

Mayor Nelson called the meeting to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll:

PRESENT: Mayor Nelson, Councillors Hannan,
Powers, Sholette and Vaugh

ABSENT: Councillors Flynn and Morley

Mayor Nelson stated that Councillor Morley was excused.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. A public hearing with the purpose of obtaining public input into the ongoing Community Development Program was held. No one being present to speak, the hearing was declared closed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Nelson moved that the claims as enumerated in Warrant #04-2008 in the amount of \$496,028.13, and Library Warrant #04-2008 in the amount of \$26,510.29 and Community Development Fund Warrant #04-2008 in the amount of \$58,027.25 and Capital Fund Warrant #04-2008 in the amount of \$252,581.95 as audited, be and the same are ordered paid and Councilor Vaugh seconded the motion.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

1. Mr. Sam Burns, a St. Lawrence County Legislator, appeared before Council regarding sales tax. Mr. Burns said he had met with City Manager Arthur Sciorra and City Comptroller Philip Cosmo about the County Remediation Fund, which he believed would be a loan to the City to cleanup contaminated waterfront property and would be paid back after the cleanup and sale of the remediated property. Mr. Burns stated that all three Ogdensburg representatives believed this to be true and were recently advised this information was incorrect. Mr. Burns added that the three Ogdensburg representatives are trying to convince the other twelve legislators that Ogdensburg is part of St. Lawrence County and deserves a portion of the Environmental Fund (\$125,000). Mr. Burns stated he will continue to argue the City's needs, but is unsure whether this amount will have to be reimbursed or not.

Mayor Nelson thanked Mr. Burns and stated he appreciates his effort.

2. Mr. Sam Burns also stated that the County unanimously passed a resolution supporting the use of the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center for Fort Drum wounded veterans and their families, and requested Council also pass a resolution of support. Mr. Burns said reports show soldiers at Fort Drum are having difficulty receiving care on site, and added that the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center has a rich history helping the mentally ill.

ITEMS FOR COUNCIL ACTION

1. Mayor Nelson moved a resolution calling for a public hearing and public notice regarding an Ordinance to name a City street, and Councillor Vaughn seconded to wit:

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF OGDENSBURG
TO PROVIDE FOR PUBLIC NOTICE AND PUBLIC HEARING

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WHEREAS, the City desires to name an unnamed City Street and to amend the official map of the City of Ogdensburg; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council shall hold a public hearing in the matter of this amendment to the Official City Map to be held in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, Ogdensburg, New York, on the 10th day of March, 2008, at 7:00 p.m., and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk give notice of such public hearing by publication in the newspaper so designated for public and legal notices at least seven (7) days before the hearing date setting forth the time and place of the hearing.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

2. Councillor Sholette moved a resolution to rescind emergency Empire Zone Regulations and Councillor Hannan seconded to wit:

RESOLUTION TO RESCIND EMERGENCY EMPIRE ZONE REGULATIONS

WHEREAS, Empire State Development implemented regulations guiding the certification of businesses wishing to participate in the New York State Empire Zone Program by establishing, among other regulations, a reasonable cost/benefit threshold equal to \$15.00 of investment and wages for every dollar of tax relief provided through the Empire Zone Program; and

WHEREAS, local Empire Zone Administrative Boards were able to secure certification for companies wishing to participate in the program that did not meet the 14:1 ratio by applying “non-quantifiable” measures by which Empire State Development and other state agencies might evaluate benefits to the community’s revitalization goals thereby providing a path for certification; and

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WHEREAS, Empire State Development has, without soliciting comments from the public or from local Zone Administrative Boards, launched emergency regulations increasing the cost/benefit ratio to 10:1 with a minimum cost/benefit ratio of 5:1 before non-quantifiable measures may be applied and has developed a set of state-wide non-quantifiable measures and implemented these without soliciting input from the public or from Zone Administrative Boards; and

WHEREAS, these changes will make it increasingly difficult for the Empire Zone Program to effectively meet the economic development needs of rural communities in upstate New York thereby creating an urban bias, rendering it more difficult for rural communities to spur new investment and job creation activities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ogdensburg City Council hereby calls on the Governor to rescind the emergency regulations that became effective on January 16, 2008, and return to the zone certification regulations implemented in 2005; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Governor, acting through the Commissioner for Upstate Economic Development, convene a series of regional meetings with Empire Zone Administrative Boards to learn about the economic development needs of various regions of the state and to discuss how the Empire Zone Program, either in its current or a modified form, may help to meet the economic development needs of the 82 participating communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Eliot Spitzer, Daniel Gundersen, New York State Senators Joseph Griffo, Darrel Aubertine and Betty Little, and New York State Assembly Members Dierdre Scozzafava and Theresa Sayward.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

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3. Councillor Vaugh moved a resolution to restore administrative funding and Councillor Powers seconded to wit:

RESOLUTION TO RESTORE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING

WHEREAS, the New York Empire Zones rely upon grant funding from Empire State Development to administer the Empire Zone Program at the local level; and

