

Vergennes City Council

Final Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

COUNCIL MEMBERS/STAFF: Mayor Christopher Bearor, Deputy Mayor Dickie Austin, Alderwoman Cheryl Brinkman, Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon, Alderwoman Sue Rakowski, Alderwoman Zoe Kaslow, City Manager Ron Redmond, City Clerk Penny Austin, Treasurer Angela Bolduc, Recreation Coordinator Martha DeGraaf. Alderman Ian Huizenga was present by phone.

1. **Microphone Check**
2. **Call to Order:** 5:30pm
3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
4. **Amendments to the Agenda:** None
5. **Visitors:** Peter Garon, Chris and Sandra Reck, Steve Rappaport
6. **Approval of Minutes (5/09/2023)** Motion made to approve the minutes with the removal of “to be funded by Vergennes and Ferrisburgh” from the 50 Green Street Fire Station section and under the Delinquent Tax Collections section “Minimum income level is \$90,000” was changed to “Eligibility limits for a one-person family is \$90,000” revisions by Alderman Austin and seconded by Alderwoman Kaslow. Vote: 6-0 Approved. Alderman Huizenga abstained.
Approval of Warrants (5/23/2023) Alderman Austin moved to approve the warrants with a second by Alderwoman Kaslow. The vote was approved 6-0. Alderman Huizenga abstained.
7. **Business**
 - a) **Request to close Park Street to vehicular traffic between Main and North Streets on Thursdays during the 2023 Vergennes Farmers Market.** Chris and Sandra Reck spoke about the Farmers Market starting up in June through October. They requested that Park Street be closed to vehicular traffic on Thursdays during the market from 6 am to approximately 7 pm so vendors can load in and out. Motion to approve by Deputy Mayor Austin with a second by Alderwoman Murray-Killon. Vote: 6-0 Approved. Alderman Huizenga abstained.
 - b) **Request to approve application for a 2023 VTRANS Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant for \$119,337 in additional funding for the Main Street Sidewalk Extension Project (Macdonough Drive to Otter Creek Bridge), previously funded in 2019 by VTRANS STP BP19(6).** Manager Redmond spoke about the cost increases of this project since 2019, and if the City receives this second VTRANS grant, the city’s required match will be greatly reduced. Motion to approve by Deputy Mayor Austin with a second from Alderwoman Rakowski. Vote: 6-0 Approved Alderman Huizenga abstained.
 - c) **Request to authorize the City of Vergennes Collector of Delinquent Taxes to engage Monaghan Safar PLLC to prepare for and conduct tax sales, until such authorization is rescinded. Kristen E. Shamis, Esq., Monaghan Safar PLLC.** Motion made by Deputy Mayor Austin and seconded by Alderwoman Brinkman to authorize the City of

Vergennes Collector of Delinquent Taxes to engage Monaghan Safar PLLC to prepare for and conduct tax sales, until such authorization is rescinded. The law firm is hired on an hourly basis, said fees to be assessed against the delinquent taxpayer in an amount not to exceed 15% of the delinquent amount. Vote: 6-0 Approved Alderman Huizenga abstained.

- d) **Portage Project Update.** Tim Cowan of Civil Engineering Associates, Inc. was unable to attend but Manager Redmond presented a map showing his latest analysis of the Cornerstone Solutions property encroaching 18 inches into the city's boundary. **A discussion about options was held.** Ed Adrian from Monaghan Safar PLLC noted that if the city contemplated legal action, because the permit was issued, Cornerstone Solutions relied on that permit being correct and thus the city would have a weak case in court. The council discussed a possible agreement with Cornerstone that had no adverse impact on the city to memorialize the encroachment. The City Manager will come back to the council with options and further discussion.
- e) **Presentation of 2023 Vergennes Fire Station Facility Assessment. Nick Thiltgen, Dubois & King, Inc. and Megan Nedzinski, Vermont Integrated Architecture, P.C. .** Megan and Nick presented their findings and recommendations for the 50 Green Street Fire Station. Overall, their opinion is that the building has "good bones" (solid structure) and that renovating (\$2.2 million) versus building new (\$3.5+ million, not including land acquisition) was more practical. A 37-page report was included in the council packet.
- f) **FY 24 Budget Discussion**
 - i. **Police Department, Chief Jason Ouellette.** City Manager Redmond and Chief Ouellette discussed the department's FY 24 strategy, organizational structure, and answered specific questions about the proposed budget.
 - ii. **Public Works, Public Works Supervisor Jim Larrow.** Public Works Supervisor Jim Larrow spoke about his budget for the year, specifically about proposed increases in paving and sidewalks. Details were included in the council packet.

Other Business: Zoning Administrator Peter Garon reported that the city's request to the Vermont Downtown Program for Neighborhood Development Area status had been approved. This designation provides special permit and tax incentives for developers that commit to building mixed-income housing within or adjacent to designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, and growth centers. Garon recognized Planning Director Shannon Haggett and the Planning Commission for their commitment and leadership in making this happen.

- 8. **City Manager Report-** None
- 9. **Council Member Reports-** Alderwoman Brinkman asked when the City email addresses would be ready for the Council Members who did not have them. They will be available next week.
- 10. **Mayor's Report-** Mayor Bearor wanted to wish everyone a good Memorial Day, expressed gratitude to those who have served our country, and thanked everyone who worked on our Spring projects!
- 11. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn by Deputy Mayor Austin at 8:13pm with a second by Alderwoman Kaslow. Vote:6-0. Approved Alderman Huizenga abstained.

