

Vergennes City Voice

Volume 11, Issue 1

February 2011

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From The Mayor

Greetings and welcome to what some of us know as a good ole fashion Vermont winter. Before you know it some of us will plant our gardens, mow the lawn and get ready for baseball. But before we do, there are a few things that I need to mention. We will be having our dessert social at the Annual City Meeting in the Vergennes Opera House on February 28th starting at 6:30 p.m.; as in past years please bring a neighbor and a dessert to share. Additionally, we will be collecting non-perishable items for the local food shelf. The Commodore Singers will sing the National Anthem and one other song that I hope everyone will join in on. The Annual City Meeting will start at 7:30 p.m. sharp. This year Alderman Lowell Bertrand suggested that we dedicate our annual report to the brave Americans that have put themselves in harm's way. We are honoring the men and women of all service branches who have put their lives on hold for our country; please take a moment to thank them.

Northland Job Corp will be shoveling snow for seniors and the disabled, call City Hall Monday thru Friday at 877-2841 or 877-3637 to have your name put on the list.

I would like to thank the Public Works Department for all their hard work this winter. They don't put the snow in the road but it is their job to remove it.

Visit our website for additional information regarding the newly formed Recreation Committee and Thirteen the Musical.

We are getting ready for another busy summer and hope you can volunteer your services to make our events a great success. This year we will celebrate our thirtieth Vergennes Day.

This will be the last City Voice that you receive via postal mail. New Postal Regulations make it too costly and labor intensive. Presently it cost more to mail than to print them. Future publications will be available at City Hall and we are in hopes to have them at our local merchant's in addition to the City website.

They passed WHAT zoning ordinance?!

Alex McGuire

Wondering if you can build a shed, how far from the property line you can install a fence, how big you can make that new deck or what restrictions exist on building uses in your neighborhood? Curious about installing solar panels downtown or opening a business with apartments above on the north end of Main Street? Own property in the NEW Historic Neighborhood or Northern Gateway Districts? Join the Vergennes Planning Commission as we explore these questions and more at a Community Forum on Monday, March 21st at 7:00 pm at the Vergennes Opera House. Help us review draft regulations for the new districts and rewritten regulations for the Central Business District. What do (and don't) you want to see in YOUR Vergennes? An agenda and copies of the drafts will be available at the City Manager's office and online (www.vergennes.org) by Monday, February 28th. Hope to see you on March 21st; refreshments and lively conversation guaranteed.

Think Spring

Carol Kress

Is all this snow good for gardens? There are plots at the Vergennes Community Garden just waiting to prove this theory. The Vergennes Community Garden is located at Northlands Job Corps Academy behind the baseball field. Plots are sized 20' x 20' and are available to anyone who has an interest in growing organic vegetables or flowers. They are free of cost, sponsored by the City of Vergennes. Northlands students built a very sturdy tool shed for storing tools and supplies that is available to gardeners. Also, a group of gardeners built a three-stall compost bin to encourage garden composting and hopefully, insure a supply of compost for the garden. A watering hose is located on one end of the garden, also installed by Northlands students.

Last summer several gardeners generously donated produce to the Vergennes Food Shelf – following the guidelines of the “Plant a Row for the Hungry” national campaign. Gardeners should be available to maintain and enjoy their garden plot throughout the season. UVM Extension Master Gardeners are available if anyone needs help or just wants someone to talk “garden” to. Call Carol Kress at 759-7777 or stop in at Vergennes City Hall to reserve a plot.

Staff Sergeant Ken Hawkins

158th Security Forces Squadron, Vermont Air National Guard

In March of 2010, the Vermont Air National Guard sent 45 of its Security Forces members to train in the El Paso area of Texas, in preparation for a 6-month tour in Saudi Arabia. The 158th SFS group returned on November 10, 2010, with all members thankful to be back in the land of Green Mountains.

Our mission wasn't at all like that of our brothers and sisters of the Vermont Army National Guard, who were deployed in Afghanistan and performing combat missions on a daily basis. Ours was a protection mission, at a very small base, surrounded by a very different culture. Osama Bin-Laden's father was nice enough in the 1980s to build a permanent community for the tribal Bedouin with play structures for children and housing for hundreds. But being a nomadic people living in the desert, well that plan just didn't work out. That same small piece of sand would become the base of operations for Desert Shield, Desert Storm and eventually our new home for 6 months.

When I left, I had the concerns that anyone leaving a family behind for 7 plus months might have. Will my wife and child be ok, will the house still be standing, and will they have the support they need when things are difficult? Despite assurances from friends and co-workers, that everything would be all right and that they would help, that concern is something you carry with you everyday.

When I returned home, Mayor Daniels asked how I would feel about writing a brief piece for the City Voice. I was torn between feeling that our mission in Saudi didn't compare with those of our Army counterparts, but realized that perhaps I could write about something that was equally important to both groups. Support from my Vergennes community.

I can't tell you how reassured it made me to be able to talk about the deployment with my daughter's teacher, Mrs. Dodge at VUES, and meeting the teachers my daughter would have the next year. How our friends Darren and Betsy would stay in constant contact with my wife and daughter, just to check in, if nothing else, and by phone from over a thousand miles away, assure me that everything was all right. Danny and Tracey for Sunday dinners and surprise packages. Jim and Amy for technical and communication support (again), and raising the kinds of kids you feel entirely comfortable having your child spend time with. How, during the windstorm when we lost limbs from trees on the edge of the property, Mike Daniels came over with the chainsaw and helped clean things up. Mike didn't ask or say anything about it, he just did it. (He's apparently a plumber as well. Who knew?) All of these kindnesses, made getting up, putting on the battle rattle every day in temperatures of 125 degrees and going to work, bearable. My thanks to the entire community that is Vergennes.

