

representative, and charter review will be discussed in the social studies classes.

Denise Polit said she recently made a presentation before the Saratoga Springs Democratic Committee which went well. She said one of their concerns was public education and they wondered whether the Commission could have done a better job of educating the public at the beginning of this process. She said they believe the many residents do not fully understand what the commission form of government is all about. She said there was also some concerns expressed on term limits (a few opposed) and whether the Commission would simply take the results of the survey and go with those results. She said Commissioner Bernard Mirling expressed his concerns on the selection process for deputy commissioners in that he was unhappy in his case. She said there was some support for a deputy mayor. She said, though, the biggest issue was educating the public.

Mark Lawton asked if the talking points were officially adopted. Commission members said they were currently using the talking points and felt it was not necessary to formally adopt them.

Elio Del-Sette asked how one might be appointed to make a presentation to organization. Margie VanMeter said she hoped that Commission members would search out organization throughout the community, perhaps one that they sit on and then coordinate through her.

Harvey Fox said he and Chris Whann would make a presentation before the Council on March 20 on the Commission's progress to date.

DRAFTING COMMITTEE

Chris Whann said the drafting committee had not met because of the weather and asked drafting committee members to meet with him after tonight's meeting to schedule a date.

INTERVIEWS

City Engineer B Paul Male

Paul Male distributed a packet of information to Commission members from the Engineering Department on their functions. He said Clyde Robinson, Assistant City Engineer, was present this evening if the Commission felt they needed historical data on the Engineering Department. Paul Male specifically pointed out the letter written by John Hay, former City Engineer, in 1972.

Paul Male said located in the Engineering Department is the Planning Department, Building Inspector's Department and the Office of Community Development. He said with the relocation of the Building Inspector's Department from the third floor to this office it has become somewhat less cumbersome for applicants. He said generally speaking, there is usually one common element in an application that makes it overlap among these departments. He said it is a great help to have all in one place.

Paul Male said Mike Biffer, Stan Borden and he were all certified building inspectors, therefore, both he and Stan could assist Mike Biffer. He said Stan Borden is also the rehabilitation specialist for the

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Community Development Office and provides all of their building inspections. He said Stan Borden is also the lead-based paint specialist. He said Community Development used to pay for services such as inspections through an outside contractor, however, the Engineering Department now offers this service to Community Development free of charge. He noted Engineering provides other services such as review of plans for the Planning Department; mapping services for Planning; traffic safety issues to DPS; and assistance to DPW in many areas (infrastructure, survey, etc.) He said Engineering is a full service department that offers a variety of services to the entire City as well as to the general public. He pointed out that they work closely with many departments on projects such as the VanRaalte Mill and the Universal Baptist Church. He said they are currently working on a GPS mapping system that will be downloaded to the GIS system which will give the City a good inventory of infrastructure. He said while locating these lines, they also identify street signs, traffic signals, etc. for DPS.

Harvey Fox asked about the coordination between departments. Paul Male said generally requests come through the Deputy Commissioners, however, in some cases such as the traffic signal program he works directly with Mark Benequista, although Deputy Commissioner Bob King is kept informed. He said in some cases his department takes the lead on issues, i.e., they are currently working on plans for the Grande Industrial Park infrastructure project. Harvey Fox asked about reporting to the Mayor. Paul Male said they have regularly scheduled weekly staff meetings with the Mayor.

Lew Benton asked if Paul Male was the direct supervisor of the Building Inspector. He also asked if there was some written protocol on that transfer of the Building Inspector. Paul Male said it was his understanding that there was an appointed committee who made recommendations to the Council on the Building Inspector issue. Harvey Fox reminded Commission members that these individuals were not brought here this evening to discuss their opinions but rather to discuss their duties and relationships with other offices.

Elio Del-Sette asked which department outside of the Mayor's Office is does the Engineering Department have the greatest dealings. Paul Male said DPW. Elio Del-Sette asked that when it came to setting priorities, were there contradictions between the Mayor's Office and DPW and who would make the final decision. He asked what was the relationship was between Engineering and the Director of Public Works and whether it is efficient and effective. Paul Male said the relationship is effective and accountable, although if there is a problem he would simply go downstairs to DPW to resolve the issue. Paul Male said prioritization of projects would be a great help to his department. He said, though, that such issues as weather, funding, City's priorities, etc., change so frequently that it is difficult for that prioritization to occur. He said many times his department devotes many hours to a project only to determine later that the priority or funding has changed. Elio Del-Sette asked Paul Male if he participated in the capital budget development and whether he worked with DPW on setting the priorities. He said it seemed as though there was a lack of bridging between departments. Elio Del-Sette asked if Paul Male thought his department should be a separate entity. Paul Male said his office operates somewhat like the City Attorney's office in that they provide services to all departments. Elio Del-Sette asked how Commissioners find out what is going on with the Engineering Department. Paul

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Male said he makes presentations before the Council.

Paul Male said in some cases there are difficulties in fulfilling requests because of the size of his staff. He pointed out that in comparison to DPW, his staff is quite small; therefore, sometimes it is difficult to react as quickly as other departments wished.

Elio Del-Sette asked what recommendations Paul Male could make to improve his department. Paul Male said an established list of priorities/projects for the City would help greatly.

Denise Polit said one time there were many unhappy developers throughout the City because of the time delays. Paul Male said moving the Building Inspector's office to the Engineering Department has helped that issue tremendously. He said in many cases developers create their own unhappiness by submitting incomplete documents. He said incomplete documents clearly delays a project. However, he noted that he has worked in many cities throughout this region and by far, this Planning Board moves projects along much more quickly than others.

Elio Del-Sette asked what would be Paul Male's recommendation on be on changing this form of government. Paul Male said his department has a job to do and they do the best then can with what is available to them.

Harvey Fox again noted that these individuals were not here this evening to be asked their opinion but rather to learn more about their duties and responsibilities.

Mark Lawton asked if the consolidation of the offices has lead to improvements and whether there were any other consolidations or improvements that could be made. He asked if better definitions, providing better direction in the charter would be helpful. Paul Male said it is not easy sometimes to work with five departments, for various reasons, but they do so.

Margie VanMeter asked about the relationship with the code enforcer. Paul Male said he has little dealings with the code enforcer and perhaps that question should be directed to Mike Biffer, Building Inspector. Margie VanMeter asked if code enforcement should be included in the Engineering Department. Paul Male said there is some overlap.

Paul Male said perhaps the consolidation of files throughout the departments would be helpful. Mark Lawton asked if it might be possible to have a "universal" application. Paul Male said at times it is confusing with the amount of applications that must be completed by applicants. Paul Male said there are daily meetings in his department among the offices to discuss mutual projects.

Elio Del-Sette asked if there was sufficient personnel in the Engineering Department. Paul male said at this time they are in good shape. He said if they do decided to go with a full GIS system, perhaps

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they would require a full time person to staff that program. He said it also might be helpful to have a full time person to simply deal with the people coming into the office.

Harvey Fox thanked Paul Male for his presentation.

City Planner B Geoff Bornemann

Geoff Bornemann informed Commission members that there was a two-page document in the handout distributed this evening concerning his department and the services offered.

Margie VanMeter asked about application fees including recreations fees. Geoff Bornemann said approximately \$26,000 was received last year for application fees, \$14,000 for staff review fees and \$40,000 for recreation fees. He said the City also obtains grants.

Lew Benton said he viewed the Planning Department as an independent entity. He said the Commission has tentatively concluded that they want to strengthen the capital program process with the establishment of a committee which would include the city planner, city engineer, representatives from DPS and DPW, etc. He asked what were Geoff Bornemann's thoughts on that issue. Geoff Bornemann said the capital budget process could use some improvement and agreed that departments need to work on long range needs. He said there needs to be analyzation of those needs and criteria establish to set priorities. He said the capital budget has been prepared in a variety of ways over the years. He said if this form of government is to be maintained it would be a good to have an interdepartmental approach. Lew Benton asked how the Planning Department is structured in other cities. Geoff Bornemann said he noted that information in his information submitted to the Commission, however, it is structured in many different ways.

Margie VanMeter asked about Geoff Bornemann's involvement with the Special Assessment Districts. Geoff Bornemann said there is some initial involvement in assisting in organization, however, his services are quite limited and at the present time he offers no direct service.

Denise Polit asked about the grant process. Geoff Bornemann said one of the key areas is the transportation field. He said the City is a member of the CDTA committees and he in particular sits on the planning committee. He said through that network, grants are identified. He pointed out that the City has done quite well over the years in obtaining grants (South Broadway, West Avenue, 21 traffic signals, downtown pedestrian improvement, Route 50, bikeway enhancement, etc.). He said the City aggressively pursues those grants. He said just recently the City was awarded a grant on historic preservation planning.

