

MINUTES

City of Geneva
Special Council Meeting
September 27, 2007
7:00 p.m.

Roll Call – Brown, Buskirk, Cordova, Ebersole, Fuller, and Piotrowski.
Latimer absent.

Citizens and representatives from the Star Beacon and Gazette were present.

Council member Crystal Latimer arrived at 7:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was said and prayer was offered by Laurie Donatone.

Citizens

Sandy Antos Jacobs – 408 Blaine Street, Geneva – Sandy Jacobs stated that she understands what it is like to sit on Council and make decisions, but she is extremely upset about the Romeo Park proposal and the decision to chip seal the City streets. Ms. Jacobs would like to see final costs, costs of insurance, and costs for funding the park long term. Ms. Jacobs feels that insurance for a pool alone would be astronomical and believes that this should be put on a ballot so that citizens can put it to a vote.

Rodger Fuller explained that the list of uses intended for the Romeo property is a future desire. There are no immediate plans in the near future to build a swimming pool and he can not give an estimate of cost for a pool that may be built 15 years down the road, if at all.

Geoff Kotzar – 7141 St. Rt. 534 – Mr. Kotzar is the President of ORCO Sportsman's Association, Inc. Mr. Kotzar distributed a statement to Council and asked that it be attached to the minutes from this meeting. Mr. Kotzar read his statement explaining the history of ORCO's property and legalities involving that property and the City of Geneva.

Paul Mikulin – 4933 North Myers Rd., Geneva – Paul Mikulin, President of the Geneva Soccer League, estimated that there are easily over 750 people at the soccer field every Saturday to include the 270 children in the league, over 75 volunteers, and parents, grandparents, friends and family. Mr. Mikulin stated that the league is in its infancy and it will only continue to grow.

Mr. Mikulin affirmed that he is in favor of Romeo Park and added that communities are built on groups like the soccer league. Mr. Mikulin feels that this park will benefit the community for many years to come and help to make it a place where people want to move, raise their children, and retire. Mr. Mikulin asked that Council continue to move forward with Romeo Park.

Crystal Latimer asked how many children in the soccer league live within the City.

Paul Mikulin estimated that half of the children are Geneva residents and the others are from the surrounding area. Mr. Mikulin added that the City is the hub of the community and having almost 800 people in Geneva for the league every Saturday has an economic impact on the City.

Jeff Piotrowski thanked Mr. Mikulin for bringing up the point of the economic impact things like this have. Mr. Piotrowski explained that the hope is as people come into the City they will be spending money within the City which will increase the tax base and more money will be in the general fund to address other issues. Mr. Piotrowski added Council is addressing drainage and planting grass for the front portion of the park to prepare soccer fields for the children at this time. Mr. Piotrowski feels that this will have an economic impact on Geneva and effect the City in a positive way.

Robert Gleason – 1744 Clay Street, Austinburg – Robert Gleason is a member of ORCO and asked if this issue went to vote, would it be a regional vote or a city issue.

Denny Brown replied that it could be a regional vote with a property tax, or it could be a city vote with a property or income tax, or it may not be necessary at all. Council is planning to operate within the funds that they have at this time.

Larry Sonstein – 30 Surry Lane, Geneva – Larry Sonstein stated that he also sat on Council and explained the history of the purchase of the Romeo property. Mr. Sonstein stated that he is fully behind recreation, but he urges Council to commission a feasibility / economic impact study and then put it to a vote of the people.

Ron Clutter – 4617 Fairway Drive, Geneva – Ron Clutter stated that he is 110% behind recreation and understands economic impact being the owner of Nordic Air and also very involved in the Harpersfield/Geneva J.E.D.D. Mr. Clutter affirmed that he has been dead set against the Romeo property and eminent domain case from day one and he was very proud of the five Council members that voted no to pass Ordinance 2947 as an emergency at the October 24th Council meeting. Mr. Clutter explained that he has offered Council over 100 acres of free land that the citizens are not aware of and he would like to see a park at a more centralized area in the City.

Jim Spellman – 7 Elizabeth Drive, Geneva – Jim Spellman asked why there is not a cost projection for the entire project to include maintenance and staffing. Mr. Spellman suggested that Council go to the voters to determine if a park is wanted. Mr. Spellman feels that ball fields should be adjacent to the schools and stated that there is a lot of land at the new high school for those fields. Mr. Spellman feels that the City is regressing dramatically with their decision to chip seal the streets.

Items for Consideration of Council

Ordinance 2947 was read, second reading. (AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE 2007 BUDGET THROUGH APPROPRIATIONS AND FUND AND INTERFUND TRANSFERS, ATTACHED HERETO AND MARKED EXHIBIT “A”, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY).

Denny Brown explained that this appropriation is for Romeo Park drainage and grass.

