

CITY OF VERGENNES, VERMONT
MEETING of the CITY COUNCIL

June 23, 2020

5:30 p.m.

Meeting Held Remotely Via Zoom

Minutes

1. Call to Order:

Mayor Jeff Fritz called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

In attendance:

- Mayor Jeff Fritz
- Alderman Mark Koenig
- Alderwoman Tara Brooks
- Alderman David Austin
- Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly
- Alderman Bill Benton
- Alderman Lowell Bertrand
- City Manager Daniel Hofman
- Rena Trepanier
- Andy Kirkaldy
- Jeffrey from VCAM
- Chief George Merkel
- Michael Daniels
- Jim Larrow
- Candy
- Mel Hawley
- Andrew Fritz
- Abbie Farrar
- Kathy Rossier
- Kim Buckley

Amendments to the Agenda:

City Manager Daniel Hofman would like to add 4 amendments to the agenda. Item J: Approve contract with the Addison County Humane Society for animal holding facility, K: Approve outdoor seating contract with Hire Hand/Bar Antidote, L: Approve the financial management questionnaire established by the City Treasure, and M: Mayoral appointment of the Pool Advisory Committee.

2. Visitors:

No comments from visitors.

3. Approval of the Minutes and Warrants:

Alderman Mark Koenig makes a motion to approve the minutes from the June 6 City Council meeting. Motion was seconded by Alderwoman Tara Brooks. On number 3, third line down, obtained should say abstained. Page 2, item a,

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fourth line from the bottom, it should say was shared. Page 4, 9th line down, add the word find between or and faults. Two lines down, remove that before states. Four lines from the bottom of page 4, clear should be substituted with fair. In this section Seguin should be spelt Seguino. Page 5, 14 rows up it should say meetings. All members voted in favor of the minutes as amended.

4. Citizen's Comments (Issues not otherwise on agenda):

None

5. Business:

a. Discussion regarding Mayoral Exploratory Committee into a Civilian Police Oversight Agency (aka Citizen Review Board)

Mayor Jeff Fritz speaks about the first meeting that was held last night. His report states it went well and was very encouraging. Mayor Fritz recommends transferring it to a council appointed committee so they have to comply with open meeting laws. This committee will have the right to go into an executive session. He thinks moving forward they will be as transparent as they can. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly wants everyone to know this is an advisory committee that reports to City Manager Daniel Hofman, not to George or the Mayor. The group that met last night was formed to figure out what the actual committee would entail and they will go back to the council in 30 days to present their recommendations. The final committee would be the one who reports to the City Manager. The one that met last night only reports suggestions to the City Council. It will follow open meeting law and report their findings. Alderman Dave Austin is concerned the committee met without City Council discussing the makeup of the group first. Mayor Jeff Fritz said there was no open access to the meeting and the Zoom information was not shared. Anyone who wanted to enter was not able to because it was not posted. Alderman Dave Austin shares his concern about the committee and wants to make sure all decisions are defensible. Alderman Mark Koenig says they should follow open meeting law and have public

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comment time but it's not a public forum. The Mayoral Exploratory Committee will include the following individuals: Catherine Brooks (Chair/Facilitator) Michael Donnelly, Maya Farrell, Cory Foote, Scott Gaines, Bryan Goodkowsky, Alicia Grangent, and Nial Rele. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly makes a motion to go ahead with the charge of the committee to report to the Council within 30 days. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconds. Discussion was made again regarding who they would report to. All members voted in favor.

b. Discussion regarding Band Stand

City Manager Daniel Hofman put up a sign saying do not draw on the band stand. Someone was writing with a sharpie. It has since been cleaned. City Manager Daniel Hofman mentions maybe providing an area for people to draw to express themselves but it could lead to something negative and ruin it for everyone. He thinks everything is okay now.

c. Discussion Friends of Vergennes Opera House and responsibilities for City Hall Maintenance

City Manager Daniel Hofman mentions there has been major repair to the fire detection system that had to be done. Most of it was for the Opera House's portion of the fire detection system. He got a quote for \$5,000 for the repair. He reached out to Friends of Vergennes Opera House and they responded saying the City is responsible for the 3 S's. City manager Daniel Hofman said the lease agreement says the Opera House is responsible for building maintenance. He asked what the City Council's thoughts are on that. He will have to get together with the Opera House and come up with an amendment to the lease agreement for the future. Alderman Bill Benton said it's unfortunate when the lease was written in 2003, a lot of the codes have since changed. There is nothing about code or safety requirements in the lease. There is no fault to anyone until something like this comes up. The City uses the Opera House for meetings and it's the City's building. City Manager Daniel Hofman recommends splitting the cost and amending the lease to address it for the future. City Manager Daniel Hofman asks the City Council members what they think he should do before meeting with them. Alderman Bill Benton and Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly will sit down with City Manager Daniel Hofman to discuss before meeting with Friends of Vergennes Opera House.

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d. Status update of City Clerk recruitment

Manager Daniel Hofman, Alderman Bill Benton, and Alderman Mark Koenig reviewed all 14 applications that were received so far for the City Clerk position. They were graded and a sample was selected to interview on Thursday and Friday via Zoom. They will reevaluate after the interviews are finished. Daniel would like to bring the finalist in front of the full Council since it is a Council appointed position.

e. Adoption of a Resolution in support of the Vermont Sales Tax Reallocation Program

This is in reference to the residential complex being built. The 6% construction tax that is paid on material is given back to the City for infrastructure projects in relation to the big project. There are projects that are happening in the City and entering into the program will allow it to basically be free to the City. Alderman Lowell Bertrand makes a motion to adopt. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly seconds. All members voted in favor.

f. Discussion regarding contractor to assist in ordinance organization and development

City Manager Daniel Hofman received a proposal from one of the contractors. He's waiting for another proposal. These companies digitalize the ordinance. There is an option called legal view where they can comb through the ordinance to find inaccuracies. He recommends this is the best way to do an overhaul in the future. City Manager Daniel Hofman would like to get the proposal in before the fiscal year is over. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly asked what it would cost. City Manager Daniel Hofman said it's a yearly subscription of \$300-\$500 a year. To migrate the material, he has gotten quotes ranging from \$500-\$5,000. The legal review would be \$8,000-\$13,000. Alderman Bill Benton asked if other communities this size in Vermont have this policy. The cost is based on the ordinance complexity.

g. Status update regarding Sam Fishman's Municipal Swimming Pool

City Manager Daniel Hofman said the pool is slated to open July 1. Saturday is introduction day for the lifeguards. Chemicals were delivered

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and the pool is ready to go. There has been \$1,500-\$2,000 in donations. People are not taking the City up on the donation money. There are more than enough lifeguards.

h. Removal of Linda Hawley, Summer Chabot, Sierra Bertrand, Anna Rakowski, and Jake Adric from the Recreation Committee

City Manager Daniel Hofman said this was at the request of the Recreation Committee. Ms. Hawley cannot participate because of family obligations, not because of a lack of interest. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly makes a motion to remove the members from the Recreation Committee. Alderman Mark Koenig seconds. Alderman Bill Benton asked if the members were students. All members voted in favor.

i. Appointment of Kathy Rossier to Recreation Committee

Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly makes a motion to add Kathy Rossier to the Recreation Committee. Alderman Bill Benton seconds. All members voted in favor.

j. Approve contract with the humane society for animal holding facility

Contract with the humane society for when the dog catcher has to bring them somewhere. The contract lies out how much each dog would cost. Alderman Bill Benton makes a motion. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconds. All members voted in favor.

k. Approve outdoor seating contract with Hire Hand/Bar Antidote

City Manager Daniel Hofman discussed the agreement with Hire Hand to allow them to set up tables in the parking spaces on School St. Alderman Mark Koenig makes to approve. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly seconds. All members voted in favor. All members voted in favor, except Alderman Bill Benton who abstained.

l. Approve the financial management questionnaire established by the City Treasure

Standard questionnaire that the State wants every year with the City Council's approval. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly makes a motion to approve. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconds. All members voted in favor.

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m. Mayoral appointment of the Pool Advisory Committee.

It is a reappointment of committee members. It should have from the beginning, be a mayoral committee. Going forward they will be following open meeting laws. Alderman Lowell Bertrand makes a motion to approve. Alderman Bill Benton seconds. All members voted in favor.

6. City Manager's Report

City Manager Daniel Hofman gives an update on pool passes and incoming revenue. He mentions more passes are coming in every day. Deputy Mayor Lynn Donnelly asks what happens if there is not enough pool passes sold. City Manager Daniel Hofman said they will tap into the Watershed Fund.

City manager Daniel Hofman asks what the Council thinks about installing park benches around the City. Alderman Lowell Bertrand asked how it would be any different than the picnic tables that were put out.

Alderman Lowell Bertrand asked if the docks were going in. He saw the forklifts down at the docks. Jim Larrow said it takes time to repair them because they are old but they plan on getting them in the water in the next two days, weather permitting.

City Manager Daniel Hofman mentioned they found an intern for the Admin Assistant position. She is a Senior at Champlain College and will be starting July 6.

a. Department of Public Works Report

Jim Larrow said the pool is ready. He wants to recognize Matt Crowley, who got everything operational at the pool and installed the shower. There has been a delay at Battery Hill in the storm water project. Everyone is behind right now. Hopefully in the next couple of weeks they will be starting that project. Next week they will be starting to paint crosswalks and parking lines other than Class 1 roads.

b. Police Department Report

Chief Merkel shared the statistics of the various actives the Police Department dealt with this month. Purchased new FirstNet cellphone system. Coordinate the purchase of WatchGuard body cameras. They

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finalized new policies and a completion of an online citizen complaint form. May be coordinating department training. Chief Merkel would like to recognize Officer O'Neil who was involved in a car stop in front of Champlain Farms. He conducted himself with a high level of professionalism. Chief Merkel would like to share the video footage with City Council.

c. Fire Department Report

N/A

d. Wastewater Treatment Report

N/A

e. Treasurer Report

The intern Admin Assistance also has Accounts Payable experience. Getting ready to prepare to send out tax bills. Doing another fireman's payroll before the end of the year and sending out bills for fireman responses.

7. Mayor's Report

Mayor Jeff Fritz, Alderman Bill Benton, and City Manager Daniel Hofman will be meeting with representatives of the Town of Ferrisburgh this coming Thursday morning to discuss the boundary dispute. Alderman Lowell Bertrand asked if there will be fireworks this year. Mayor Jeff Fritz heard they have been cancelled.

8. Adjournment:

Alderman Lowell makes a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Alderman Bill Benton, with all voting in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

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Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Hofman
City Manager