

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 10, 2015
MINUTES

Mayor William Benton called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Vergennes Fire Station meeting room located at 50 Green Street. Those in attendance were:

Mayor William Benton	Officer Adam O’Neill
Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette	Officer Mark Barber
Alderman Michael Daniels	Officer Jacob Ouellette
Alderman Joe Klopfenstein	Officer William Wager
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	Lauren Morales, CHP International
Alderman Renny Perry	George Sabol, Northlands Center Director
City Manager Mel Hawley	Gerianne Smart, FVOH
City Clerk Joan Devine	Roberta “Cookie” Steponaitis
Police Chief George Merkel	Clara “Ziggy” Comeau
Detective Jason Ouellette	Richard Catchapaw
Officer Patrick Greenslet	Family and Friends of Police Officers
Officer Brent Newton	

POLICE DEPARTMENT SERVICE RECOGNITION CEREMONY: The annual recognition ceremony for the Police Department was led by Chief George Merkel who began his presentation thanking the City Council and the residents for their new police station. Their station set the new standard for small departments such as ours, he advised. The first person he would like to recognize is Roberta “Cookie” Steponaitis and presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation for her self-less service and leadership with our youth. She works with the 7th and 8th graders of the Vergennes Union High School where she instills good values and manners. The recipient of the next recognition, Richard Catchapaw, was not present but the Certificate of Outstanding Service was read by the Chief. He advised Mr. Catchapaw is always there helping his community and stays for however long is needed to get the job done. Moving on to Department awards, Chief Merkel presented Life Saving Awards and pins to Officer Patrick Greenslet and Officer Jacob Ouellette. On January 8th both officers assisted the Fire Department with a fire call on a bitterly cold night. They kicked down a door to an apartment building where an elderly handicapped woman was asleep in her bed unaware that her building was on fire. They assisted in getting her out of the structure and to a safe location. Officer Patrick Greenslet was also presented with a Certificate of Achievement for his motor vehicle enforcement. Officer O’Neill was awarded his 3-year chevron while Officer Wager was awarded his 10-year chevron. Chief Merkel then moved on to recognize Officer Brent Newton’s and Detective Jason Ouellette’s distinguished leadership within the department and promoted them both to the ranks of Patrol Sergeant and Detective Sergeant. He explained that a Sergeant in any department is the balance beam between the Chief and the department. Chief Merkel thanked those who attended the event and pointed out that this was an important night for the officers to be recognized. Mayor Benton thanked the Chief and the members of the department for their time and service to our community. A short intermission was taken at 6:30 p.m.

NORTHLANDS JOB CORPS CENTER DIRECTOR: Interim Center Director Lauren Morales, an employee of CHP International that operates the Northlands Job Corps Center, introduced their new Center Director George Sabol. Mr. Sabol advised he is looking forward to relocating to School Street in Vergennes from Oregon in the very near future. He reported he has 22 years in the U.S. Coast Guard, has a wife and 6 adult children, has been with the Job Corps program for 11 years, and his goal is to stay with them for another 9 years before he retires.

PROPOSED LEASE AMENDMENT-FVOH: Friends of Vergennes Opera House President Gerianne Smart reported they are doing some renovations in the opera house and now have the need for a new office as theirs is being converted into a janitorial and supply closet. Currently the City allows them to use the “ticket booth” for events but they would like to have that space on a more permanent basis for their office, she advised. Mayor Benton stated that they would have to use that space with a Memorandum of Understanding until such time the voters could act on a proposed lease amendment that would include the “ticket booth” as part of the premises under lease. It is too late to include this on the ballot for the Annual City Meeting, he advised. Manager Hawley advised he has spoken with Gerianne about the City having, in essence, a right-of-way to have access to the vault located easterly of in the “ticket booth”. He also pointed out that the voters approved an article specifying a 25-year lease to the FVOH for the space upstairs but the lease itself is written so that it has an automatic 25-year renewable clause. Mel felt that in 13 years the voters will need to consider ratifying the renewal which can be dealt with at that time. Alderman Renny Perry moved to direct City Manger Hawley to draft Memorandum of Understanding between the City Council and Friends of Vergennes Opera House for use of the “ticket Booth” during the interim and commit that an amendment to the lease go to the voters. Alderman Mike Daniels seconded he motion with all voting in favor.

WARRANT: The Warrant totaling \$44,966.64 was circulated for review and signatures of approval.

MINUTES: Minutes to the January 27th meeting were amended on the second page under Recreation Plan. The first sentence was corrected to read, “Mayor Benton prepared a comprehensive plan outline for recreation that he would like to see a group tackle” After “Alderman Donnelly recommended that a survey be available at the polling place.” the following sentence was added. “Alderman Perry suggested the draft be done first administratively and then submitted to the group for finalization. Alderman Michael Daniels moved to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

CERTIFICATE OF NO SUIT OR APPEAL PENDING: A certificate of no appeal or suit pending for the 2014 Grand List was passed for signatures of the City Council. Once signed by the Board of Listers and the City Council the grand list is sealed and its validity shall not be an issue by any party in any hearing or trial in any court.

AMEND POSTING LOCATIONS: Locations for posting legal notices as determined by the City Council are City Hall, ANWSU office and the information booth, advised Manager Hawley. The door to the information booth is frozen shut at this time, he reported, and recommended the information booth be removed from the locations and replaced with the post office. Alderman

Perry moved to approve that recommendation, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

SAM FISHMAN SWIMMING POOL RATES: City Manager Hawley advised he will be meeting with the swim team coordinators one more time before setting pool rates next week.

COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION PLAN: Mayor Benton reported he contacted Dustin Hunt who lives in Vergennes and works for Middlebury Recreation Department. He has also met with Kathy Rossier and will put her in touch with Dustin along with one other resident under consideration to be part of the working group on the plan outline. He advised he drafted a recreation survey for the polls and has had Dustin look at it for any adjustments before its release. He said it would be distributed to the City Council for input at the next meeting.

BUDGET REPORT: Manager Hawley advised Public Works has ordered more salt but we may not be able to get any due to the shortage. The Police Department has \$110,000 in payroll grants which has allowed us to keep that budget in line. He advised he will not be surprised if the Sewer Department budget goes over this year with all the major maintenance projects that have had to be done.

PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUND PROJECT: City Manager Hawley reported the Development Review Board cancelled their February 2nd meeting due to the storm and the public hearing was rescheduled for February 16th at 7 p.m. at City Hall regarding the project.

OTHER BUSINESS: Alderman Mike Daniels reported Stevens Hose Company wants to expand the kitchen at the fire station and will come to the City Council in the near future.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:25 p.m. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk