

APPROVED MINUTES of the City Council
Budget Workshop of the City Council of the
City of Rye held on November 20, 2006 at
7:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

STEVEN OTIS, Mayor
ANDREW C. BALL
MACK CUNNINGHAM
MATTHEW FAHEY (arrived at 9:00)
DUNCAN HENNES
GEORGE PRATT (arrived at 7:35)
HOWARD G. SEITZ
Councilmen

ABSENT:

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Otis called the meeting to order and invited the Council to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Otis asked the City Clerk to call the roll; a quorum was present to conduct official city business.

3. Request of Rye Merchants Association to close a portion of Purchase Street on November 26, 2006 from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. to mark the beginning of the annual holiday shopping

City Manager Shew reported on a request from the Rye Merchants Association to hold their annual holiday shopping event during Thanksgiving weekend. The event is a good one and has been held for the past couple of years. The Association has withdrawn their request to close the street on the night before.

Councilman Hennes made a motion, seconded by Councilman Cunningham and unanimously carried, to adopt the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Council of the
City of Rye hereby approves the
request by the Rye Merchants

Association for use of City streets and to close a portion of Purchase Street on November 26, 2006 from 12:00 to 3:00 P.M.

4. Discussion of Police/Court Study Committee

City Manager Paul Shew discussed the next steps in setting up a Police/Court Study Committee. He said a report of the previous study had been distributed to the Council and was also on the web site; that Frank Culross was willing to chair the new study; and he suggests deferring the creation of the committee until after the first of the year. The Council agreed.

5. Continued Discussion of 2007 Budget

Mayor Otis said this evening's workshop would concentrate on proposals from the Fire, Recreation and Police Departments. He turned the floor over to City Manager Paul Shew who asked the Council if the 16 pages of Q&A distributed to the Council was satisfactory. Follow-up procedure was discussed. The Comptroller should receive the questions, but it is important that everything be shared with all Council Members, digitally if possible.

Fire Department. City Manager Shew reported the department is advocating the addition of one full time (FT) employee. He said this position is not in the budget, but is under consideration. Chief John Wickham presented statistics indicating that the busiest time for calls is between 8 A.M. and 9 P.M. during which time most volunteers are out of town at work. This year, there have been more calls than ever, partially because of the many power outages, but also because of false alarms (which account for over 30%). A new hire would have to go to school so there would be a time lapse and they need someone. They rely on mutual aid and cannot tap more City employees because many are already part of a neighboring fire company and cannot be hired for Rye. They have been recruiting volunteers (especially younger ones through the Explorer Program). Councilman Seitz suggested recruiting from employees in the Central Business District and beyond. The Council asked for a written case statement outlining the rationale for the request and other ideas for recruiting more volunteers.

Recreation Department. Doug French, Chairman of the Recreation Commission, described the *need for a new entrance* to the Damiano Center. He said it was needed for ADA compliance as well as a more efficient flow of traffic. It would also provide more parking, including handicapped spaces which would be more compliant than those they have (particularly important for future elections). The Mayor was concerned about the parking ruining the view out the window, but in general the Council was in favor of this addition. Recreation Supervisor William Rodriguez (Assistant Supervisor Sally Rogol was also present) presented the case for *adding an additional full-time employee* to the Recreation staff. He said there are three maintenance employees

supplemented by part time (PT) and seasonal employees, but the scope of work has increased and an extra person is necessary to help maintain the greater number of fields and monitor all the systems now incorporated in the Damiano Center. He said they can use some DPW assistance, but they have found it more efficient and productive to have their own staff who fully understands the needs of the Recreation Department. He said the same is true with the School maintenance staff, but they do share when it makes sense. He said seasonal and PT employees are not always available during peak periods and the quality of employee at \$15/hour is not always up to the demands of the job. He is suggesting the new FT employee work from 1-10 PM so he could do outside work as well as inside maintenance.

Police Department. Commissioner Connors gave an overview of several issues affecting the Police Department, citing progress and challenges.

