

CITY OF VERGENNES, VERMONT
REGULAR MEETING of the CITY COUNCIL
April 13, 2021
Meeting Held Remotely via Zoom
Minutes

Attendance :

- Mayor Mathew Chabot
- Alderman Dickie Austin
- Alderman David Austin
- Alderman Mel Hawley
- Alderman Ian Huizenga
- Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon
- Alderwoman Susan Rakowski
- City Manager Ron Redmond
- City Clerk Britney Aube
- Shannon Haggett
- Kathy Rossier
- Steve Huffaker
- Jim Larrow
- Otto Hansen
- Christopher Reck

1. Call to Order, Amendments to Agenda

Mayor Mathew Chabot called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Adjustments to the agenda (Time Stamp 0.25).

A motion was made by Alderman David Austin, seconded by Alderman Mel Hawley, to add discussion regarding reconsideration of the vote taken at the March 23, 2021 Council Meeting regarding zoning fees. Mayor Chabot suggested that the topic be placed on the April 27, 2021 Council meeting. Alderman David Austin withdrew his motion and Alderman Mel Hawley withdrew his second. The item is to be placed on the April 27th meeting agenda.

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to add the consideration of the new owner of Small City Market (R.L. Vallee) second-class liquor license to the agenda. VOTE- All members voted in favor.

Mayor Chabot asked staff to reach out to VLCT for further guidance on what type of items are considered appropriate when it comes to amendments to the agenda.

2. Visitors

None.

3. Approval of Minutes and Warrants (Time Stamp 10:20):

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon, to approve the minutes of March 8, 2021. Alderman Mel Hawley suggested several clerical edits to the March 9th meeting minutes. There were no objections to the proposed revisions. VOTE- All members voted in favor.

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to approve the minutes of March 23, 2021 meeting. Alderman Mel Hawley suggested several clerical edits to the minutes. Under Section 5d., discussion of zoning fees, Alderman Mel Hawley noted that the date of the zoning fee updates should be corrected to say March 10,

2020 and that the description of the vote should be amended to show that he voted in opposition of the motion. Under item 8, Alderman Hawley noted that conflict of interest disclosures should be recorded in the minutes, and under item 8, Dickie Austin, Ian Huizenga, and himself disclosed potential conflicts of interest and abstained from the vote. There were no objections to the proposed revisions. VOTE- All members voted in favor.

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon, to approve the warrant of March 23, 2021. VOTE- All members voted in favor.

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon, to approve the warrants from April 13, 2021. VOTE – All members voted in favor.

4. Citizens Comments (Time Stamp 21:40)

- Shannon Haggett noted that the Planning Commission would be holding a public meeting on May 3rd to review proposed amendments to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations.
- Kathy Rossier noted that the Parks and Recreation Committee would be providing an update on the Hoehl Family Foundation grant at the next council meeting.

5. Business

a. Adoption of Conflict-of-Interest Policy (Time Stamp 25:00)**

A motion was made by Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to adopt the VLCT model Conflict of Interest Policy. Alderman Mel Hawley noted that the Policy should be distributed to all the appointed officials as it applies to them as well. City Manager Redmond agreed to send the Policy to all applicable city officials. VOTE – All members voted in favor.

b. Resolution to join the Addison County Communications Union District dba Maple Broadband and appointing a representative to the governing board. Presentation: Steve Huffaker, Chair, Maple Broadband (Time Stamp 28.55).

Steve Huffaker, the Chair of Maple Broadband gave a presentation on the current status of the Maple Broadband Communications Union District and long-term goals of the project. Huffaker noted that the goal of the Communications Union District is to bring highspeed broadband service to all towns in Vermont. Huffaker explained that Vergennes is currently the only municipality in Addison County that has not joined the District. Huffaker explained that there would be no tax implications or financial obligations for the City if they did choose to join. Shannon Haggett and Christopher Spencer spoke in favor of joining the Addison County Communications Union District. Huffaker provided a brief overview of current and future state/federal funding for the project. Shannon Haggett volunteered to be the City's interim representative.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to adopt a resolution to join the Addison County Communications Union District dba Maple Broadband and appointing interim representative Shannon Haggett to the governing board. VOTE – 6 in favor; 1 opposed (Alderman David Austin).

c. Presentation by City Clerk of Kofile and CAI, and request for funding from the Restoration & Digitization Fund (Time Stamp 1:06:58).

City Clerk Britney Aube gave a presentation on Kofile, which is the system that the City implemented back in December for accessing the city land records digitally. Mrs. Aube explained that the City was awarded a state grant for just over \$16,500 to implement a digitized land record system. Kofile was selected as the vendor and came to the City in December to scan/index the land records from January of 2020 back to April of 2006. Mrs. Aube explained that she is now requesting to contract with Kofile to have them scan and index the land records from 2020 forward, so that the system is current, and scan/index the records going back from 2006 to 1980, so that full forty-year title search can be performed online.

A motion was made by Alderman Ian Huizenga, seconded by Alderman Dickie Austin, to approve the City Clerk to access up to \$25,000 from the Preservation and Digitization Fund for the purposes of contracting with Kofile to further digitize and index the City land records. VOTE – All members voted in favor.

Mrs. Aube also provided a brief overview of CAI tax mapping to the Council. Under the first proposal, CAI would update the City's tax maps and print new paper copies. Under the second proposal, CAI would create a digital mapping website for the City. The site would contain all the parcels, grand list parcel information, and could include any other GIS shape layers that the City would like to have implemented.

A motion was made by Alderman Mel Hawley, seconded by Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon, to approve the City Clerk to spend \$5,000 for paper mapping, and \$3,000 annually thereafter for the digital tax mapping website, funds to come from the Preservation and Digitization Fund. The City Clerk clarified that the fee for the online mapping is \$3,000 for startup and \$3,000 annual thereafter. Alderman Mel Hawley amended his motion to state approval of the City Clerk to contract with CAI and spend \$5,000 for the purchase of paper tax maps, \$3,000 for the digital tax map startup fee, and \$3,000 annual thereafter, funds to be allocated from the Preservation and Digitization Fund in accordance with a policy to be written forthwith. Alderman Dickie Austin stated that he believed that the City should wait to contract with the tax map service until after the city boundaries are settled. VOTE – 6 in favor; 1 opposed (Alderman Dickie Austin)

d. Update on Draft Ordinance re the Control of Poultry. Sponsors: Alderman David Austin, Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon (Time Stamp 1:37).

Alderman David Austin stated that a draft ordinance should be ready for the next Council meeting. As drafted, the ordinance includes registration of poultry with no fee to residents. The registration will aid in future enforcement of the policy.

e. Budget Discussions (Time Stamp 1:41:01).

City Manager Ron Redmond provided a brief overview of broad-picture budgeting focuses for each of the City Departments. He noted that the sewer plant upgrade project will continue to be a priority in FY2022. Due to internet connectivity issues, Ron Redmond noted that further budgeting discussions would take place at the next council meeting.

f. City Manager's Discussion with City Council re: FY2022 (Time Stamps 1:45:45)

Mayor Chabot asked City Manager Ron Redmond to put his budgeting presentation on the City website so it could be viewed by the public. Alderman Ian Huizenga requested that any budgeting information be provided in the council packets. City Manager Ron Redmond noted that he would discuss budgeting in more detail at the next meeting.

g. FY2022 budget presentation, Department of Public Works (1:49:25).

Public Works Supervisor Jim Larrow provided an overview of the proposed public works budget. Jim Larrow noted that sidewalk maintenance has been identified as a priority, since sidewalk maintenance was completely deferred in FY2021. Mr. Larrow explained that the purchase of a new 3500 series dump truck was also worked into the draft budget. Overall, the draft public works budget has an increase of approximately \$73,000. Jim Larrow noted that investing in maintenance of public infrastructure is a prudent use of any excess funds or federal grant funding coming.

h. Review of Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund (Time Stamp 2:15:05)

Alderman Mel Hawley explained that the Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund is currently about \$428,000 and since budgeting is being discussed, appropriations of the Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund should also be reviewed. Alderman Hawley noted that the voters approved a reserve fund of \$350,000 in 2012. Mayor Chabot noted that the Parks and Recreation Committee may be asking for funding soon, so review of the Fund should wait until after the presentation is made by Parks and Recreation Committee.

I. Review and Approval of a Second-Class Liquor License for R.L. Vallee (Time Stamp 2:29:30).

City Clerk Britney Aube explained that R.L. Vallee would be purchasing Small City Market. Lavelle was hoping to get the City portion of the liquor license approved so that the license can be sent to Vermont DLC for approval pending the sale.

A motion was made by Alderman Ian Huizenga, seconded by Alderman David Austin, to approve the second-class liquor license application of R.L. Vallee. VOTE- All members voted in favor.

5. Mayor's Report.

Mayor Chabot reminded the public that Green Up Day will be held on May 1st and that green bags are available at City Hall. Mayor Chabot thanked Lowell Bertrand for continuing to be the Green Up Day Coordinator.

6. Adjournment

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to adjourn the meeting. VOTE- All members voted in favor.
The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by:
Britney S. Aube
Vergennes City Clerk