

CITY OF VERGENNES, VERMONT REGULAR MEETING CITY COUNCIL  
Tuesday, January 10, 2023

COUNCIL MEMBERS/STAFF

Mayor Mathew Chabot, Alderman Dickie Austin, Alderman Mel Hawley, Alderwoman Jill Murray-Killon, Alderwoman Zoe Kaslow (ZOOM), Alderwoman Sue Rakowski (ZOOM), Alderman Ian Huizenga, City Manager Ron Redmond, City Clerk Penny Austin (ZOOM), City Treasurer Angie Bolduc (ZOOM)

VISITORS

Shannon Haggett, Planning Commission, Kathy Rossier, Mike Daniels, Steve Rapoport

Call to Order: 5:30 PM

Amendments to Agenda: Alderman Hawley made a motion, seconded by Mayor Chabot, to add discussion of the City's sewer main associated with the so-called Portage Project (1-3 West Main Street) being built by the Otter Creek Bridge, as item 7.f.

Public Hearing on the proposed amendments of the City of Vergennes Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, unanimously approved by the Planning Commission on November 7, 2022.\*\*\* Alderman Hawley gave testimony, stating his continued opposition to a density requirement of 4,000 square feet per unit for a multiple-household dwelling in the HND and opposed the continuation of only requiring 3,750 square feet for a duplex.

Approval of Minutes (12/13/22). Motion by Alderman Austin, second by Alderwoman Murray-Killon, to approve the minutes as written. Vote: 7-0 Approved unanimously.

Approval of Warrant FY 23 (1/10/23). Motion by Alderman Austin, second by Alderwoman Murray-Killon. Vote 7-0, Approved unanimously.

Business:

7a. Presentation of Research of ARPA Spending in Certain Addison County Municipalities. Jessica C. Teets, Professor, Political Science Department and Faculty Director, Social Entrepreneurship Program, Middlebury College.\*\*\*

Jessica gave a presentation titled Spending of American Rescue Plan dollars. They did interviews in Bristol, Weybridge, Vergennes, and Middlebury. Alderman Hawley thought we should go to the voters to approve setting up a reserve fund for the "ARPA" dollars. It was the consensus of the city council that there will be an Article on the Warning for the March election.

7b. Presentation of information provided by Addison Northwest School District Board re: school district tax rates and common level of appraisal (CLA).\*\*\* Alderwoman Rakowski. Alderwoman Rakowski explained that the City's CLA is below 85% which would mean a reappraisal is needed. We have a town-wide one slated to be done starting in 2024 and finishing in 2025. Alderman Hawley asked if we were doing an appeal. Alyth Hescok, our Assessment Consultant is doing the review to determine if an appeal will be made.

7c. The proposed amendments of the City of Vergennes Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, unanimously approved by the Planning Commission on November 7, 2022, were discussed, specifically

Alderman Hawley's testimony at the public hearing regarding his opposition to the density requirement of 4,000 square feet per unit for a multiple-household dwelling in the HND and opposed the continuation of only requiring 3,750 square feet for a duplex. Alderman Austin was not opposed to the changes proposed by the Planning Commission and Alderwoman Kaslow felt the city needed increased housing which these changes could provide. Alderman Austin made a motion to accept with Alderman Huizenga seconding. Vote: 5-2 with Alderman Hawley and Alderwoman Murray-Killon opposed.

7d. Discussion of City of Vergennes Winter Parking Ban. Chapter 2 Motor Vehicle and Traffic Ordinances, Section 9 Stopped or Unattended Vehicles (Winter Parking Ban) \*\*\* There was a discussion on what we could do to change the Winter Parking Ban so we would not have to pay our police officers overtime to stay and ticket the cars that were left on the street after 2 am. There was much discussion on different ways to change our ordinances to relieve the problem. The Mayor asked the City Manager to come back with recommended alternatives.

7e. Approval of Vermont Agency of Transportation's Certificate of Highway Mileage, Year Ending February 10, 2023.\* Alderman Hawley noted that Phase 2 of Commodore Drive was not added to the certificate last year as a result of City Council discussion and it appears to have not been done for the 2023 certificate. Certificate is due on or before February 20, 2023. The Mayor requested the city manager to report back by 1/24/2023.

7f. Discussion of the sewer pipe on the Cornerstone Portage Project being built by the Otter Creek Bridge. Alderman Hawley expressed his concerns re: the permit issued by the Zoning Administrator for the project. Also, he expressed concerns about and the potential risks of not replacing the clay sewer pipe on the property, as it could rupture in the near future because of its age and leaving a city-owned clay tile pipe between two buildings under construction. Mayor Chabot asked that the City Manager meet with the developer/property owner on Wednesday morning, 1/11/23 to ask if construction can be slowed down or stopped until the council can assess the current situation and determine the best next steps. Alderwoman Rakowski asked if this particular pipe was identified by Hoyle Tanner rising to the same level of concern as sections of pipe targeted to be replaced per the planned sewer upgrade.

#### City Manager Report.

- City Manager to bring amended budget for the Vergennes Police Department for the February 14, 2023 council meeting.

Alderman Hawley raised these issues/ concerns:

- Condition of the Pump House i.e. broken windows and substantial pigeons, pigeon waste. After robust discussion, Mayor asked City Manager that all haste be taken to secure the building as quickly as possible.
- Concerns about delinquent taxes. City Manager reported delinquent taxes have declined from \$140k in FY 21 to current day \$50K
- Need for a sidewalk on Panton Road near Mobile Home Park which has been on the city's "to do" list since he was city manager. He asked that there be a sidewalk plan using the recent sidewalk inventory completed.
- Not sure sump pumps contribute to the storm water inflow entering the system to the degree that our engineers say they do. First step of solving the sump pump issue is an inventory. City needs a database of people so that this issue can begin to be addressed.

Alderwoman Kaslow said she too supports improvements to sidewalks but also noted there are limited funds to solve many issues, and that the city council will need to make some hard choices as we move forward.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Alderman Austin, second by Alderman Huizinga. Vote: 7-0.  
Adjourned at 7:45.