the pier extension and marina, a paddle craft launch, and a building with restrooms and showers that will either be built on the pier, attached to the office, or added on to the Long Pier Ice Cream building. Greg explained the pier extension including its function as a wave break, and room between the vertical walls of the pier extension and the lakebed, allowing fish movement under the extension.

Colin with Edgewater reviewed bid drawings, and explained the approved dredging slopes and tolerances. He noted improvements that will be made to the existing portion of Long Pier during the project as well. Colin provided an overview of water and electrical service to each slip, and highlighted safety features built into the project. ADA standards compliance was explained as well. Colin shared that the structure is a steel frame with removable panels for ease of maintenance service.

Councilor Pealer wondered what the gap in the panel slats was, Colin answered that they are about two inches. Discussion followed. Councilor Pealer wondered if the bathrooms are a requirement of state code, which they are, and are ADA accessible, meeting requirements for a marina if it's size. Mayor Valentino wondered about a pump out station, which Colin explained will be near the office building on the marina. Councilor Pealer then wondered if the station will be accessible by larger boats, which it will be, discussion followed around dredge depths. Councilor Lavin then wondered about a fire suppression system. Colin explained that there will be dry fire stand pipe, and a fire truck will still be required, but no fire boat. Councilor Brennan wondered if the new structure would create dredging challenges, Edgewater doesn't think so. They have reviewed extensively with DPW Director Venuti, modeled, looked back on historic information, and note that over the almost eight years on the project there has been no noticeable sedimentation to be concerned with. Councilor Brennan then wondered if the marina would create a new scenario for an algal bloom. Greg shared that Edgewater doesn't believe so, as the water is not shallow, the pump out station will reduce nutrients to feed blooms, and more boats will create more circulation of water also discouraging blooms. Councilor Brennan then wondered about the durability of the extension to Long Pier, noting that it will from time to time really be pounded by waves, and wondered if Edgewater has examples of other projects that have stood up to this. Greg shared that the pier extension is designed and reviewed by structural engineers and should resist forces of the water, noting that ice is the main issue. He further explained that the panels are removable for repair from ice damage, which is of concern over waves, and further noted that the design is limited to what the DEC will allow, and that the structure is the most robust that can be built within DEC requirements. Councilor Brennan then wondered if Edgewater can put a lifespan on the structure. Greg explained that it's hard to put a lifespan on the structure, and noted that adding circulators or ice eaters, to move warmer water up will minimize ice accumulation and damage. Councilor Pealer raised concerns and questions regarding the original feasibility study, where the marina would be tied to amenities like parking, a store, and boat launch. Greg explained that half of the slips are transient, and half are seasonal traffic, noting that seasonal boaters won't need a boat ramp. He further explained that there's no need to have a boat ramp in the marina to support it, as there's a boat launch at Lakefront Park and in the State Park, and traffic is expected from the canal system. Councilor Pealer agreed with this assessment and noted that there is no parking at the marina for boat trailers anyway. Discussion followed around parking for seasonal boaters, which is the lot next to Solar Village, that boaters can access via the Lakefront Tunnel. Parking utilization rates at marinas were discussed, and it was agreed upon that there is ample parking to support the marina. Greg further recommended that the ship store on the marina only sell essentials, as the goal is to draw visitors into town to shop and dine. Councilor Brennan then wondered about revenue and enforcement of payment for docking at the marina. City Manager Hendrix explained that there are projections for cost and revenue, Director West explained that although the City is waiting for more solid costs to project, and that vacancy space will play a part in the calculation, last year when these numbers were reviewed the marina looked like it would slightly more than pay for itself. Councilor Brennan wondered if the office would be staffed full time, and wondered about scoffs and someone essentially functioning as a parking attendant. Greg explained that marinas will often offer a slip at no cost to a "Marina Host" for the season. Discussion followed around this being a third party or City staff. City Manager Hendrix suggested using a shared staff solution, since the role would be seasonal. Councilor Moracco wondered if maintenance would be

