

~AD HOC REPORT~  
*Sewer & Water Connection Fees*  
*Thursday, March 22, 2007*

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Hon. Mark D. Boughton, Mayor  
Common Council Members

Chairwoman Mary Saracino called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 22, 2007, in the Caucus Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Danbury City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue. Present were Committee members Jimmy Johnson and Duane Perkins and Ex Officio member Lynn Taborsak. Also present were Corporation Counsel Laszlo L. Pinter, Assistant Finance Director Dan Garrick, Director of Public Works Antonio Iadarola, and interested citizens.

*Absent:* Probate Judge Dianne Yamin.

Chairwoman Saracino explained that the charge of the Committee was to consider the request of Councilwoman Taborsak which she read into the record: Dear President Cavo: One of the recommendations of the 10-year plan to end homelessness is to have the Common Council reduce the water and sewer connection fees to those in effect prior to July 1, 2005 for residential units meeting the state definitions of affordability. As you know, the plan contains many recommendations but this one specifically requires action by the Common Council. Therefore, I request the appointment of an Ad Hoc committee to review this recommendation and report its findings to the Common Council as a whole.

Chairwoman Saracino asked the Corporation Counsel to explain the procedure. Corporation Counsel Pinter explained that the Common Council has authority to amend the two Ordinances that relate to sewer and water connections upon recommendation by the Committee. The Water Connection Ordinance presently is Section 21-48 of the Code of Ordinances, Subsection a-1. The Sewer Connection Ordinance presently is Section 16-4 of the Code of Ordinances, Subsection b-1. After the Common Council reviews the Committee's recommendation, the matter would be sent before a Public Hearing and the proposed Ordinance would return to the Common Council for final action. Corporation Counsel Pinter pointed out that the last amendment to the Sewer and Water Ordinances occurred approximately two years ago. Chairwoman Saracino asked Corporation Counsel Pinter if the procedure he explained was the legal procedure and he said that the Common Council has jurisdiction both by Charter and through its normal powers authorized by the Statute to amend Ordinances.

Chairwoman Saracino opened the meeting up for discussion and/or questions. Councilman Johnson asked if the amendment was limited to the 10-year plan to end homelessness. Corporation Counsel Pinter understood the request to relate to affordable housing as defined in the Statutes and noted that the amendments could be crafted to fit the statutory definitions found in 8-39a. The language in the 10-year plan is in line which could be inserted into the Amended Ordinances. Councilwoman Taborsak recalled a special meeting on January 19, 2006 wherein the connection fees were amended. Corporation Counsel Pinter said that the last amendment he was aware of was based on a cover memo from the Finance Director to the Mayor and the Council in late 2005. The application of that may very well have been January 2006. Last year's budget process did not include any amendment to the sewer connection fee or the water connection fee. Mr. Iadarola pointed out that at a May 2, 2006 Common Council meeting, an amendment to the meter rates took place but not to the connection. The current Ordinances do not have the new rates listed. Councilman Perkins asked which units would be affected. Corporation Counsel Pinter explained that in order to qualify, the unit occupant would need to fall under the guidelines of affordable housing. Councilwoman Taborsak pointed out that the 10-year plan calls for the construction of 275 new units of supportive housing. Chairwoman Saracino noted that once the amendment was crafted, what falls into the definition of that Ordinance would be what it would apply to. Mr. Iadarola

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explained that currently a connection fee reduction that applies to the Central City Center Business District exists which the Common Council approved in 2006. He suggested using that as a guideline for the amendment. One complication that he noted, however, would be that six or more units are considered to not be residential units, but rather a commercial development. The amendment would not apply to commercial developments, only to residential units. He urged being cautious with the wording of the amendment. Currently, there is a \$1,500 connection fee for sanitary and a \$1,500 connection fee for water, a \$200 application for sanitary and a \$200 application fee for water—per home or per unit. Mr. Garrick agreed with Chairwoman Saracino’s suggestion of charging a percentage of the fee so that the fee could be altered in the future more easily. Again, Mr. Iadarola urged all scenarios be carefully explored as substantial revenue loss could result (noted approximately \$500,000-\$600,000). Chairwoman Saracino explained that the criteria is defined by the State Statutes as to what constitutes affordable housing and incentives are needed in order to encourage development of affordable housing while having an eye towards citywide revenue. Councilman Johnson pointed out the lack of building space in Danbury and said that needed to be taken into account when crafting the amendment. He looked to Mr. Garrick for a financial recommendation. Mr. Garrick suggested a 65% reduction would be in line with the other reduction which is one-third of the fee. Councilwoman Taborsak suggested wording the amendment so that the reduction applies to connection fees that are made to supportive housing that is called for in the Mayor’s 10-year plan. Corporation Counsel Pinter pointed out that certification was needed by an official who is familiar with the plan that the amendment followed the plan’s recommendation. Chairwoman Saracino agreed and felt that it was financially better for the City to target only those homes that fall under the requirement of the Mayor’s plan. She suggested conducting another meeting which would meanwhile afford not only Corporation Counsel Pinter time to draft an Ordinance for the Committee’s review prior to making recommendations to the Common Council but also afford the Committee time to rethink some issues that have not been brought to light at the evening’s meeting.

A motion was made by Councilman Johnson and seconded by Councilman Perkins to table the Sewer and Water Connection Fees request made by Councilwoman Taborsak in order to afford the Corporation Council time to draft an Ordinance relating to the Sewer and Water Connection Fees in accordance with the 10-year plan to end homelessness leaving the fee blank at this time.

Chairwoman Saracino asked that Corporation Counsel Pinter notify her when he has drafted an Ordinance in order that she may call another meeting.

The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Johnson and seconded by Councilman Perkins. The motion carried unanimously at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mary Saracino, Chairwoman

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Jimmy Johnson

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Duane Perkins