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Domestic Violence Resolution Presented at City Administration

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Rachel Philipson

Deb Mohlenhoff

Deb Mohlenhoff chaired the City Administration meeting where alderpersons heard about a measure regarding domestic violence.

Posted: Wednesday, January 28, 2015 6:00 am

Bill Chaisson | 0 comments

Carolyn Matos and Joanne Joseph, two third-year law students from Cornell, approached the City Administration Committee at their Wednesday, Jan. 21 meeting to ask them to pass a resolution condemning domestic violence and to take steps as a government to do something about it. Matos and Joseph have already visited Tompkins County and the Town of Ithaca governing bodies. The city committee members had not received the resolution before the meeting and so had not yet read it. They declined to vote on it last Wednesday and promised to consider it at their February meeting.

Matos told the committee that she and Joseph had drafted their resolution in the fall. She reminded them of the Thanksgiving murder of Shannon Jones. "Domestic violence affects everyone," Matos said. "1.3 million women and 835,000 men experience domestic violence, and the real number is higher than what is reported."

"This is a societal problem that requires a societal solution," said Joseph, "There is nationwide momentum to pass similar resolutions. Tompkins was the first rural

county to pass one. Albany County has also passed one." She noted that there were important educational components in the text of the resolution, including statistics. "It's always good to reevaluate policies," she said. "We have done a lot of community outreach and have 400 signatures on petition in Ithaca ... Safety is not a privilege; it is a right."

Tiffany Greco, the education director at the Advocacy Center, partnered with the students to look at "real-life" ways to address domestic violence. The Advocacy Center annually serves 800 clients who have experienced domestic violence. They had 200 new clients in 2013. "Our 24-hour hotline rings nonstop," said Greco. "We look at the many factors that affect domestic violence. A lot of our resources have been pulled away from preventing violence at the macro level. This resolution addresses societywide problem. Start of an ongoing conversation about how our city responds to this problem."

Committee chair Deb Mohlenhoff (D-5th) told Greco, Joseph, and Matos that "our community has to decide if we are comfortable with this."

"I would like to have time to read it and think about it," said Alderperson Donna Fleming (D-3rd). "We don't want to move as a resolution this evening. We need to take it seriously."

"If we were to adopt this," continued Fleming, "How might the city be held accountable for progress on these goals? What kind of follow up or guidance would we expect?"

Greco assured Fleming that her organization would collaborate with the city and make sure that were a lot of

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Around the Lake 10

The staff of the Ithaca Times and Finger Lakes Community Newspapers talk about the Ithaca graphic design community, the

people involved in the task force. She noted that the county officials also had insisted that the resolution "have teeth."

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"We wouldn't want anything in the resolution that merely expresses a sentiment," said Fleming.

• • •
City Forester Jeanne Grace sought approval of an \$11,780 grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for replacing street trees that had been made unsightly and unhealthy due to pruning by power companies. Grace said that the city wanted to replace the trees with low-growing species.

Aldersperson George McGonigal (D-1st), a landscaper by trade, asked Grace what species she had chosen.

"We have haven't picked them yet," said Grace. "It depends on the site. We will plant some crabapples, some medium height trees where the lines are higher, like horsechestnut; dwarf honey locust, and taller crabapples." She said there was also an Asian species of maple that was suitable.

Fleming asked Grace where she purchased the trees. The forester named a nursery south of Buffalo that had a good selection, particularly of native species.

McGonigal noted that in spite of this being a matching grant the city was going to receive only \$5,450, which was less than half the \$11,780 stated initially. Grace explained that the city was being reimbursed only for the cost of the trees. The state would not pay for all associated costs, but would accept the labor of city employees as a contribution toward the overall cost.

The committee gave Grace permission to accept the grant. The forester explained that they work had already been done, but it had taken the DEC some time to process the grant application.

• • •
Traffic Engineer Tim Logue requested permission to appropriate \$60,000 via serial bonds for a \$355,000 project to build new "bump out" curbs at the corners of Plain and Corn streets where they cross Seneca and Green streets. Eighty percent of cost will be paid for from federal sources.

Logue put the project out to bid late in the construction season last year and received only one high bid. This year it was posted again and the city received four bids, which were lower but all over the engineer's estimate. Logue decided that the estimate was high and accepted the lowest bid.

McGonigal asked Logue if some money could be saved by installing less elaborate landscaping. Logue said he would talk to Trowbridge and Wolf, the landscape architects on the project, and admitted that it landscaping could also be added later.

Logue was given permission to go forward.

• • •
Bridge Engineer Addisu Gebre sought permission from the City Administration Committee to allocate funds to go ahead with the design phase of a project that includes repairing many components of the infrastructure of the Cascadilla Creek channel between Tioga and Cayuga streets. This includes the Sears Street pedestrian bridge, which was declared unsafe and is closed, the railings along Cascadilla Blvd., and the retaining walls next to the creek.

After a lengthy procedural discussion about whether to approve allocation of the full amount of the project or the portion needed for the design phase, the committee approved the full amount. Final decisions in these matters are made by the full Common Council. •

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