

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 10, 2012  
MINUTES

Mayor Michael Daniels called the regular meeting to order at 7 p.m. at the Vergennes Fire Station located on Green Street. Those in attendance were:

Mayor Michael Daniels	Alderman Joseph Klopfenstein
Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette	City Manager Mel Hawley
Alderman Clara Comeau	City Clerk Joan Devine
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Allison Rimmer, FVOH President
Alderman Peter Garon	Shannon Haggett, PC Chair
Alderman David Austin	Andy Kirkaldy, Reporter

WARRANTS: The warrant, totaling \$69,935.02, was passed for review and signatures of approval.

CITY HALL SPRINKLER SYSTEM PROJECT: City Manager Mel Hawley reported that he has met with Allison Rimmer, President of Friends of Vergennes Opera House, Inc. and their Executive Director, Eileen Corcoran, since the last meeting regarding their request for financial assistance from the City. He advised that the sprinkler system project has been problematic for the Friends from the beginning and now they are told a fire pump needs to be installed in the basement to increase pressure to properly cover the balcony, attic and roof. The City's cost to extend the sprinkler system to include coverage of City offices was originally expected to be approximately \$20,000. Because of the new requisite for the fire pump, he would recommend that the City Council approve increasing the City's share of the project to \$35,000. Funds are available in the Water Tower Fund and additional funds could be used from the City Hall Capital Fund, he advised. Mayor Daniels stated that the City is the landlord and the property belongs to the City so he encouraged support of Mel's recommendation. Lowell Bertrand moved to increase the City's share of the project to \$35,000 as recommended. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette. Allison advised the Fire Marshals have been on them to complete this project immediately or they will have to go back to only a maximum of 99 occupants when alcohol is being served. The Opera House will be able to have 300 occupants at a time once the sprinkler system is in operation, she advised. Although they appreciate the City's willingness to help them with the unexpected additional cost to install the fire pump, she advised it doesn't help them with their operating budget. They will be back looking for ways to partner with the City to keep the Opera House operating and open. A vote on the motion showed all were voting in favor.

MINUTES: Minutes to the December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved as written by motion of Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, Lowell Bertrand seconding, with all voting in favor.

BUDGET REPORT: Manager Hawley was questioned by Lowell Bertrand regarding the general miscellaneous revenue line item that had \$1,000 budgeted yet there was over \$6,600 received. He advised there are times when revenues arrive that were not planned so those funds

go to this line item. He advised some of the money was from the sale of one of the cruisers (\$4,000) and the sale of scrap metal (over \$1,000) at the Public Works garage.

REWRITE OF ZONING AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS: Zoning Administrator Mel Hawley reported the City's Planning Commission met last night and they are making good progress with the proposed changes to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. He stated he felt very confident matters are coming together and should have something to submit to the City Council by the end of the month. Tim Boutin, of ACRPC, has provided updated Flood Hazard Regulations so that the City will maintain compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program. The Planning Commission did get a two-month extension regarding the municipal planning grant to get this work completed.

ADDISON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (ACRPC): Mel said he is looking into the duties of an ACRPC delegate as that position remains vacant.

POLICE STATION SITE ALTERNATIVES: Manager Hawley hoped everyone had toured the possible sites available that were on the list. He advised Denecker Chevrolet on Main Street would become available in 2013 and that the former Vergennes Building Supply property will soon be owned by the bank. He felt it was now time to see which sites should be eliminated for one reason or another; basically rate them by their priority. All of the properties need further investigation at this point but some criteria should be established. He recommended the City Council members individually rank the properties based on location alone for discussion at the next meeting.

2011 FINANCIAL AUDIT: Manager Hawley explained procedures that are followed processing revenues and expenses that comply with accounting principles and maintain security. Any recommended changes by our auditors have been completed. He explained that the auditors are critical of our not being in full compliance with standards established by the Government Accounting Standards Board to primarily maintain a list of assets. He said it would be very expensive to create such a list.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: City Manager Hawley advised he has been working with Green Mountain Power (GMP) on the street lighting. Currently GMP is behind in their work so they have not switched out much of the lighting at this point but they have adjusted our bill and we will no longer be charged for phantom lights that were on our account. He reported two tax sales were scheduled in December. The bank redeemed one of the properties and the other went to a bidder but the bank is in the process of redeeming that property as well. The City's loan to Shear Properties, LLC using the Maynard Building Revolving Loan Fund closed on December 9<sup>th</sup>. The Riverwalk Project behind the LF Benton Company property at 300 Main Street has an issue. The grant agreement provided for an increase in the grant by 15 percent which VTrans is saying should not be there. The State will be releasing \$60,000 from a 2002 grant that was never closed out and should cover this. We have not transferred ownership of the Boyer truck to the Stevens Hose Company yet because they have not secured insurance. The transfer of ownership may not happen. Manager Hawley advised the scheduled January 24<sup>th</sup> meeting is too early to adopt the Warning for our Annual City Meeting because petitions for articles on the ballot can be filed

with the Clerk through January 26<sup>th</sup>. He recommended moving the meeting to January 31<sup>st</sup>. He also advised he will be away on February 14<sup>th</sup> and requested that meeting be moved to February 21<sup>st</sup>.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY: Various model Conflict of Interest policies were made available to the Board in their packets. Manager Hawley advised he felt each Board in government should have their own policy. Alderman Joe Klopfenstein moved to have Manager Hawley write a Conflict of Interest Policy specific to the City Council. Alderman Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

WATERSHED RECREATION RESERVE FUND: The City sold the Vergennes Watershed Property located in the town of Bristol, as approved by the voters in 1996, for \$300,000 with the income only of the reserve fund to be used for purposes of parks and recreation in the City, advised Manager Hawley. A Policy was established that 25 percent of the earnings would be set aside for growth of the reserve fund and the remaining 75 percent of earnings would go into the Recreation Maintenance Reserve Fund to be used for recreational purposes and \$6,000 to the Sam Fishman Memorial Swimming Pool. Currently the principal is about \$387,000. Manager Hawley reported he and Alderman Klopfenstein have discussed using some of the earnings in the Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund to upgrade deteriorating recreational facilities in the City (\$37,000). The Recreation Committee is focused on upgrading our facilities. At the same time, advised Manager Hawley, he would also like to secure the remaining \$50,000 and raise the threshold of the permanent reserve fund to \$350,000. To accomplish that will require an article on the Warning and voter approval. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to have Manager Hawley draft an article for the Warning to increase the Watershed Reserve Fund from \$300,000 to \$350,000 and to release the remaining \$37,000 towards the Recreation Committee's upgrades. The motion was seconded by Alderman Bertrand with all voting in favor.

ANNUAL REPORTS: City Clerk Joan Devine advised the law says the auditors shall report their findings in writing and cause the same to be mailed or otherwise distributed to the voters or residents of the town. The law also allows voters at a duly warned annual or special meeting to provide notice of the availability of the auditor's report in lieu of mailing or otherwise distributing the report. She advised she would like to include an article on the Warning asking voters to approve the latter due to the amount of reports that are not read and are wasted. She reported that some books must still be printed for those requesting one to be mailed and to meet statutory distributions to State agencies. Other alternatives for making the book available to the public will include putting the report on the City's website or emailing it. Alderman Clara Comeau moved to allow the article on the Warning, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT: At 8:30 p.m. Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman Clara Comeau, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk