

**City Council Workshop
February 15, 2022
Council Chambers
6:30 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Beaudoin
Councilor Berlin
Councilor Desrochers
Councilor Fontneau
Councilor Gilman
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hailey
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Larochelle
Councilor Malone
Councilor Rice
Deputy Mayor Lachapelle
Mayor Callaghan

OTHERS PRESENT

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager
Terence O'Rourke, City Attorney
Carol Petruszewicz, resident
Susan Rice, resident
Mark Collopy, Planning Board Chair
Peter Potenza, resident
Sherry Beaudoin, resident
Clara Cembalisty, resident
Kelly Potenza, resident
Carolyn Stuart, resident
John Freese, MD
Kevin Monte, Frisbie EMS
Peter Nourse, Director of City Services

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Callaghan called the City Council Workshop to order at 6:30 PM. Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara took a silent roll call. All Councilors were present.

2. Public Input

Carol Petruszewicz, resident, addressed Council in regards to having a question placed on the next ballot in support of the removal of voting machines in favor of hand-counting ballots.

Susan Rice, resident, introduced herself to Council and detailed her qualifications as a potential member of the Planning Board.

Mark Collopy, resident and Planning Board Chair, introduced himself to the Council and summarized some of the issues the Planning Board has upcoming and emphasized the need for qualified members for the board.

Peter Potenza, resident, addressed Council in support of hand counting of ballots.

Sherry Beaudoin, resident, spoke in support of removing the Accuvote ballot counting machines and hand counting ballots.

Clara Cembalisty, resident, spoke in favor of adding a question on the ballot to hand count all City ballots.

Kelly Potenza, resident, addressed Council in support of adding a question on the ballot to hand count Rochester's ballots.

Carolyn Stuart, resident, spoke in regards to the hand counting of ballots as opposed to using the Accuvote machines.

3. Communications from the City Manager

City Manager Cox announced that the Department of Public Works was planning to do a feasibility study in order to explore ways to implement and fund storm water pollution initiations and they are looking for residents to volunteer to serve on this study group. He requested that interested parties contact Director of City Services Peter Nourse at 603-332-4096 and gave additional contact information, which can be found on the City website.

Councilor Rice asked if the public volunteers had to be residents who receive City sewer and water service. City Manager Cox stated that there was no such prerequisite.

4. Communications from the Mayor

4.1 Petition Regarding Programmable Voting Devices

Mayor Callaghan directed Council to City Clerk Kelly Walter's memo contained in the packet, which gave details on the Accuvote machines utilized by the City and the handling and processing of the memory cards used in said machines. Mayor Callaghan clarified that the testing of the memory cards prior to the elections is a publicly conducted test, however there are rarely if ever any observers who show up. He stated that it may alleviate concerns if residents view the process. He responded to the comment during public input that there was no evidence that the machines used in Rochester are accurate; however, there were recounts requested in two wards following the November 2021 Municipal election, and these recounts showed the machine counts were

accurate. He reiterated that there is no evidence that Rochester's machines have ever been tampered with.

4.2 Budget Retreat dates: Friday, May 6th and Saturday May 7th

Mayor Callaghan reported that this year, the Council will take part in a budget retreat over the course of two days at the new Department of Public Works facility on Chestnut Hill Road. The retreat will begin at 9:00 AM on March 6 continuing through the entire day, and will reconvene on March 7 at 9:00 AM. Mayor Callaghan clarified that this is a public meeting and the public is welcome to attend or watch the broadcast.

Councilor Rice pointed out that the dates announced for the retreat fell on Mother's Day weekend and suggested alternate dates could be considered and Council input could be obtained on when the retreat could take place. Mayor Callaghan clarified that although the budget retreat would be over two days, there would be ample opportunity for budget discussions and adjustments at workshop meetings prior to the budget adoption.

5. Presentation: Frisbie Hospital Ambulance Services

Dr. John Freese, MD, Emergency Medical Services Director at Frisbie Memorial Hospital, introduced himself and presented to Council regarding the emergency medical services that Frisbie offers. He detailed the model Frisbie uses for their ambulance service, how they are staffed, and the qualifications and advanced service provided by their ambulance staff. He summarized the advantages to the services offered by Frisbie versus alternatives.

Councilor Rice inquired how many transports the Frisbie Ambulance service completes each year. It was stated that the prior year, there were 6,996 calls of which approximately 4,000 were transported to a hospital. Councilor Rice asked what the approximately \$700,000 cost of ambulance service covers for residents within the City. Kevin Monte, Frisbie EMS, stated that this cost covers the ambulance service itself which comes with the elevated skill level and expertise of staff, as well as the mobile integrated health unit. Councilor Rice asked for further clarification regarding the specifics of what the tax dollars were funding. Dr. Freese stated that he would confer with the Frisbie CFO and get a detailed accounting of how the money is allocated. Councilor Rice asked for the average years of experience of the Frisbie paramedic staff. Dr. Freese responded that the average length of experience is 5-7 years with a few newer certified staff members.

Councilor Larochelle referenced the reluctance of some citizens to accept ambulance transport due to the high price tag and asked for an average cost if

a resident did have to be treated and transported. Dr. Freese stated that the average cost of transport is \$485 billed to insurance, if applicable. The out of pocket cost would be dependent on insurance coverage.

Councilor Hainey asked for clarification on the staffing numbers referenced in the presentation. Dr. Freese explained the data contained within the presentation and detailed staffing.

Councilor Fontneau asked if anything had changed with the ambulance service since Frisbie was purchased by HCA. Dr. Freese reported that he has noted only improvements in the quality of support, and he reported ease of getting necessary equipment and supplies since the HCA acquisition.

Councilor Fontneau asked if there was a particular reason why the call volume in Rochester is so much greater versus the number of calls in other neighboring communities. Kevin Monte, EMS, stated that the response vehicle also performs intercepts and assists other communities who do not have ambulance services. He also said that in general, Rochester just has a higher call volume.

Councilor Berlin asked if there was data available on how often EMS was at contingency staffing. Mr. Monte acknowledged that there is a national shortage of EMTs and health care workers, exacerbated by the pandemic. This can cause fluctuations in staff numbers and adjustments to be made within the department to maintain certain levels.

Councilor Desrochers referenced the "second wave" of COVID anticipated, increased call volume, along with the shortage of healthcare workers, and asked if there were any projections on how this could affect both tax payers and quality of care received. Mr. Monte stated that the department is constantly looking for qualified employees and currently, due to multiple qualified hires completing orientation, the outlook is positive for Frisbie EMS. Dr. Freese stated that due to the unique system and the way it is structured at Frisbie, they are less likely to lose employees to attrition; employees tend to remain or return because they can further their training and experience.

Councilor Desrochers referenced community services that Frisbie had offered in the past when it was a non-profit. She asked if any of these services would be continued. The community outreach initiatives being undertaken by Frisbie were discussed.

Mayor Callaghan asked if there were any plans to expand the Mobile Integrated Health Unit program in the future. It was stated that there was

interest in expanding the program and there have been discussion with HCA about doing so; however, this program is limited by staffing as well.

Councilor Rice stated, for the record, that the City of Rochester had never referred to the Frisbie Ambulance service as the “Rolls Royce” of ambulance services and that comment had come from an MRI Ambulance employee.

Councilor Rice referenced a billing model employed by a different ambulance service in which extraneous revenue garnered above and beyond the amount billed to a community were then reimbursed back to the community. He suggested looking into this option in the future. Councilor Rice also stated that the City is not compensated in any way for the assistance provided by the Rochester Fire Department when ambulance services are delayed or not available. Dr. Freese stated that the hospital would be open to looking into other options and billing models in the future.

Councilor Hainey asked for figures on how much is billed versus how much is collected. Dr. Freese reported that the billing was transferred from the ambulance service to HCA after the acquisition and, while he didn’t have those numbers readily available, they could be obtained and reported back to Council.

Councilor Rice conveyed concerns from residents that, when calling for emergency assistance, the ambulance speeds past the residence needing help. He questioned the ambulance staff’s knowledge of the City streets and their ability to navigate the area. Mr. Monte spoke about the large volume of calls that EMTs are responding to on a yearly basis and stated that, with the training and knowledge of the area these issues are few and far between. However, there could be such an issue on rare occasion regardless of the staff member’s level of knowledge.

6. Department Reports

Councilor Lachapelle referenced the notice of bid award in the Department of Public Works report for Household Hazardous Waste Day (May 21). He said the information on the DPW web page was outdated from the prior year and needed to be revised. Councilor Lachapelle also referenced a passage about the Wastewater Treatment facility, which spoke about further improvements being needed. He asked for clarification on what these improvements entailed. Peter Nourse, Director of City Services, stated that the output from the facility remains under the required levels and environmental standards; however, the levels are not where the department would like them to be. It is a matter of decreasing age of water and flushing the system.

Councilor Rice suggested that the departments add a header on all pages

of their reports indicating which department issued the report. This way, Councilors will not have to return to the main page to determine which report they are viewing.

7. Other

No discussion.

8. Adjournment

Mayor Callaghan **ADJOURNED** the City Council Workshop meeting at 8:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk