THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

November 20, 2024 – 5:30 PM

City Hall – 2nd Floor Council Room
47 Castle Street
Geneva, NY 14456

Presiding – Steve Valentino, Mayor

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Clr. Brennan, Clr. Lavin, Clr Pealer, Clr Grimaldi (arrived at 5:33), Clr. Petropoulos, Clr. Moracco, Clr. Whitfield (arrived at 5:37), Mayor Valentino

Absent: Clr Gillotte

2. DISCUSSION – Economic Development Plan

Director of Planning and Economic Development, David West presented the draft Economic Development Strategy Plan to Council, noting that over 200 residents participated in the process via surveys, meetings, and engagement with business and not for profit leaders. Director West explained that the plan gives a quarter by quarter, year by year work plan for 5-10 years with tasks for staff, the IDA, LDC, and BID. He also shared that the LDC, IDA, and BID have all endorsed the plan. He further explained that the plan is a draft and adjustments can be made, noting that the plan is a living document. Director West then reviewed short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations for all partners.

Mayor Valentino thanked Director West, partners and the community's work on the plan, and wondered how to make modifications. Director West explained that it's a living document, changes can be made at any time. He suggested an annual review to keep on a steady path towards long term goals, keeping everyone rowing in the same direction. Discussion followed around establishing some level of priority across organizations. Councilor Pealer commended the plan and efforts that went into developing it, noting that he appreciates the element of hope, optimism, and prosperity. Discussion followed around measurement of goals. Councilor Brennan expressed the timeliness of this plan which will grow income, and grow Geneva, recognizing the quotative, measurable goals, noting that he'd like to move forward using this as a working document rather than picking it apart. Director West explained that endorsement would indicate general support, and license to move forward. City Manager Hendrix added that some components of the plan will be built into the Strategic Thinking with Staff meeting on December 3rd. Councilor Lavin applauded the work, and framework, noting the urgency of some financial wins, and the development needed to grow the tax base. Discussion followed around an annual forum held with real estate professionals and developers, collaboration with Ontario County, and a similar forum the City and Town of Canandaigua hosted recently. Councilor Petropoulos finds hope in the plan, noting that Hobart interns are working on marketing. He noted the need to reduce poverty and add employment opportunities in the City. Orders of priority were discussed, Director West explained that the consultant ordered priorities based on feedback, however, priority can be reordered. Councilor Whitfield complemented the well-structured plan, and expressed support for quotative goals around jobs and housing. Mayor Valentino wondered about 125 gross new jobs, discussion followed around job retention and job growth, as well as communication with businesses ahead of job losses. More discussion followed around the order of priority. Councilor Whitfield observed that some project recommendations are already being worked on, pointing to an arcade that will be opening this week on Castle Street. Discussion then followed around the City's IDA collaborating with County IDA. Councilor Whitfield asked for information about MAAP grant structure and how information is spread to the community when funding is available. It was decided that next round there will be even more robust sharing of information on how to apply, including asking participating businesses to help get the word out.

3. <u>DISCUSSION – Storm Task Force Report</u>

City Manger Hendrix reviewed the structure of the Storm Task Force, which was broken up into three committees. She reviewed overall recommendations including ongoing storm and sanitary sewer system maintenance, digitalization of City storm and sanitary systems and system inspection records, Ordinance updates, a sump pump ordinance, municipal and business engagement and collaboration, educational items, community engagement, audible alarm system, ongoing support for emergency response trailer, and daylighting of Castle Creek. Costs and considerations were also reviewed, noting that some are already part of the annual budget process, and some proposed solutions may include incentives for homeowners. City Manager Hendrix thanked staff and resident task force members for their work.

Councilor Petropoulos applauded the good ideas, and wondered about daylighting Castle Creek and if emptying sump pumps into the storm sewer is ok, which it is not. Discussion followed around sump pumps, and stopping water before it gets downtown. Junior Engineer Kevin Reed explained that the sanitary and storm systems are separate, that a sump pump ordinance would focus on the storm system, and the data showing the sanitary system being overwhelmed during events due to sump pumps as well. Councilor Pealer raised concerns about unfunded mandates, noting that homes were built in full compliance, and now feels that rugs are being pulled out from under homeowners. Discussion followed around storm and sanitary sewers during storms, the Town flooding into the City, and getting other municipalities involved. Mayor Valentino thanked the task force for their time and effort, keying in on mapping and digitizing, using modeling to identify areas to address. Bryson Cochron shared that would help prioritize what needs to be done right away, then the City could work from the bottom up on solutions, once emergent items are addressed. Discussion followed. The three task force committees will reconvene to generate priorities and bring them back to Council.

4. <u>DISCUSSION – Committee Structure</u>

Councilor Lavin opened the discussion by voicing concerns about best practices and how he believes council deviates. He explained that with committees there would be more meetings, but monthly meetings won't be five-to-six-hour slug fests. He lamented getting the agenda packet only a few days before council meetings, the need to raise issues and fully vet them, not having access to information to make decisions, and suggested that around $1 million was lost under the former cash handler noting that he still wants to know who's responsible and how to keep it from happening again. Councilor Lavin then reiterated that agenda items need to be vetted by committee before coming to the full council to avoid four-hour meetings, recommending two councilmembers plus the mayor on each committee.

Councilor Pealer called a point of order, as Councilor Lavin continues to bring up committees with no support, and called on the mayor to wrap up the discussion. Councilor Lavin interjected noting that for too long the town has been using the City's assets to make it harder to create housing in the city. Mayor Valentino noted that Councilor Lavin was not bringing facts forward. He explained that the water and sewer agreements with the Town stand after expiration, and that they have not exceeded the capacity allowed by the agreement. He explained further that the city will come to a decision regarding the next agreement with facts, which will be available once the Headworks study is completed. Mayor Valentino explained that the study will help understand further impacts of development, and aid in intelligent decision making with data to back it up. After some discussion, Councilor Pealer stated his disagreement with committee structure, and disappointment in having the same discussion again. He then raised concerns about a deficit in information, and suggested restructured agendas with associated staff reports including more history and opinion. He went on to explain that he doesn't see this as a committee problem, rather an information problem, asking that staff provide more support to council's decision making. City Manager Hendrix shared that staff are required to provide briefings for agenda items, and attend if they have an item on the agenda, and looked for confirmation that Councilor Pealer is looking for an expanded briefing. Councilor Brennan shared his thoughts on council asking for more information, while denying the City Manager something she asked for to provide that additional communication piece. He then explained that he doesn't have any problem with committees, noting that they're free and easy to do. Councilor Petropoulos shared that he feels that the Community Engagement Coordinator is different, and voiced support for short term ad-hoc committees without charter changes provided that they're fair and impartial and include only staff and council, not outside non-elected people affecting city decision making. Councilor Lavin then suggested that it takes 4, 6, 8, 10 weeks to get an ad-hoc committee together, and made reference to County standing committee structure, and Planning and Zoning Boards not being elected, and in a position of decision making, suggesting that the city's process is opaque, slow, and it takes years to do anything. Councilor Pealer stated that he disagreed with Councilor Lavin's patently false statements, noting that council has been efficient in decision making, and encouraging Councilor Lavin to get on board with the rest of council. Mayor Valentino reminded council to focus on discussing committee structure. Councilor Petropoulos explained the 21-member County Board of Supervisors legislative body, where each supervisor sits on two committees, noting that he doesn't think Geneva's City Council has enough members to pivot to this type of structure. He also noted that for all the years Geneva has been a city, council has been efficient.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Pealer
MOVED THAT council move to executive session at 7:34pm to discuss negotiations pursuant to article fourteen of the civil service law
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (8-1 absent)

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Petropoulos; seconded by Clr. Brennan
MOVED THAT council exit to executive session at 8:14pm
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (8-1 absent)

6. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Pealer; seconded by Clr. Moracco
MOVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 8:15pm
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (8-1 absent)

Nicole Tillotson
City Clerk