Mark Lawton asked if there is any established mechanism to search out grants. Geoff Bornemann said the City is on several mailing lists, obtains newsletters, and has a well-established network. He pointed

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out that the City is also turned down on many grant applications.

Chris Whann asked what percentage of Geoff Bornemann's time was devoted to grant applications. Geoff Bornemann said that about 60 percent is devoted to planning, 20 percent to the Design Review commission, 10 percent on other activities and probably less than 5 percent on grants.

Harvey Fox thanked Geoff Bornemann for his presentation.

Building Inspector B Mike Biffer

Mike Biffer said also included in the previously submitted packet was information on his department. He said typically his department takes in applications for permits; reviews for conformance to City, state, zoning and building codes; review insurance information and eventually issue permits.

Harvey Fox asked which departments/issues does Mike Biffer have the most involvement. Mike Biffer said both the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Design Review Commission take up a fairly concentrated short period of time when nearing their deadlines. He said typically that might be between two and three days per month. He said he does not review Planning Board applications. Harvey Fox asked about site inspections. Mike Biffer said they do between 10 to 12 site inspections daily and more during the summer months. He explained that typically a newly constructed residence would receive five or six inspections if everything went well and more if not. He then reviewed the necessary inspections for new construction with Commission members.

Margie VanMeter asked about fire and health inspections. Mike Biffer said the City's fire department handles the fire inspections and the Department of Health handles the health inspections.

Elio Del-Sette asked if the Building Department has become more effective by moving to the Engineering Department. Mike Biffer said they have made great strides by hiring additional inspectors and having the additional clerical support at the counter. He said it is also helpful that there are simply more knowledgeable people available in the office to answer applicant's questions.

Denise Polit asked about the relationship with the code enforcement department. Mike Biffer said there is some overlapping with that department with properties such as the VanRaalte Mill. Denise Polit asked if it would be easier to have the code enforcement office located in the building department. Mike Biffer said at one time, the code enforcement officer was the housing inspector who was an assistant to Mike Biffer. He said since Kevin Veitch was hired, it was changed to a code enforcement officer. He said there is a duplication of files and in some cases it would be easier if there was one file. He said in some cases it would be better to have that office as part of the building department.

Lew Benton asked who could issue an appearance ticket. Tony Izzo said the Building Inspector and the Fire Inspector may issue appearance tickets. Chris Whann asked about fines. Mike Biffer said that is

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described in the City's ordinance and in the State Uniform Building Codes. Lew Benton asked if there would be some merit with the integration of code enforcement and building departments. Mike Biffer said there is duplication of some files which leads to a lack of information in the files of the individual departments.

Harvey Fox thanked Mike Biffer for his presentation.

Community Development Director B Brad Birge

Brad Birge said he too included information in the packets previously distributed to the Commission. He explained that his office is slightly different than the others in that his office is federally funded. He said his department was developed in 1975 when the City began applying for the small cities grants. He said since 1994, because of the 1990 census figures, the City is now qualified for entitlement funding. He said generally the City obtains between \$450,000 to \$500,000 yearly. He said a committee is formed and reviews requests for those funds, the committee then makes its recommendation to the Council and the Council then adopts those recommendations. He said programs such as Catholic Charities Mentoring, infrastructure improvements, rehabilitation grants and loans, etc. are types of requests for funding.

Harvey Fox clarified that the City's entitlement funding is automatic. Brad Birge said yes. He said it has been decreasing slightly over the years, but is still a substantial amount. He explained that his office is charged with administration, monitoring and reporting to the federal government on those funds. Brad Birge said there is also a revolving loan program that they maintain.

Brad Birge said he also serves in other capacities such as the ZBA staff representative, provides services to a variety of other committees, and serves as the City's WEB site coordinator.

Denise Polit asked how Brad Birge became the WEB site coordinator. Brad Birge said it was because he acquired the skills. He noted though that the City now has a technology expert. Denise Polit asked about a more effective way to disseminate information to the public. Brad Birge said it could be improved and there are many opportunities to move in that direction.

Chris Whann asked to what does Brad Birge devotes his time. Brad Birge said approximately 70 percent to Community Development, 20 percent to Zoning Board of Appeals and 10 percent to other projects.

Harvey Fox asked who pays his salaries. Brad Birge said the majority is paid by the Community Development budget.