- *Youth Issues* continue to be a major area of concentration. He cited the Viscome incident in 2001 and the Fulton Avenue incident in 2004 which brought to a head the questions of balancing enforcement and outreach with underage drinking. He cited the transformation of Purchase Street as a “hang-out” area and the continuing issues in Parking Lot #1 (mostly involving the sale of drugs). He cited achievements in moving the youth to the Village Green and the creation and publication of the Respect Manual (which will be republished with a \$5,000 grant from Assemblyman Latimer). Councilman Seitz wondered if a revised loitering law would be helpful. There are specific laws and Manager Shew said he would send information so they could read up on the subject. Councilman Pratt said he had watched the activity in Parking Lot #1 and said maybe a loitering law would help. He also suggested the matter would be a good subject for discussion between the School Board and City Council.
- *Staffing.* He said staffing is at an appropriate level but at any given time authorized staffing does not equal actual staffing because of those out on disability on field training, injured or just ill. He also said the department requires a significant “back-office” operation in addition to the street presence. He described some of the programs the department administers, including the Marine Unit (supported by State Aid and other revenue such as the mooring fees resulting in a total outlay to the city of only about \$10,000 per year); the Auxiliary Police Unit (which has already contributed over 700 hours this year for a cost of only \$10,000 per year); the D.A.R.E. program; and School Crossing Guards, including the new Milton/Apawamis initiative.
- *Statistics.* He said each community differs so it is hard to compare us to other communities, but Rye’s crime statistics are remarkably low, particularly in light of the attractiveness of the target. Larcenies from vehicles has been the biggest challenge, but this year the number is down to 7 (from 25-30). He attributes this good record to the proactive presence of the police within the community.
- *Budget.* He mentioned again the introduction of global issues (terrorism, NIMS, etc.) and the need for additional preparedness. He said local issues include deterring crime; being flexible and prepared to address conditions as they arise; youth issues; service to residents; and involvement in the community. He said his budget is frugal – they ask for what they need and try to prepare for possibilities

while budgeting for probabilities. He said he advocates dialogue with the community (such as with the Milton/Apawamis crossing guard situation) and feels it is his, and his Department's duty to bring forth recommendations and offer professional opinions. Councilman Pratt said the new initiative is good and the school needs to be part of the solution; that maybe the behavior patterns of driving to school can't be changed, but we should try. Councilman Seitz said it was time for serious consequences for bad behavior. Maybe there should be new signage or even a light. Everyone agreed it should be a cooperative venture which should be on-going now, rather than waiting until the experimental period is over next summer.

Responding to questions from the Council, Commissioner Connors confirmed that there will be a mandatory retirement in the spring of 2007 (one of the officers who had been on disability for many years) and he would hope to fill the slot with a new entry-level officer. He confirmed that Detective Kenny's slot is still open. Manager Shew said the City was reviewing all needs and it was entirely possible they would be coming to the Council with a recommendation to unfreeze the two positions. The plan would be to hire on the entry level and promote from within. In terms of technology, he said his first priority would be to upgrade the system to enable officers to do reports from their cars. He is also looking into license plate readers. He confirmed that the supply budget number is down because there is no need for big ticket items in 2007. He said there is always going to be overtime, but there is a time when OT will be at a level to justify adding the additional staff. At the moment OT is about \$300,000 per year. There are 6 officers with less than five years of service; most sergeants have more than twenty years on the force. The Commissioner is generally in favor of reducing the Boston Post Road to two lanes. The Mayor suggested we look into available grants which might contribute to not only this project, but others involving safety, health, etc. The Commissioner acknowledged he asks for a motor cycle each year, but it has yet to make the cut.

6. Next workshop

The main topic for the next workshop will be capital projects. It will take place at 7 P.M. on Monday, November 27, 2006.

7. Adjournment

As there was no further discussion on the budget, Councilman Pratt made a motion, seconded by Councilman Fahey and unanimously carried, to adjourn the budget workshop at 9.30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Morison
City Clerk