Lastly, I have to give my thanks and all of my love, to my wife and daughter, who had what I think, was the hardest job of all. Ask anyone who deploys with a family left behind, and I'll bet they say the same thing.

Message from Chief George Merkel

Burglaries are an invasive crime. They deprive us of our sense of security and compromise the sanctity of the places we call home. The knowledge of someone entering our home, rifling through our personal items and stealing our hard-earned belongings and heirlooms, leaves us feeling violated. Unfortunately, these types of occurrences have increasingly become more frequent, rather than being rare occasions.

How do we protect ourselves as families and as a community from being victimized? We can organize neighborhood crime watches, we can pay closer attention to what goes on around our neighborhoods, and we can make note of any suspicious behavior, persons or vehicles when we see them. Anytime we see something of a suspicious nature, we should call the police as soon as possible. If you see something that appears as though it is wrong or suspicious, it probably is. Do not hesitate to call us, and call immediately. By no means should you contact the suspicious person, or place yourself in harm's way. Get as much information as possible, write it down, and then call the police.

Another precautionary measure we can take is to notify our neighbors, our families and the police, when we are going to be away from our homes for periods of time longer than normal, i.e., more than a 24-hour period. The Vergennes Police Department has developed a Request for Home Security Check/Security Checklist, and on the form, there is specific information the homeowner will need to provide to us in order to determine who has access to your home while you are away. It alerts us to your absence, and it provides us with the valuable information we need to do our jobs more effectively. Be sure to come into our office at least a couple of days prior to your departure and fill out the Home Security Check Request/Security Checklist in order for us to keep a close eye on your home. While you are gone, we will conduct periodic checks on the security of your residence until you return.

As citizens of the city of Vergennes, we have an advantage over those that live in more rural settings. Most of the time, we know our neighbors, their schedules and the vehicles they operate. Due to the relatively close proximity of each other's homes, it is easier to keep an eye on one another's residences, which most likely are not obscured by large wooded areas or long distances. By taking some simple precautions, we can do a lot to keep our homes secure. Please help us keep your homes safe and maintain Vergennes as a safe and secure place to live.

Dog and Cat Lovers

Joseph Klopfenstein

For dog and cat lovers, cold weather can present some special challenges. The Vermont Veterinary Medicine Association offers these handy tips:

1. Provide outdoor dogs or cats with a dry, insulated pet house or shelter out of the wind. Bring your pet inside if the wind chill or other weather conditions become severe.
2. The nutritional requirements for your pets may change during cold

weather. Outdoor animals may require a higher calorie diet while less active indoor pets may need fewer calories to prevent weight gain. Talk with your vet about your pet's diet.

3. Pets like the smell and taste of antifreeze, but even a very small amount can kill them. Thoroughly clean up spills at once. Tightly close containers and store them where pets cannot get to them.
4. Remove ice, salt and caked mud

from your pet's paws and coat at once. Contact your veterinarian immediately if you suspect your pet has frostbite. Frostbitten skin may turn reddish, white or gray, and it may be scaly or sloughing.

The VVMA website (vtvets.org) offers many other cold weather tips and a wealth of other helpful information. If you have specific questions about cold weather care, talk with your local vet.

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CITY OF VERGENNES

Permit NO. 4

Vergennes, VT 05491

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STD A

The City Voice-A Citywide Newsletter

Street Lighting

City Manager Mel Hawley

There are 222 streetlights in the city of Vergennes. This does not include the lights on the City Green, at Vergennes Falls Park, or outdoor lighting at any of our facilities. We spend over \$31,000 a year on street lighting. This spring we will be working with Green Mountain Power staff to conduct an audit of the account. According to their records, there are five 400-watt crime lights, eleven 250-watt streetlights in the central business district, twelve 175-watt streetlights on MacDonough Drive through Northlands Job Corps Academy, and one-hundred ninety-three 100-watt fixtures throughout the city. All of our lights are Mercury Vapor except one Sodium Vapor crime light. The cost will become much more expensive as time goes by. The Federal Government

banned the manufacture of Mercury Vapor ballasts as of January 1, 2008. The manufacture of Mercury Vapor bulbs will be banned January 1, 2016. So we are working with Green Mountain Power to see if any lights can be reduced in wattage or possibly eliminated. Moving forward, when there is a failure in a fixture, it will be replaced with Light Emitting Diode technology, better known as "LED". Green Mountain Power has already changed four fixtures in the city to LED. One is located at the West Street entrance to Goodrich Corporation, one is in front of Riverside Apartments, and another is in front of the property at 87 Main Street. These three fixtures are Model 20 LEDs. The fourth one is across from City Hall and is a Model 40 LED. As an example, a

100-watt Mercury Vapor light will be replaced with a Model 20 LED. The amount of lumens is reduced by a third, but the design of the fixture is "Full Cutoff" referred to a "Dark Sky compliant" and therefore lessons wasted light. The new fixture directs all light to the ground. But more importantly, a 100-watt Mercury Vapor light uses 129 watts and a Model 20 LED uses just 42 watts – a 66 percent energy savings. This is a huge reduction in our carbon footprint associated with street lighting. We are anxious to see the elimination of all Mercury Vapor and Sodium Vapor lighting in the city.