Motion by Fuller, seconded by Buskirk to declare Ordinance 2947 an emergency measure. Roll call, 5 yeas, 2 nays – Ebersole and Latimer. Motion by Buskirk, seconded by Fuller that the rule of law requiring certain Ordinances be read at three separate meetings be waived and suspended and Ordinance 2947 be placed on the final roll for passage. Roll call, 5 yeas, 2 nays – Ebersole and Latimer. Roll call on passage, 5 yeas, 2 nays – Ebersole and Latimer. Ordinance 2947 duly passed.

Ordinance 2948 was read, first reading. (AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE 2007 BUDGET THROUGH APPROPRIATIONS AND FUND AND INTERFUND TRANSFERS, ATTACHED HERETO AND MARKED EXHIBIT “A”, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY).

Jim Pearson explained that this appropriation covers expenditures from donations for the Fire Department, expenditures from donations for the Recreation Department, additional funds to help repair the Sherman Street walk bridge, and development fees collected to pay for the JEDD Sewer Project.

Motion by Piotrowski, seconded by Buskirk to declare Ordinance 2948 an emergency measure. Roll call, 7 yeas. Motion by Fuller, seconded by Buskirk that the rule of law requiring certain Ordinances be read at three separate meetings be waived and suspended and Ordinance 2948 be placed on the final roll for passage. Roll call, 7 yeas. Roll call on passage, 7 yeas. Ordinance 2948 duly passed.

Unfinished Business

Crystal Latimer stated that she was sorry how the vote went and thanked the citizens who spoke tonight. Ms. Latimer feels that the cost of drainage at Romeo Park is just the tip of the iceberg and the total costs will be phenomenal, but hopes that she is wrong.

New Business

Rodger Fuller stated that the City made the decision to chip seal streets to protect them not to regress. Mr. Fuller explained that it is imperative to protect the City streets until they have the money to pave. Mr. Fuller added that he was fortunate to have helped to start the Senior Center in Geneva which is now the most prominent in the County and he feels that Romeo Park is important for the children.

Citizens

Jim Spellman - 7 Elizabeth Drive, Geneva – Jim Spellman stated that he would support recreation if Council would create a Recreation Board and grant them taxing authority not to be influenced by Council. Mr. Spellman added that a recreation board should be working in conjunction with the schools.

Robert Gleason – 1744 Clay Street, Austinburg – Robert Gleason asked if anything was going to be done with West Street because it is in terrible condition.

Jim Pearson replied that West Street is one of the paving projects for this year and it will be paved in about three weeks.

Sandy Antos Jacobs – 408 Blaine Street, Geneva – Sandy Jacobs stated that she is very disappointed on how the vote went tonight and added that Geneva can not afford to pick up the tab if they lose the litigation with ORCO.

Ron Clutter – 4617 Fairway Drive, Geneva – Ron Clutter stated that he was very disappointed with the decision that was made. Mr. Clutter asked Mr. Mikulin if he was ever made aware of the other opportunities presented to the schools and the City of Geneva for land close to the schools and free to the community.

Mr. Mikulin replied that this was the first he has heard of it.

Ron Clutter stated that the citizens deserve to know the facts. Mr. Clutter added that he sat on a Recreation Board before and he applauds the idea but feels it has to be autonomous. Mr. Clutter feels that Council has made a serious mistake going to the wrong area of town if they truly are concerned about the children and bringing economic development to the community.

Mary Stoeffler – 4339 S. Ridge Rd., Kingsville – Mary Stoeffler stated that she is a mother of six children, some of whom are in the boy scouts and practice shooting at the ORCO property free of charge. Ms. Stoeffler stated that ORCO has been training young children for 40 years in marksmanship and she feels that this is an asset to the community. Ms. Stoeffler added that she is concerned that children will be playing near the railroad tracks at the Romeo property and as a mother she would not feel comfortable allowing them to be there. Ms. Stoeffler does not feel that Romeo Park will be economically beneficial to the community.

Ed Brashear – 536 Chestnut Street, Geneva – Ed Brashear stated that he was saddened by the vote tonight due to the obvious cry of the citizens. Mr. Brashear stated that he was one who asked for information on Romeo Park and he thanked Mr. Pearson for getting that for him.

Mr. Brashear read the costs given to him and stated that he feels recreation at the cost of financial irresponsibility is wrong.

Chris Beseda – 30 Greenridge, Geneva – Chris Beseda feels that Council is making a major mistake with Romeo property and he does not know how the City will maintain a 100 acre parcel. Mr. Beseda stated that he was also upset about the decision to chip seal the streets and he feels the gravel will end up in the storm drains which are already backed up.

Denny Brown thanked everyone for attending the Council Meeting and stated that he understands they are genuinely concerned about the community.

Special Council Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Recorded by: Laurie Donatone
Clerk of Council

President of Council

Clerk of Council