subcontracted out. City Manager Hendrix explained that would depend on the level of maintenance. Greg explained that this small marina won't need a barge, and can get a contractor to pull panels if need be. Councilor Lavin wondered what the projected costs of this project looked like in 2017, compared to pricing after the COVID spike, wondering if all costs are projected to be 30-40% above original project projections. Greg explained that it depends on the material, some materials including electrical remain high, while the price for steel is coming down. He further explained that contractors may be more impactful, noting that contractors are quite busy due to the flood of ARPA money, leading labor availability to be more of a problem. Councilor Lavin then wondered if the State would give more money due to pricing increases since the project was awarded. City Manager Hendrix advised that the State is not providing an increase in funding to match present day costs. She further explained that there have been conversations with the State regarding flexible funding, and they will work with the City, as they want to see the project come to fruition. Discussion followed. Councilor Petropoulos then wondered what people pay to use the existing slips. Currently the slips are free of charge, which is very uncommon. She noted that there is a fee to park boat trailers for non-City residents. Greg shared that boaters are willing to pay to use slips at first class facilities. Discussion followed around rates at other marinas on Seneca Lake, noting that this is an established high-quality market, with Watkins Glen being the only comparable marina destination on Seneca Lake, which is a long boat ride from the canal. Councilor Pealer recalled that previous council discussed reserving some slips for public access, and wondered if that was still happening. Greg advised that due to grant requirements transient slips are required, and recommends getting away from the idea of free slips. He strongly recommended charging market rate to afford maintenance of the marina, charging at minimum what a private marina charges, or perhaps 5% more and to raise rates annually. He went on to recommend a kayak rental facility at the marina as well. Councilor Pealer noted that the extension of Long Pier will triple fishing access, and wondered if the wetland space in the corner would be affected by the marina. Greg shared that the marina intentionally is not encroaching on the wetland space, and explained that soft shorelines prevent storm damage. The timeline for the bid process includes the bid going out in early October, with bids received the first week of November. Followed by a month of bid meetings, a month of contracting, and finally a notice to proceed around the first of next year. Councilor Pealer asked for Edgewater to send updated documents and drawings, they will send to Director Venuti for distribution. Councilor Brennan wondered who owns the parking lot between the Marina and 41 Lakefront, 41 Lakefront owns that lot.

B. Senior Exemptions

Mayor Valentino opened the discussion sharing that he has heard from many residents that wish the City would align with the School and County related to senior exemptions. Current senior exemptions sit at roughly \$800,000, or 12-14% of the tax rate. Due to the revaluation, the subject is being revisited. City Manager Hendrix reviewed current School and County exemptions and provided a handout that reviewed how their rates respectively would look if the City implemented one or the other of those exemption rates. She noted that the Assessor was able to forecast the projected impact on the levy using established School and County exemption numbers. Councilor Grimaldi explained that the City will collect whatever the levy is now, and other property owners would make up the difference if the senior exemption is updated. He further noted that the senior exemption cap stands at \$18,200, the same as it was dating back to 2002, and shared that IRA's are now counted as income towards these exemptions. City Manager Hendrix explained that if Council decides to update the senior exemptions a resolution will be needed, and asked for direction. Discussion followed related to the gap that would be created between expenses and revenue creating the levy, and that any exemptions get spread out across the total population. Discussion also followed around more than 50% of Geneva being property tax exempt. Mayor Valentino stated that to make a solid decision, Council

needs to understand the impact overall, and Councilor Grimaldi explained that if the City adopts an exemption in line with either the School or County exemption the City will be able to project fairly accurately. Discussion followed. Councilor Brennan sees this as a moral and financial decision, as nonexempt tax payers will have to make up the difference. Discussion followed with rough calculations of what the adjusted tax rate might be to cover the loss created by more exemptions. City Manager Hendrix will have the Assessor prepare more information for Council since there is interest on the subject, and will place Senior Exemptions discussion on the agenda for the next City Council Meeting, noting that she recommends staying with the sliding scale of either the school district or the County.

3. ADJOURNMENT

**ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Pealer; seconded by Clr. Petropoulos
MOVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 7:14pm
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Nicole Tillotson

City Clerk