

Vergennes City Council

Final Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

COUNCIL MEMBERS/STAFF: Mayor Christopher Bearor, Deputy Mayor Dickie Austin, Alderwoman Cheryl Brinkman, Alderman Ian Huizenga, City Manager Ron Redmond, City Clerk Penny Austin, Treasurer Angela Bolduc, Recreation Coordinator Martha DeGraaf.

1. **Microphone Check**
2. **Call to Order:** 5:32pm
3. **Pledge of Allegiance**
4. **Amendments to the Agenda:** None
5. **Visitors:** Mel Hawley (Zoom), David DiBiase and family, Jim Sestokas
6. **Approval of Minutes (4/25/2023 and 5/2/2023)** It was noted by Alderwoman Brinkman that the motion to approve the zoning changes from the public meeting was missing. Also, there were items to be revised brought up by Alderwoman Rakowski. Motion made to approve the minutes with the revisions above by Alderman Austin and seconded by Alderwoman Kaslow. Vote: 7-0 Approved.

Approval of Warrants (5/09/2023) Alderman Austin moved to approve the warrants with a second by Alderwoman Rakowski. The vote was approved 6-0 with Mayor Bearor abstaining because there were invoices from his employer in the warrants.

7. **a. Request from the City Manager to approve appointment of David DiBiase as Chief, Vergennes Fire Department.** City Manager Redmond said he was pleased to recommend him as Chief. Motion to approve by Mayor Bearor with a second by Deputy Mayor Austin. Vote: 4-0 Approved.

b. Pavilion Project Update. * Kathy Rossier, Robyn Newton.** Kathy and Robyn gave a PowerPoint presentation with the financial information listed in the meeting packet. They have received many grants and declined on a few. The City gave them \$30,000 for Phase 1 which was completed 11/21. In Phase 2, the City gave them another \$30,000 in addition to the \$20,000 they gave them to do the electrical upgrade. They spoke of all the Community Volunteers that have worked on this project which they are very thankful for. Next Steps—More Donations and Fundraising!

c. Welcome and discussion with Clark Hinsdale, Chair, Ferrisburgh Town Selectboard. *** Clark Hinsdale and the Council discussed 1) Emergency Services including Fire Service Discussion and 2) Boundary Study: He said that Ferrisburgh is still interested in meeting with us to discuss these issues and come to agreements on solutions.

d. Request to approve appointments to the Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC) for a one-year term from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 for Shannon Haggett, Delegate; Cheryl Brinkman, Delegate; Tim Cook, Alternate; and Don Ferris, Alternate. * Motion to approve made by Alderwoman Rakowski with a second by Alderwoman Murray-Killon. In the discussion, Deputy Mayor Austin asked about conflict of interest. Alderwoman Brinkman said that there was no language in the charter preventing her appointment but would recuse herself

if needed. She is presently on the executive board of the ACRPC and is up for treasurer. Vote: 6-0 Approved. Alderwoman Brinkman abstained.

e. Request to approve appointments to the Addison County Regional Planning Commission's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) for a one-year term from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 for Brent Rakowski, Delegate and Shannon Haggett, Alternate. * Motion to appoint made by Deputy Mayor Austin with a second from Alderwoman Murray-Killon. Vote: 6-0 Approved. Alderwoman Rakowski abstained.

f. Presentation of fund balances for Water Tower Fund and Watershed Fund. Angie Bolduc, Treasurer *.** The fund balance for the Water Tower Fund is \$169,549.72. The fund balance for the Watershed Fund is \$34,349.58.

g. Request to allocate up to \$3,000 from the Watershed Fund for the purchase of baskets, signage, and tee pads for Disc Golf at Falls Park. * Alderwoman Brinkman moved to allocate up to \$3,000 from the Watershed Fund for the Disc Golf at Falls Park with a second from Alderman Huizenga. Vote: 7-0 Approved.

h. FY 24 Budget Discussion *** City Manager Redmond and the Council discussed the council meeting calendar and the number of meetings remaining before budget approval and setting of tax rate at the June 27 meeting. The following meeting schedule was decided: May 23 meeting – Police and Recreation; an additional meeting to be warned on June 6, for Public Works and Administration budget review; June 20 meeting for Fire, Sewer and Pool. Other issues discussed:

- **Delinquent Tax Collection:** Redmond discussed efforts to lead those who are delinquent to the Vermont Homeowner Assistance Program. Those living in mobile homes with delinquent taxes have been invited to our offices and help has been offered to apply to the (VHAP) provides grants of up to \$30,000 to eligible homeowners who have financial problems because of COVID and are behind on expenses for the house they own and live in. The grants may help pay mortgage payments or mobile home loans. Eligibility limits for a one person family is \$90,000. Deadline is 6/12/23. Redmond said he would be asking the council to approve Monaghan Safar assisting staff with tax collection.
- **Status of FY 22 Audit:** No firm completion date but projecting this summer. Alderwoman Rakowski asked if an estimated fund balance would be available, and Redmond said he could provide an estimate at the next meeting. Staff and RHR Smith are working on finishing the asset database and anticipate that FY 22 audit will include recognition of assets and recategorizing capital expenses.
- **50 Green Street Fire Station:** Redmond said for the 5/23 Council meeting, there will be a presentation by Dubois & King on the engineering analysis conducted for the 50 Green Street Fire Station. The council discussed the expert-driven study that would provide the city with an evaluation of opportunities for regional cooperation for fire protection and prevention service and EMS.
- **Capital Plan** There was discussion about the timing of a capital plan, with the council focusing on it during budget discussions or afterward. Alderwoman Kaslow said that there needs to be a balance between keeping Vergennes an affordable place to live and providing

needy city services. Alderwoman Brinkman said waiting till after the budget is approved would be more tolerable. Alderman Huizinga asked for a capital plan at the next meeting that was 10,000-foot overview. Deputy Mayor Austin noted that in the past, the city should have set up capital budgets for building maintenance and vehicle purchases and without them the city will have to be constantly playing catch up, and that this practice needs to be started.

8. City Manager's Report

- a. Redmond discussed the encouragement expressed by Clark Hinsdale for progressing with codifying boundaries with neighboring municipalities. .
- b. Timing for funding and commencing the proposed Fire Study was discussed. Deputy Mayor noted the city has real data of what happens when the city does nothing. Mayor Bearor asked that is be brought to the council in July.

9. Mayor's Report: Saturday is Green-Up Day. He thanked Sierra and Lowell Bertrand for taking on the task of getting everyone involved with cleaning up our City. He also thanked the people that came and worked on the Pool Clean-Up Day on Saturday as well. He also announced that the Fire Department was having an open house this Saturday, May 13th looking for new people to join!

10. City Council Reports: Alderwoman Brinkman that she had visited Northland Job Corp and found that now the students are not allowed to the leave the grounds unless they are given a ride by the school. She visited the Weld Shop and was very impressed. The school is now a trade school and has many good classes.

11. Adjournment: Deputy Mayor Austin moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00PM with a second from Alderwoman Murray-Killon. Vote: 7-0 Approved.