

**Niagara City Council Meeting  
April 20, 2009**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Stern. Present: Mayor Stern, Aldermen Kuchinski, Lantagne, Steeno, Moreau and Brown. Absent: Alderman Towns. Also present: Administrator Novak, Director of Public Works Payette, Police Chief Karl Lamoreaux, Hank Murphy and Karen Klenke of the Borderland Journal, Mayor-Elect George Bousley, Alderman Elect Tim Phillips, Marvin Chamberlain, Andrea Moratti, Sherryl Weber, Representative Jeff Mursau, Steve Zigman, Tom Sielaff and Ron Lawrence.

**PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

After discussion, a motion was made by Alderman Moreau and seconded by Alderman Kuchinski to approve the Minutes of the 03-16-09 Regular Council Meeting, the 02-12-09 Finance & Administration Committee Meeting and the 03-30-09 Special Council Meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF BILLS**

A motion was made by Alderman Brown and seconded by Alderman Moreau to approve the bills as presented in the amount of \$68,706.27. Motion carried unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF STAFF REPORTS**

A motion was made by Alderman Steeno and seconded by Alderman Kuchinski to approve the staff reports as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Stern presented a plaque of recognition to Alderman Brown for his two terms as alderman and expressed appreciation on behalf of the Council for Alderman Brown's service to the community.

**OLD BUSINESS**

There is no old business to report.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Police Chief Lamoreaux provided a request to purchase two additional automatic rifles with budgeted funds. Chief Lamoreaux indicated that we currently have two rifles and the additional two rifles will provide that there will be one available for each full time officer. Chief Lamoreaux summarized the request and explained that the recent murders near the city in 2008 had brought about the need to have such weapons in the event such circumstance would occur again. A motion was then made by Alderman Steeno and seconded by Alderman Brown to approve the purchase of two additional rifles with budgeted funds. Motion carried 4 – 1 with Alderman Lantagne voting no.
2. The Council then considered a request for an Operator's License from Alexa Swanson. A motion was made by Alderman Moreau and seconded by Alderman Lantagne to approve the request for an Operator's License for Alexa Swanson. Motion carried 4 – 0 with Alderman Steeno abstaining.

3. The Council addressed a resolution regarding encouragement to buy American and use American Manufacturers regarding any expenditures of Federal Economic Recovery Grants. This resolution was requested by the United Steelworkers Union. A motion was made by Alderman Moreau and seconded by Alderman Kuchinski to approve the Resolution. Motion carried unanimously.
4. Mayor Stern then provided a farewell address, as this was his last meeting as Mayor. The Mayor then summarized the accomplishments and his desires for the community. He also noted that he hoped that the future Council would continue with the initiative to complete the ATV Trail between the County Line and City Limits south of the City. The Mayor then read his farewell address as follows:

**Mayor Stern's Farewell Address**

It hard to believe four years has passed so quickly. It seems like only yesterday I was being sworn into office, but a great deal was accomplished in what seemed a very short period. I would like for us to remember some of those accomplishments tonight and consider what will be important in the future.

The first ordinance we passed was that dealing with exterior Maintenance. It has provided the city with a tool to fight blighting and dilapidation. In that same vain we began the Mayor's Beautification Award, which I hope Mayor Bousley and the new Council will continue. We have made good progress in cleaning up the appearance of our city and stabilizing the real estate market over the past four years, however, appearance is an issue the requires the ongoing attention of City staff. I hope the new Council will build on the progress we have made in this area and not allow any backslide.

Early on in may first term we were successful in obtaining a grant for the River Street Parkway project. Many improvements have been made in conjunction with this project including the acquisition and installation of the fishing pier and construction of the earthen berm. Marinette County land and water conservation will begin the wild flower planting June. In addition to the plantings, the monument will be installed and parking improvements will be made in conjunction with the highway reconstruction. It should be noted that engineering work for dusk to dawn type lighting of the bluff has begun. The new council will have to decide if it wants to move forward with that plan. For what its worth, I am in favor of the lighting project.

One of the greatest accomplishments of my administration was convincing Wisconsin and Michigan that resurfacing the Hwy 141 Bridge would be a huge mistake and replacing it with a new bridge was the prudent course of action. I am certain that my trip to Madison to visit with Governor Doyle helped us in that regard as well as with issues concerning the paper mill, which I will discuss in further detail later.

I would like to briefly make mention of Music In the Park. I understand to during difficult financial times paying for public entertainment may be difficult to justify, but I ask you to consider the following benefits: 1) It has the potential to bring tourists and their money to the area, 2) It enhances our sense of community 3) It provides entertainment and relaxation during a tumultuous time 4) It provides a rare cultural event.

We have made several acquisitions in the interest of public health and safety. They include a defibrillator, tazers, thermo imaging camera, and other equipment for the police, fire and public works departments. Also, along the lines of public safety, was an ordinance passed defining Pit Bull Breeds as vicious and prohibiting them in the City.

While I am not convinced it was necessary, we drilled a new well and constructed a new pump house to comply with tougher EPA standards for arsenic in drinking water. I am not persuaded the new arsenic standard will produce significant health benefits. The fact that this is another unfunded mandate has also left a bitter taste in my mouth.

I have discussed a few of the accomplishments I feel were important, the truth is, our accomplishments are numerous and trying to mention each one tonight would make for a very long meeting. With that in mind, I would like on touch of the greatest challenge facing the new Council. That being the closing of the paper mill by New Page Paper and the loss of more than 300 jobs. As you know, I have been trying to walk a fine line on the subject between keeping the public informed of developments regarding a potential sale and not raising false hopes or saying anything that may compromise our efforts. What I can say is the sale of the hydroelectric facility is going to significantly increase property tax revenue beginning about a year or two from now. I expect this increase in tax revenue to be between 10 to 20 percent of our annual budget. I hope the new council will use this windfall to provide relief to residential property taxpayers and to pay down debt on the business park, the new well and pending public works projects. Additional tax revenue, does nothing to replace the jobs the have been lost. As you know, we have taken a two prong approach to job restoration/creation. First, we are doing every thing possible to facilitate the sale of the mill to another paper producing entity. It is my understanding that there is continued interest in that regard. Second, we have contracted a study to determine what other growth industries the facility could be adapted to. When this study is completed it will be released and a public meeting will be held. These are difficult times for our city, our country and indeed the world. With this in mind, I asked that you be patient with the new council and know they will do all in their power to improve a bad situation in very trying times.

Finally, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your mayor. I found it to be one of the most fulfilling and challenging experiences of my life. I know that I have served you faithfully and to the best of my ability. I like to think what we have accomplished goes beyond the physical and legal, but also encompasses the way in which we treat one another and approach conflict. I have grown tremendously over the past four years, but am more gratified by the growth of those around me. I like to think in some small part I had something to do with that. Again, thank you for this incredible experience. God bless you. God bless Niagara and God bless the United States of America.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Alderman Brown and seconded by Alderman Steeno to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.