Denise Polit asked about grant writing. Brad Birge said they continually look at other sources of

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funding and work with other departments on that issue. He said though the Accounts Department has an individual who assists in writing and obtaining grants.

Chris Whann asked about the consolidated plan committee and what was his position in that committee. Brad Birge said he simply facilitates that committee.

Brad Birge pointed out that his department uses the services of Stan Borden, Engineering Department, on a regular basis. He said that service is provided free of charge to his department. He said Stan devotes quite a bit of time to housing inspections and prioritization of the applicants' needs. He said this is a rather large service that is provided to his office by the Engineering department.

Elio Del-Sette asked if there was the possibility that the entitlement funding would disappear. Brad Birge said it was always a possibility but because it is such a popular and politically motivated program it was unlikely.

Denise asked how the committee which makes the recommendations to the Council on the funding is appointed. Brad Birge said the appointments are made by the Mayor with the consultation of Commission members. He said there are 15 members with two year term limits.

Elio Del-Sette asked to whom did Brad Birge directly report. Brad Birge said his department was placed under the Mayor in 1975 and he reports directly to the Mayor.

Harvey Fox thanked Brad Birge for his presentation.

Harvey Fox noted that there was an additional letter in the packet from Clyde Robinson, Assistant City Engineer and asked that Commission members review that letter. Elio Del-Sette asked that Tony Izzo do some research on the State Education Law and the local law as noted in Clyde Robinson's letter. Tony Izzo said he would do so.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Harvey Fox moved and Chris Whann seconded to approve the February 26, 2001, meeting minutes as presented. Ayes all.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Act as Mayor: Elio Del-Sette moved and Chris Whann seconded to retain this function in the Finance Department and refer it to the drafting committee for the appropriate language.

Maintain complete employee history: Elio Del-Sette moved and Denise Polit seconded to provide for

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a Human Resources Department in the Finance Department.

Mark Lawton said he believed it was premature to place this function under the Finance Department. He said perhaps it should be on its own. He said the Commission is in a position to possibly create new council members or a separate central administration function. He said if there is a full time Mayor that also needs to be considered.

Elio Del-Sette said perhaps there are other offices in City Hall that should also be separate. Harvey Fox questioned whether offices such as these should report to the Council or the Mayor. Mark Lawton said we need to know how many of these types of functions there are first. Chris Whann asked what was Mark Lawton's vision of a Human Resources Department. Denise Polit read from the November 20 meeting minutes in which the Human Resources Department was defined. Elio Del-Sette pointed out that some of the proposed functions for the Human Resources department are already part of the Finance Department.

Harvey Fox polled Board members on where the Human Resources Department should be placed as follows: Elio Del-Sette, Finance; Chris Whann, report to the Council; Lew Benton, Finance; Denise Polit, with a full time Mayor; Margie VanMeter, reporting to the Mayor or the Council; Rita Balmuth, not sure; Mark Lawton, report to the Council or the Mayor; Lee Nelson, a decentralized interdepartmental service reporting to a full time mayor, servicing the entire Council; Mia Mouzon, not sure; Harvey Fox review it in the same context as the City Attorney and City Engineer's offices, reporting to one (probably a full time Mayor).

Denise Polit questioned who would monitor these types of departments if they were to report to the Council. Elio Del-Sette said the question of cost would also come up. Mark Lawton said he was thinking in terms committees monitoring the independent offices. Denise Polit said there was consensus that the City Attorney would be under the Mayor but serve the Council as a whole.

Elio Del-Sette said that Tony Izzo's research in connection with Clyde Robinson's letter might help.

Margie VanMeter moved and Rita Balmuth seconded to table this motion until the next meeting. Ayes all.

Keep City Books: Commission members agreed this needed some clarification. Mark Lawton said there is a problem in that the Finance Department collects, disburses and audits revenues. He said it is unusual to have it all done in one office. He said the person disbursing the revenues should not be the person collecting the revenues. It was pointed out that the accounts payable function is handled in the Accounts Department.

It was agreed that at the next meeting Mark Lawton would give a breakdown of his recommendations

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for the Finance Department. Lee Nelson said she would also like to see a draft of Mark Lawton's diagram.

ADJOURNMENT

Denise Polit moved and Margie Van Meter seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 p.m. Ayes all. There being no further business, Harvey Fox adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Moran
Clerk

Approved: