

CITY OF VERGENNES, VERMONT
REGULAR MEETING of the CITY COUNCIL
August 10, 2021

Meeting Held in-person at the Vergennes Fire Station and Remotely via Zoom

- Mayor Mathew Chabot
- Alderman David Austin
- Alderman Mel Hawley
- Alderman Ian Huizenga
- Alderwoman Susan Rakowski
- Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon
- City Manager Ron Redmond
- City Clerk Britney Aube
- Shannon Haggett
- Matt Birong
- Samantha Dunn
- Jennie Auster
- Jim Larrow
- Brent Rakowski
- Chris Spencer
- Andy Kirkaldy

1. Call to Order, Amendments to the agenda.

Mayor Mathew Chabot called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. There were no amendments to the agenda.

2. Visitors.

None.

3. Approval of minutes 7/13/2021) and warrants 08/10/2021

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to approve the minutes of July 13, 2021, with revisions as noted in the packet. VOTE – 5 in-favor; 1 abstained (Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon).

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to approve the August 10, 2021, warrant for FY2021. VOTE – All members voted in-favor.

A motion was made by Alderman Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to approve the August 10, 2021, warrant for FY2022. Alderman Mel Hawley noted that Green Mountain Power was not listed on the warrant. City Clerk Britney Aube explained that Interim Treasurer Rose Russett had received the Green Mountain Power invoices and was working on getting them paid. VOTE- All members voted in-favor.

4. Business.

a. FY2022 Budget Update, City Manager (Time Stamp 7:14)

City Manager Ron Redmond provided an update on the anticipated ending fund balance for FY2021 and the projected beginning fund balance for FY 2022. He noted that one of the City's police officers who had been on active military duty has decided not to return to his post with the Vergennes PD. Manager Redmond explained that he decided not to post the position since he anticipated that the City would be engaging the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) with the

intention to reviewing the staffing needs of the Vergennes PD. He asked the Council whether they felt it was necessary for him to get their approval in instances where he was making staffing decisions that would reduce the budget.

Alderman Mel Hawley stated that it was his opinion that the Council should approve all amendments to the budget, whether it is an increase, or decrease. Alderman Hawley also noted that he would not amend the budget to remove the position but agreed that it made sense not to fill the position since the City Manager has proposed a police officer staffing review by IACP. Alderman Mel Hawley explained that he believed it would be premature to act on the budget at this time.

Alderwoman Susan Rakowski and Alderman Dickie Austin agreed with Alderman Mel Hawley that the budget document should remain unchanged and that the position should not be posted at this time.

Mayor Mathew Chabot noted that the Council would appreciate discussion prior to any budget amendments taking place.

City Manager Ron Redmond noted that he was working with NEMRC to get the approved budget loaded correctly into NEMRC. Darlene Kelly from NEMRC would be meeting with the Council at the August 24th meeting to describe how NEMRC is assisting the City at this time.

- b. FINAL PUBLIC HEARING to obtain citizen views on community development, communicate community development activities undertaken, give affected citizens opportunity to examine a statement of the use of the \$400,000 in funds from Vermont Community Development Program, sub granted by the City to Addison County Community Trust to acquire the property located at 45 Armory Lane, construct a twenty-four (24) unit multi-family affordable housing building and conduct program management activities (Time Stamp 25:18)**

Samantha Dunn from Addison County Community Trust explained that a post construction public hearing was a requirement of the grant process. She explained that the meeting is meant to give the public the opportunity to ask questions regarding the project at 45 Armory Lane. No public comments were received. City Clerk Britney Aube confirmed that there were also no public comments received through the Clerk's Office.

- c. Lister Errors & Omissions affecting the Grand List, Britney Aube, City Clerk (Time Stamp 27:21).**

City Clerk Britney Aube explained that the mobile home located at 105 Panton Road, owned by Patrick Whitley, had been moved out of the city back in 2019. She explained that a Mobile Home Bill of Sale was received in March of 2021. The mobile home should have been deleted in the grand list and a tax bill should not have been sent. A motion was made by Alderman Mel Hawley, seconded by Alderman Dickie Austin, to approve the correction for the property of Patrick

Whitley identified as parcel 663-210-10898 removing the property from the 2021 Grand List. VOTE- All members voted in-favor.

d. Request from Matt Birong, 3 Squares Café, 141 Main St to operate a food truck at City Green through November 15, 2021, on days when unavailable staffing precludes him from opening his brick-and-mortar location (Time stamp (31:20)).

Matt Birong, the owner of the 3 Squares Restaurant requested to operate a food truck at the City Green on days the restaurant is closed. . Matt explained that the restaurant is struggling to meet staffing needs and will be closed Mondays and Tuesdays. Since the food truck requires fewer employees to operate, it could be open on the days that the restaurant is closed. Alderman Mel Hawley requested that Matt come back with an agreement and a plan that provides details as to hours and location of the food truck. Manager Ron Redmond noted that he would work with Matt on an application and agreement and plan details. Mayor Mathew Chabot deferred the matter until the August 24th meeting.

e. Presentation on Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade by Jennie Auster, Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc (Time Stamp 0:45:20).

Jennie Auster from Hoyle, Tanner and Associates gave a presentation on the proposed sewer plant upgrade. Jennie discussed the redesign and the reasoning behind it, noting that they were ultimately recommending switching from an aerated lagoon design to a sequencing batch reactor. Jennie explained that the sequencing batch reactor requires less space for processing, is easier for staff to operate, and is more cost efficient. Jennie noted that the city was poised to receive USDA funding but would need to move forward with a bond vote to have the best chance of securing further funding. Jim Larrow questioned whether improvements to the sewer plant facility should be completed prior to upgrades to the collection system, noting that that infiltration during rainstorms is what has caused the overflows.

Alderman Mel Hawley echoed Jim Larrow's concerns noting that the upgrades to the sewer treatment facility have occurred on three other occasions and none of the upgrades have resolved the overflow problem. Alderman Mel Hawley noted that he felt strongly that upgrades to the collection system and the Macdonough Pump Station should be prioritized and occur prior to the sewer plant upgrade. Alderman Mel Hawley also noted the single cast iron force main at the bottom of Otter Creek serving sewer plant and has been in place since 1962. He noted upgrades to the force main should also be included in the project.

Jennie Auster noted that improvements to the collection system and the Macdonough Pump Station were part of the long-term control plan and were moving forward simultaneously with the sewer plant upgrades. Availability of funding is in part driving the timeline on the various parts of the project. Funding secured for the treatment upgrades doesn't necessarily cover upgrades to the collection system and vice versa. Jennie also explained that there would be some time sensitivity to spend the congressional funding received.

Mayor Mathew Chabot requested that Jennie Auster and Manager Ron Redmond digest the comments from the Council and figure out how the action plan can be reversed to address the infiltration/collection system in the short-term and the sewer facility upgrade in the long-term control plan and discuss the potential grant implications.

f. Discussion re: City Council setting a bond vote before end of 2021; proposed date Tuesday, November 9, 2021,

Item deferred by Mayor Mathew Chabot.

g. Discussion re: Staffing and Workload Study Proposal from the International Association of Chiefs of Police**

Ron Redmond reviewed his proposal to have the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) complete a workload study for the Vergennes PD. Manager Redmond noted that the proposal is not meant to be a negative reflection on the Vergennes PD but provide a fresh third-party perspective. The goal is to have IACP review staffing needs and gather community input. The goal is to have a strong and safe community on a sustainable budget.

Alderman Dickie Austin, Alderman Ian Huizenga, Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, and Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon spoke in favor of the proposal, noting that a 3rd party review may help alleviate the division among the community regarding policing.

Alderman David Austin spoke against the proposal; stating that it was an unnecessary expense. Alderman David Austin noted that he believed that issue boiled down to two small decisions: how many officers should Vergennes employ and what hours should they serve. Alderman David Austin believed that the Council could make those determinations without the help of a third party.

Alderman Mel Hawley questioned whether there was a more cost-effective option that the city could explore, stating that he could support a less-costly study.

Chris Spencer asked if the city requested proposals from other entities and questioned whether the review would also investigate potential police biases against minorities.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, seconded Dickie Austin, to accept the IACP proposal of \$30,000, to be funded by creating a new budget line item entitled “police staffing study” under the administration budget. VOTE – 5 in-favor (Mayor Mathew Chabot, Alderman Dickie Austin, Alderman Ian Huizenga, Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon); 2 opposed (Alderman David Austin & Alderman Mel Hawley).

h. Request for Authorization to spend \$18,495.17 from Water Tower Fund for improvement to City Hall, 120 Main Street (Time Stamp 2:43:00).

Manager Ron Redmond explained that the proposed repairs to City Hall include replacing storm windows and converting the front door of the building to a crash-bar door to be compliant with public building codes. Manager Redmond noted the Norman LeBeouf has offered to complete the architectural plans for the front door. Acme Glass would be completing the window repairs. Alderman Mel Hawley recommended additional money to fund the project rather than the exact amount in case the work comes in slightly over the budgeted amount.

A motion was made by Alderman Mel Hawley, seconded by Alderman David Austin, to commit up to \$25,000 from the Water Tower Fund for the front entrance doors and second floor window restoration and repair. Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon questioned whether the work should be paid for by the City when the Vergennes Opera House is a private non-profit entity. Manager Ron Redmond noted the proposal has to do with the building's safety, and per the agreement, the city is responsible for the care of the exterior of the building. VOTE – All members voted in-favor.

i. Request for Authorization to increase FY2022 Fire Department Budget by \$35,000, drawing from the current fund balance of \$44,403.57, to fund improvements to the Vergennes Fire Station at 50 Green Street (Time Stamp 2:49:00).

Manager Ron Redmond explained that there is on-going water damage occurring around the foundation of the building due to drainage issues. To remedy the problem, there will need to be some excavation and repaving. The proposal calls for using up to \$35,000 from the current Fire Department fund balance to finance the repairs. A motion was made by Alderman Mel Hawley, seconded by Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, to amend the fire department station maintenance line item from \$15,000 to \$50,000 to fund the proposed drainage improvements to the fire station. VOTE- All members voted in-favor.

j. Request for Authorization to hire Fothergill, Segale & Valley to conduct FY2021 audit (Time Stamp 2:51:00).

A motion was made by Alderman David Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to hire Fothergill, Segale & Valley to conduct FY 21 audit. VOTE – All members voted in-favor.

k. Request to add Interim Treasurer Rose Russett as an authorized representative on the City of Vergennes account with the National Bank of Middlebury, and to remove Abbie Farrar.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, seconded by Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon, to add Interim Treasurer Rose Russett as an authorized representative on the City of Vergennes account with the National Bank of Middlebury, and to remove Abbie Farrar. VOTE – All members voted in-favor.

- 1. Request add City Clerk Britney Aube, City Manager Ron Redmond, and Interim Treasurer Rose Russett as authorized representatives (and to remove Abbie Farrar) on the Edward Jones accounts: John H Donnelly Fund; Ray E. Davison Capital Equipment Fund; Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund. ***

A motion was made by Alderwoman Susan Rakowski, seconded by Alderman Dickie Austin, to add City Clerk Britney Aube, City Manager Ron Redmond, and Interim Treasurer Rose Russett as authorized representatives (and to remove Abbie Farrar) on the Edward Jones accounts: John H Donnelly Fund; Ray E. Davison Capital Equipment Fund; Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund; and Green Mountain Cooperative Agreement account. VOTE- All members vote in-favor.

5. Manager's Report (Time Stamp 2:53:00)

Manager Ron Redmond noted that Jim Larrow and his team developed a new storage unit that automated the distribution of pool chemicals. Manager Ron Redmond noted the Vergennes Falls Park docks would be discussed at the next meeting.

6. Mayor's Report

Mayor Mathew Chabot congratulated the Vergennes Swim Team on winning the State Championship.

7. Adjournment.

A motion was made by Dickie Austin, seconded by Alderman Ian Huizenga, to adjourn the meeting. VOTE- All members voted in-favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by:

Britney Aube

Vergennes City Clerk