

CITY OF VERGENNES, VERMONT
REGULAR MEETING of the CITY COUNCIL

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

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

VISITORS: Martha DeGraaf, Recreation Coordinator, Don Perley, Mark Koenig and Mike Kane from the ANWSD board, and Bill Benton, Julie Basol, Scott Gaines, Jen Russell, and Vaughn Collins from the Vergennes Partnership

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 pm

AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA: Alderwoman Rakowski requested the removal of item c. Request to Allocate \$10,000 from the Watershed Fund to cover expenses required prior to the commencement of the 2023 season for the swimming pool.*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (1/10/23): Motion by Alderman Austin, seconded by Alderwoman Murray-Killon, to approve the minutes as written. Vote: 7-0, Approved Unanimously.

APPROVAL OF WARRANT FY23 (1/10/23): Motion by Alderman Austin, seconded by Alderwoman Rakowski. Vote: 7-0, Approved Unanimously.

VISITORS: Mike Kane and Mark Koenig spoke about the upcoming 1% school tax rate increase to cover the 13% budget increase.

BUSINESS:

8a. Council went into executive session per 1V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3) at 5:55pm. The Council came out of executive session at 6:10 pm. No action was taken.

8b. Update from the Vergennes Partnership. *** Bill Benton, Renny Perry, Julie Basol, Scott Gaines, Jen Russell, and Vaughn Collins from the Vergennes Partnership provided an update on activities by the Partnership. The council expressed their support for the efforts of the Partnership to support and strengthen the city's downtown district. Of note, Alderman Hawley discussed the importance for the next council considering an increase in its annual allocation. Currently, \$7,500 comes from the general fund and \$7,500 from the Water Tower Fund. Alderman Hawley suggested that the increase could come from the Water Tower Fund.

8d. Request to allocate \$2,395.84 from the Water Tower Fund to complete funding for Improvements to City Hall Storm Windows and Front Door Project.* Alderman Hawley asked about the additional step down requested by the State Fire Marshal, Josh Maxham. City Manager Redmond said that sourcing and placement of Panton Stone step will be a separate project and is being managed by Norm LeBoeuf. Motion by Alderwoman Rakowski and second by Alderman Kaslow to do the requested allocation. Vote: 7-0 Approved.

8e. Adoption of the Annual City Warning including Article 2: Shall the City establish a reserve fund to be called the Infrastructure Improvement Fund for the purpose of funding improvements to city facilities, parks, and sidewalks to be funded by Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds totaling \$723,075.75, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Section 2804?*

Note: City of Vergennes original CSLFRF allocation was \$772,125.92 less funds allocated by the City Council in FY23 to fund a) 25% of the cost or \$24,050.25 for a 2022 Ram 3500 Dump Truck and b) \$25,000 for Fire Station emergency generator = remaining balance of \$723,075.75.

The Council reworded Article 2 and the total amount of ARPA funds, reflecting a small increase sent by the Treasury department. Alderwoman Rakowski moved to accept Article 2 as amended with Alderwoman Murray-Killon seconding. Vote was approved 7-0. The new wording for Article 2 is shown below:

Article 2: Shall the City establish a reserve fund to be called the Infrastructure Improvement Fund for the purpose of funding capital improvements including but not limited to city facilities, parks, and sidewalks to be funded by the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds totaling \$723,257.72, in accordance with 24 V.S.A. Section 2804?

8f. Update on city sewer lines at 1-3 Main Street property.***

At the 1/10/23 City Council meeting, Mayor Chabot had requested that the City Manager reach out to Cornerstone Construction to either stop or slow down construction at the Portage Project, and report back to the Council. The City Manager and the Public Works supervisor met with the owner/foreman for Cornerstone Construction on 1/11/23 to discuss coordination of the repair of the clay tile pipe while on-site construction continued. Redmond explained to the Council the sequence of events that occurred, beginning with the former property owner re: a commitment from the City Manager to move the pipe, involvements of the property owners attorney and the former City attorney, Jim Ouimette, when the City Manager learned it was not the practice of the City, and eventual decision to hold the previous commitment (at the recommendation of the former City attorney) and move the pipe at the City's expense. An RFP was prepared by Otter Creek Engineering. As the RFP process was underway, OCE shared with the City Manager and Public Works supervisor that the cost to move the pipe would be an unreasonable expense, plus an additional expense for blasting – something not possible because of the site's proximity to the dam. The City Manager and Public Works supervisor met with the new property owners (Cornerstone) to discuss the situation. Rather than maintain their current design of building over the sewer pipe, the developer broke the design into two separate sections, with the sewer pipe running between the two buildings. In the meantime, the Public Works supervisor reached out to and is waiting to hear back from Green Mountain Pipeline Services in Bethel, for an estimate re: sleeving the existing 20+ feet of sewer line and installing new manholes at the site.

8g. Update re: 21st Century Grant, administered by the Addison Northwest School District, that funds 100% of expenses for Camp Commodore.**

Council and staff discussed the City's relationship with funding from the 21st Century Grant (used to fund Camp Commodore) and if the Recreation Coordinator's time should be spent on this endeavor. In the end, there was a majority that thought the program is important and should be continued.

8h. February Agenda Planning, Alderman Hawley.**

Alderman Hawley discussed a list of items to be included on the agenda for discussion at the two upcoming February City Council meetings.

9. City Manager's Report.

-Mike Daniels reached out to three potential vendors to provide cleaning services for the Pump House. Staff has selected Chris Mullis and his quote for \$7000. The plan is for Public Works to seal up house and repair the Pump House windows. Millis is set to power wash, remove the bird waste from the site in May/June of 2023.

-Redmond gave an update on the Wayfinding Signage Program.

Presentation on sewer upgrade on 2/14/23 will have a more in-depth explanation about the City's 1272 order.

10. The Council went into executive session at 8:25 pm per 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3). The Council came out of executive session at 9:30 pm with no action taken. They immediately adjourned on a motion by Alderman Austin with second by Alderman Huizenga. Vote 7-0 Approved.