

**CITY OF VERGENNES, VERMONT  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2023**

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

**VISITORS:** Marth DeGraaf, Recreation Coordinator; Rick Chaput, WWTP Chief Operator; Michael Daniels; Jim Larrow, Public Works Supervisor; Jennie Auster, Hoyle Tanner & Assoc.; Steve Huffaker, Maple Broadband; Shannon Haggett, Vergennes Delegate to Maple Broadband; Cheryl Brinkman (Zoom); John Merrifield, VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation (Zoom).

**CALL TO ORDER:** 5:30 PM

**AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:** Alderman Hawley – item 8.b. to be changed from “for an easement from the City of Vergennes,” to “for an option of an easement from the City of Vergennes.”

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES (1/24/23), (1/30/23), and (2/2/23):** In the 1/24/23 minutes, Alderman Hawley requested that in 8f. the word “feel” be changed to “feet” and to change the word consensus to majority. In the 1/30/23 minutes, Alderwoman Kaslow pointed out that all attendees attended the meeting via Zoom. On the 2/2/23 minutes, Alderman Hawley requested that in 5.a. “request from staff to amend Article 1 in the Warning for the Annual City Meeting that the verbiage match what was in the Warrant that was approved, thus remove the comma and the word “a” before respective. Motion by Alderwoman Rakowski, seconded by Alderwoman Kaslow, to approve the minutes as amended. Vote: 6-0 Approved unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF WARRANT (2/14/23):** Alderman Austin recused himself from approving the warrant as one of the checks in the warrant was made out to a restaurant that he operates. Motion by Alderwoman Rakowski, second by Alderwoman Kaslow. Vote: 5-0, Alderman Austin abstained.

**VISITORS:** Cheryl Brinkman stated that she thought that the City should record all Zoom attendees in the meeting minutes. She also said that she thought the planning agenda by Alderman Hawley was good for the upcoming new council to know what was coming but would not be good if it was for long-winded speeches. Alderman Hawley stated that a VLCT best practice is to only record the people who speak in the meeting minutes.

## **BUSINESS:**

### **8a. Update re: Sanitary Sewer Collection System and Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade**

- 1) City Manager Redmond congratulated Rick Chaput, Chief Operator of the WWTP, for being chosen 2022 Operator of the Year for Vermont, from the New England Water Environment Association (NEWEA).
- 2) WWTP Operator Rick Chaput and Jennie Auster, Hoyle Tanner & Associates, provided an update on the sanitary sewer collection system and wastewater treatment facility project. A written summary was included in the City Council packet.
- 3) John Merrifield, VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation provided background and an update on the recent 1272 order issued to the City. The consequences of not addressing the order include the state prohibiting any expansion of the City's sewer system to new development and taking the City to court for non-compliance. Alderwoman Murray-Killon asked John Merrifield if early notification on stop gaps to the State would be good and Merrifield agreed they would.
- 4) Alderman Hawley said he believed the City was addressing the wrong issues and cited two manholes – one on South Water Street and one on South Maple Street – that were known to overflow during storms, putting sewage into Otter Creek. Also, he said he was not sure that getting rid of sump pumps would fix anything.
- 5) Alderman Hawley said he was uncomfortable with the increase in cost of the sanitary sewer and wastewater treatment plan upgrade, from the projected \$25.5 million cost when voters approved the bond in March 2022, to the current cost of \$33.8 million. He said he understood the reasons for cost increases. He asked Jennie Auster about bond rates. Auster said the good news is that all the bonds the City has are fixed and that the City will not have to go to the bond market. USDA Rural Development bond rate 1.750%, 30 years. Clean Water SRF (through Vermont Bond Bank) rate is 2% for 20 years.

**8b.** Steve Huffaker from Maple Broadband, and Shannon Haggett, our delegate to Maple Broadband board, discussed their request for a permanent easement to place a structure with telecommunications equipment in the northern corner of MacIntosh Park near Comfort Hill Road. Motion to approve by Alderwoman Kaslow and seconded by Alderman Austin. The council discussed compensation to the City. Huffaker said that Maple Broadband is a non-profit, he was serving as a volunteer, and that the organization did not have funds to compensate the City. There was discussion about receiving service in lieu of cash, that had been provided to private property owners and other municipalities. Alderman Hawley said that the Charter will most likely require the City to take the request for an easement to the voters for approval and that it may require DRB review and approval. Since there was information needed, the motion was withdrawn and seconded to further discuss at the next meeting.

**8c.** The Council approved the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Certificate of Highway Mileage for year ending February 10, 2023. This was updated to show Phase 2 of the

Commodore Drive Development Road. Motion to approve by Alderman Austin and seconded by Alderman Hawley. The Vote was 6-0 to approve.

**8d. Police Budget.** The City Manager presented a FY23 budget projection for the police department. There were errors in the Excel formulas used. The matter was postponed until the next meeting.

9. The Council went into executive session at 7:12 pm per 1 V.S.A. Section 313(a)(3). The Council came out of executive session at 9:30pm (no action taken). They immediately adjourned on motion by Alderman Austin, with second by Alderman Murray-Killon. Vote 6-0 to approve.