

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF WATERVLIET
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2012 AT 6:30 P.M.**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Michael P. Manning at 6:30 P.M.

Roll call showed that Mayor Michael P. Manning, Councilwoman Ellen R. Fogarty and Councilman Nicholas W. Foglia were present.

Also present from City Administration were: Mark Gleason; General Manager, Yorden Huban, Corporation Counsel, Bruce A. Hidley, City Clerk and Clerk to the Council and Police Chief Ron Boisvert.

Mayor Manning stated that as he announced last Thursday we are here tonight for a Special City Council Meeting consisting of one topic. There is only one topic on the agenda. Mayor Manning then turned the meeting over to Mr. Paul Goldman, Esq., Special Counsel to the City of Watervliet.

Mr. Goldman stated that last week we circulated draft documents for review by the Council. We had comments from the City Council. The version was revised and we made public on Monday November 19, 2012. They were again revised today on a couple of specifications. The SEQRA documents were given to me on Monday and made available to the public then placed on the City's website. The Findings Statement which is the second Resolution has been modified to have a short Resolution with a task of defining statement on the zoning issue. The third action which is required is the approval or disapproval of the Ordinance for the re-zoning of the property.

Mayor Manning requested Bruce A. Hidley, City Clerk and Clerk to the Council to make an announcement. Mr. Hidley explained that all the documents and legislative items that are on the Agenda tonight will be on the City's website first thing in the morning. Any one that was planning to F.O.I.L. the information can get all the information on the website in the morning.

Mayor Manning has a statement written here in keeping with the tradition on how we can review this project. So I am going to read this brief statement. Then Councilman Foglia will read one as well. The City of Watervliet has fully reviewed the proposal submitted to us by a private party to redevelop this property on 19th Street. The decision to close this church was not ours and may have been made quite some time ago. Early in this process a call went to other specific interested parties to step forward and Price Chopper said it would step aside. Within our 1.5 square mile City we have 13 churches approximately. This City has supported projects to re-use churches and schools for either different religious uses or other uses. Most recently the redevelopment of St. Brigid's for a commercial use. We worked with a developer to make it a viable location. The scale is certainly much different than that of St. Patrick's and the costs associated with the building were far different. Across the street here we are lucky to have the Historical Society using and providing basic upkeep of the Dutch Reformed Church the City owns. Without which we could not afford to properly maintain and operate even that much smaller church. We have worked to renovate old schools and rehab older buildings and we have a realistic view on what is doable.

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As we look throughout the urban areas in the region and even throughout the state and nation, we see a plethora of older churches. Each has a unique story and history. The decision before us is not an easy one. The burden to save these old buildings should not fall to the local governments alone. We simply do not have the resources necessary to take on this burden. When opportunities exist to partner with private developers to re-use, we have jumped at the chance. This situation is completely different. For eight months this project has undergone a rigorous and public review. We have held dozens of meetings on this single issue in an effort to give everyone who is interested, be they residents of our City or not, a chance to comment. A pace has been maintained to hear, fully review and request revisions to the proposal. The plan has been changed for green space, buffers to residential properties, architecture and appearance along with measures to reduce noise and traffic impact. A vast majority of the residents I interact with want to look to the future. They understand the proposal and what it means and they overwhelmingly want us to move forward. They understand that no one has stepped forward to commit to invest the millions of dollars needed to stabilize and renovate this structure. Absent that alternative, I cannot see how we cannot move forward on this proposal.

Councilman Foglia wanted to thank all who were active participants in this process over the last eight months. I think we have been able to use a lot of comments people had constructively. This decision is not easy and has not been easy for me, it wasn't easy for the Mayor and it was not easy for Councilwoman Fogarty. Ultimately my decision came down to a few factors. As it related to the current property the City does not own the property. The diocese has the ability at any time to demolish rehab or save the property. The City does not have the ability or resources to purchase rehab or invest in the property now or in the near future. A few comments on the current proposal. I do feel the project fits within the current character of 19th Street our Business District. The proposal addresses many of the concerns that were brought by us and by you. Furthermore this property will generate tax revenue for the City. Something we really need at this point. For the aforementioned reasons I will be voting in favor of the re-zoning the property.

RESOLUTION NO. 8879 – The Council of the City of Watervliet having reviewed and considered the entire record of proceedings for the 19th Street Redevelopment Project hereby approves the completed Part 2 and Part 3 of the SEQRA Full Environmental Assessment Form and SEQRA Determination of No Significant Impact Adverse Environmental Impact. Upon motion of Councilwoman Fogarty, seconded by Councilman Foglia, this Resolution was approved and adopted.

RESOLUTION NO. 8880 – The Council of the City of Watervliet after due deliberation does hereby resolve to adopt the annexed Findings Statement for Rezoning Map Amendment Ordinance No. 1889. Upon motion of Councilman Foglia, seconded by Councilwoman Fogarty, this Resolution was approved and adopted.

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ORDINANCE NO. 1889 – An Ordinance of the City of Watervliet, New York providing that the Code of the City of Watervliet Article 1 of Chapter 272, Section 272-5 of the Code of the City of Watervliet be amended to change the Zoning Map Classification of the properties located on City Block bounded by 19th Street, 5th Avenue, 23rd Street and 6th Avenue in the City of Watervliet from R-3 Residential to B-1 Business District and the Zoning Map is hereby amended to reflect this change. Upon motion of Councilman Foglia, seconded by Councilwoman Fogarty, this Ordinance was approved and adopted.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the Special City Council Meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bruce A. Hidley
City Clerk and Clerk to the Council