WHEREAS, the local zones provide cash as match for administrative grant funding from Empire State Development during the current contract term (2007-2008); and

WHEREAS, local and state funds provide the resources necessary to serve the local Empire Zone's certified businesses as well as Regionally Significant Projects; and

WHEREAS, Governor Spitzer has eliminated grant funding for the administration of the Empire Zones program by the state's 82 zone communities from his proposed 2008-2009 state budget;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ogdensburg City Council urges the New York State Legislature to restore and increase funding for the Empire Zone Program so that each empire zone community receives an allocation of \$50,000 for program administration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State Legislature also provide additional grant funds for Empire Zone communities that are outstanding performers in the creation and retention of manufacturing, emerging technologies and agri-business industries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Eliot Spitzer, New York State Senators Joseph Griffo, Darrel Aubertine and Betty Little and New York State Assembly Members Dierdre Scozzafava and Theresa Sayward.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

4. Councillor Powers moved a resolution authorizing the City Manager to authorize an application for administrative funding for the Ogdensburg Empire Zone Program and Councillor Vaughn seconded to wit:

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO AUTHORIZE AN
APPLICATION FOR ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING
FOR THE OGDENSBURG EMPIRE ZONE PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the City of Ogdensburg is a New York State designated Empire Zone – a program which offers business incentives to new or expanding businesses that invest in the Zone and create new jobs for area residents; and

WHEREAS, the State has authorized an administrative funding grant for the Ogdensburg Empire Zone in the amount of \$28,500, reduced from (\$42,800) last year due to the expansion of the Empire Zones program to include 12 new Empire Zones; and

WHEREAS, the State has required that the grant be matched equally, the City of Ogdensburg's share being \$28,500.; and

WHEREAS, the State has advised that at least 50% of the local share be in cash;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the City Council hereby commits \$14,250 in cash and \$14,250 in in-kind services to match the State's administrative funding of \$28,500 for the 2007-2008 Empire Zone Program year; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the local matching funds in the amount of \$28,500, as noted in the attached budget, are hereby authorized and committed.

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The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

OLD BUSINESS

1. Mayor Nelson stated that Councillor Flynn wanted to send a letter to our elected officials regarding the Veteran's Tuition Coverage at the last Council meeting, but Council requested more information, which Councillor Flynn made available. Mayor Nelson handed out a letter he drafted that will be sent to Tim McClain, Senator Aubertine and Governor Spitzer if there's a consensus of Council. There was a consensus of Council to send a letter of support for the Veteran's Tuition Coverage bill.

2. Councillor Hannan stated Mr. Sciorra said that he was planning a meeting of the Executive Compensation Committee and asked if there have been any dates set. City Manager Arthur Sciorra stated that Councillor Morley is a member of the Executive Compensation Committee and is in the hospital, and a date will be set as soon as he is out. Mr. Sciorra added that there are new ICMA salary surveys available and he is still receiving them.

Councillor Hannan asked Mr. Sciorra if he has received any feedback from the department heads. Mr. Sciorra stated he has met with the department heads and has a counter proposal ready for Council from them.

3. Councillor Hannan asked Mr. Sciorra for an update on the development of a City services survey and employee survey. Mr. Sciorra stated he is still gathering survey information.

4. City Manager Arthur Sciorra presented Council with updated Visitor's Center landscaping and waterfront revision plans. Mr. Sciorra said that he would like a consensus of Council to move the landscaping concept forward with Saratoga Associates.

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Mayor Nelson stated this updated plan incorporates all of the Council's suggestions.

Mr. Sciorra stated he will speak with Kit Smith and Rick Polniak to implement a crosswalk from the mall parking lot. Mr. Sciorra stated a recent review of funds for this project showed that there is sufficient funding for the landscaping, and no new funds are needed.

After discussion amongst Council, there was a consensus of Council to contact Saratoga Associates and move forward with this landscaping concept.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Councillor Sholette stated that he prepared a resolution supporting the use of the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center for Fort Drum wounded veterans and their families, which County Legislator Sam Burns spoke of earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Sholette moved a resolution to support the use of the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center for Fort Drum wounded veterans, and Councillor Hannan seconded to wit:

RESOLUTION URGING SUPPORT FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO UTILIZE THE ST. LAWRENCE PSYCHIATRIC CENTER TO CARE FOR FORT DRUM TROOPS AND THEIR FAMILIES

WHEREAS, the four tours in Iraq served by the Second Brigade at Fort Drum have created an unusual level of stress, and

WHEREAS, the draft report "Fort Drum: A Great Burden, Inadequate Assistance", done by Veterans for America, a non-profit advocacy organization for wounded members of armed forces describes problems with understaffing, a reliance on questionnaires to identify soldiers in need of treatment and the heavy reliance on units that have seen high-intensity combat, extended deployments and inadequate time between deployments that has caused large cases of post-traumatic stress disorder, and

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WHEREAS, the Commander of the 10th Mountain Division has acknowledged the shortcomings of the mental health care on base and has spoken passionately about the need for soldiers to seek psychological treatment, and

WHEREAS, the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center in Ogdensburg is one hour or less away from Fort Drum and has an excellent record of serving individuals with mental health needs, and

WHEREAS, a dialogue needs to be opened between the Department of Defense and the New York State Office of Mental Health, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Ogdensburg City Council urges our elected officials on the federal and state level to work on developing a plan where DOD troops and family members from Fort Drum utilize the services offered by the NYS OMH staff at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center at Ogdensburg, and

BE IT FURHTER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to New York State Governor Spitzer, U.S. Senators Clinton, Schumer; Congressman McHugh, New York State Assembly Member Scozzafava, New York State Senator Members Griffo and Aubertine.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

Councillor Vaugh questioned the waterfront master plan at the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center and what those plans involve. City Manager Arthur Sciorra explained that this resolution is for the use of the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center's operating facilities, not the waterfront.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Kathryn Bateman, City Assessor, addressed Council regarding raising the ceiling levels for the Alternative Veteran's Exemption. Mrs. Bateman explained the program to the Council. Mrs. Bateman stated that she would like to see uniformity with the City and all the towns and villages.

Mayor Nelson stated that this amendment is overdue and moved to call for a public hearing, and Councillor Vaugh seconded the motion.

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OGDENSBURG
TO INTRODUCE A LOCAL LAW AND TO PROVIDE FOR PUBLIC NOTICE
AND PUBLIC HEARING

BE IT RESOLVED, that a public hearing shall be held by the Ogdensburg City Council to raise the wartime, combat and disabled alternate veteran ceilings in the City of Ogdensburg, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said public hearing is to be held on March 10, 2008, at 7:00 pm in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Clerk give notice of such public hearing by publication, in the newspaper so designated for the publication of legal notices, at least seven days before the hearing date, of a notice setting forth the time and place and describing the proposed Local Law in summary form.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

2. Kathryn Bateman, City Assessor, addressed Council regarding the Cold War Veteran's exemption. Mrs. Bateman explained the program to the Council. Mrs. Bateman urged Council to raise the exemption up to the same level as the County.

Mayor Nelson moved for a public hearing, and Councillor Vaugh seconded the motion.

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OGDENSBURG
TO INTRODUCE A LOCAL LAW AND TO PROVIDE FOR
PUBLIC NOTICE AND PUBLIC HEARING

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BE IT RESOLVED, that a public hearing shall be held by the Ogdensburg City Council on establishing a property tax exemption for Cold War veterans owning qualifying real property within the City of Ogdensburg; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said public hearing is to be held on March 10, 2008, at 7:00 pm in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Clerk give notice of such public hearing by publication, in the newspaper so designated for the publication of legal notices, at least seven days before the hearing date, of a notice setting forth the time and place and describing the proposed Local Law in summary form.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

3. Kathryn Bateman, City Assessor, addressed Council regarding the low Income Senior Aged Exemption. Mrs. Bateman explained this exemption and said she would like to see this exemption raised to \$18,000 which is the same rate as the rest of the county. Mayor Nelson asked when this exemption was last amended and Mrs. Bateman said in 1981. Mrs. Bateman also stated that this will only effect thirty-four people. Councillor Hannan asked if this exemption was on a sliding scale. Mrs. Bateman stated that the county has sliding scales, but would like to see our exemption established at a permanent amount of \$18,000. Mayor Nelson stated he has received e-mails to raise this exemption and would like Council to consider the \$18,000 maximum as well. Mayor Nelson moved to call for a public hearing, and Councillor Vaughn seconded the motion.

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OGDENSBURG
TO INTRODUCE A LOCAL LAW AND TO PROVIDE FOR
PUBLIC NOTICE AND PUBLIC HEARING

BE IT RESOLVED, that a public hearing be held by the Ogdensburg City Council on increasing the low income, senior tax exemption in the City of Ogdensburg, said public hearing to be held on March 10, 2008, at 7:00 pm in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, and

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AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Clerk is directed to publish notice of said hearing give notice of such public hearing newspaper so designated for the purposes of public and legal notices in the City of Ogdensburg, at least seven days before the hearing date, which notice shall set forth the date, time and place of said hearing and which notice describe the proposed Local Law in summary form.

The vote was:

CARRIED, AYES ALL

4. Mayor Nelson stated he received a letter from Claude Sykes, Supervisor of the Town of Van Buren, regarding a pedestrian bridge that is no longer being used by the City of Ogdensburg. Mayor Nelson added that the Town of Van Buren has a bridge which is beyond repair and is requesting if an intermunicipal transfer of the pedestrian bridge is possible. Kit Smith, Director of Department of Public Works, stated that this pedestrian bridge is the old Oswegatchie Dam bridge. Mayor Nelson stated he will turn this request over to staff for discussion.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.