

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
APRIL 22, 2014
MINUTES

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

Mayor William Benton	Alderman Joe Klopfenstein
Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette	Alderman Lynn Donnelly
Alderman Renny Perry	City Clerk Joan Devine
Alderman Michael Daniels	City Manager Mel Hawley
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	

WARRANT: The warrant totaling \$45,495.98 was available for review and was circulated for signatures of approval.

MINUTES: Minutes to the April 8, 2014 meeting were presented for approval. Clarification was made on the AT&T Lease Amendment after being questioned. Alderman Michael Daniels moved to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

APPOINTMENT/ACRPC: Manager Hawley advised there we still need two alternate delegates to Addison County Regional Planning Commission (ACRPC). Shannon Haggett has agreed to fill one of those vacancies. Alderman Renny Perry moved to appoint Shannon Haggett as an alternate delegate to ACRPC. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette with all voting in favor.

REPEAL TAXI ORDINANCE LICENSE: Alderman Renny Perry advised he researched 10 to 15 Vermont communities likely to have an ordinance for taxi licenses. A clear majority did not have an ordinance for this and those that did, in his opinion, over-regulated, he advised. He found that Vermont law mostly deals with the insurance that is required when offering a vehicle for hire. Alderman Perry reported he would like to at least have a record on file for someone offering this service with proof of a driver's license and insurance. Alderman Lynn Donnelly stated that she and City Clerk Devine knew a compromise might be needed and would suggest licenses only for those businesses that are based out of Vergennes or the majority of their business involves pick-up or delivery in the city.

Manager Hawley recommended granting a taxi license to Nicholas Schieldrop, d/b/a Shelburne Car Service, as applied for in December 2013. He advised he has spoken with Nicholas' insurance broker several times and the appropriate insurance has been issued and verified with a certificate from his New Hampshire insurance broker. Senior Alderman Ouellette moved to issue a 2014 Taxi License to Nicholas Schieldrop, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor except Lynn Donnelly who abstained. Lynn did not support issuing a license under our current ordinance because it references Vermont law that has been repealed since 1991.

WATERSHED RECREATION RESERVE FUND POLICY: Following the policy for this fund, Manager Hawley advised it has been customary in recent years to take \$6,000 from the annual interest earnings (75% portion) to supplement revenues of the Sam Fishman Memorial Swimming Pool. Earnings in excess of the \$6,000 have been retained in the Recreation Facilities Maintenance

Fund. He went on to explain that funds from the Watershed Reserve Fund are invested in CDs and municipal bonds with Edward Jones and the market value fluctuates from month to month. Currently we have a face value of \$359,000 plus small amount in the cash account. He advised he is not looking for any action on this but wondered if the City Council still wanted to fund the pool operation at \$6,000 this year that would get transferred in July or is everyone comfortable waiting to see if the pool even needs those funds. Alderman Klopfenstein felt we should continue with the recreation allocation. Alderman Daniels said he was fine with waiting to see if it was needed. Alderman Perry agreed there was no harm in waiting and funds can be reallocated elsewhere if not needed. Alderman Bertrand wondered if we could put the \$6,000 back or a portion of it if it was not needed. Alderman Ouellette suggested moving \$3,000 over in July and if we need more, that transfer can occur later. Manager Hawley advised if the \$6,000 is budgeted, that it gets funded up front and the City Council can review this again at the end of the season.

REFORMATION OF RECREATION COMMITTEE: Mayor Benton advised we were waiting for results from the April 16th Community Visit meeting before we addressed this agenda item. The priorities for action to move the community forward were to improve transportation and parking, expand our community and economic development capacity, and redevelop the basin area. Using the larger community is more representative for direction, he advised. Alderman Perry stated that we should continue to look at other communities to see what their respective charge and program costs are. Recreation Committee Chair Joe Klopfenstein advised he was disappointed they did not make the final cut with their plans. He stated they would like the City Council to commit to looking at a formal committee. He would prefer not to enlarge the committee but to focus it. Do we want a coordinator for programs, do we move forward with a walking path, can we get approval to go forward with Toddler Playground, should we start the ground work with the transportation walkability path/bike route are all considerations, he advised. They do have a project they want to move forward with and finish. Alderman Perry thought the committee should stay in place as it is until the City Council is ready to revise it. Senior Alderman Ouellette felt that a small committee is easier to work with. Alderman Klopfenstein agreed unless the charge is larger where they will need a broader group. Alderman Donnelly felt a smaller committee makes it difficult to get enough members there in which case then you accomplish nothing. She went on to advise the proposed Toddler Playground did not have the support at the forum that she expected so we will need to decide if we are moving forward with this unless dollars are being raised elsewhere. Alderman Klopfenstein stated the Toddler Playground was not part of the forum but they plan on fund-raising the balance. They did receive a \$21,000 grant towards the project and do not want to give it back, he advised. The Vergennes Union Elementary School board supports the project and neighbors were invited to the meetings but they did not appear. Mayor Benton felt it would be okay to go ahead or to get financing in place but we need more indication of support. Alderman Klopfenstein asked for an endorsement to move forward with the project as it relates to zoning and hearings. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette recommended they find other locations so that they can offer two or three options for this park. Mayor Benton reported the time and days of their meetings have not been good based on his emails.

City Manager Hawley stated that he would like the City Council to talk about fundraising for City projects. He felt fraternal organizations can fundraise but the City shouldn't be doing that. He did advise that the Sam Fishman family annually donates \$2,000 towards the operation of the Sam Fishman Memorial Swimming Pool and the Vergennes Fishing Derby Committee does fundraising for their event. He recommended the City Council make it clear to Alderman Klopfenstein what authorization is being given and not be loose. Alderman Daniels wondered if a fundraising policy

was needed. Mayor Benton felt a consensus has been given for the committee to get back to work. Alderman Klopfenstein will head up researching other town recreation committees. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to reappoint the recreation committee as it stands, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

COMMUNITY VISIT: Mayor Benton advised the community meeting held on April 16, 2014 set economic development as one of the priorities that could be supported by the one percent local option tax. The funds could be used to develop the basin area as well as the pedestrian walkability/biking route. More discussion can be had on this at the next "Community Visit" by the Vermont Council on Rural Development being held Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. at the Bixby library. He encouraged everyone to attend. Alderman Klopfenstein noted there was a clear consensus by those present to go ahead with the one percent local tax option. Manager Hawley advised taking this step will require a City Charter change and a community vote. To do this by November would be an ambitious goal, he advised, but waiting until March is too late to get Legislative approval. Mayor Benton advised the one percent local option tax would net about \$130,000 of the \$190,000 annual estimate and the City Council gets to decide on allocation of those new revenues. Alderman Mike Daniels felt the City Council should let this play out with the task force members who signed up to investigate this revenue source.

RECYCLING PROGRAM BUDGET: City Manager Mel Hawley presented a proposed FY2015 budget for the recycling program. He advised he is looking for approval of the budget early so that he can get word to adjacent towns of their slightly increased assessments. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to adopt the budget as submitted, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

BUDGET REPORT: Revenues have rebounded, advised Manager Hawley, and he is feeling real good about the budget at this point. He reported all VLCT insurances have been paid. The administration budget is fine. The Police Department appears in good shape but we still need to get through the Memorial Day holiday. The upgrade of trucks in the Public Works Department is paying off in salt, sand and manpower costs, he advised. The line-item for salt and sand is only at 80 percent despite the tough winter, he reported. Mayor Benton advised they will still be doing \$100,000 in paving in the spring. The Fire Department needs to replace their furnace this year at a cost of \$20,000.00, advised Manager Hawley; otherwise they are in good shape. Matt Crowley has repaired the deteriorated roof that hangs over the ramp and Mike LeBeau is doing the painting in the front. As for the Sewer Fund, the last quarterly billing has been done and there are three more excess gallonage billings by year-end. Expenditures are fine. The new Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator, Rick Chaput, is working out great, he advised. Manager Hawley said he is looking into having a professional study done on the plant to project operating cost and capabilities of the plant if there is a change in the phosphorus. The study will cost \$8,700. Alderman Perry felt this new standard is putting a tremendous cost burden on the towns versus the positive impact it will have on Lake Champlain. He feels they are afraid to attack the real problem; the farmers and discharge from their fields. If this change in phosphorus level was to have more impact it would be different, he advised. Alderman Klopfenstein countered that it is not all farmers as erosion is a major contributor to phosphorous in Lake Champlain.

POLICE STATION UPDATE: Nothing new there, advised Manager Hawley, other than to decide on whether to approve a change order to expand the parking lot.

TRAIN STATION SEWER EXTENSION UPDATE: Manager Hawley reported he received an email from Wayne Davis confirming that Merle Miller from State Buildings and General Services received and reviewed the draft sewer extension agreement and that it is now under review by the Attorney General's office.

VERGENNES BURYING GROUND FENCE: Mayor Benton reported that an 8' gate at the end of the cemetery will be installed so vehicles can get in and out based on the location of the head stones. It will cost about \$350 more to add a 4' gate on the roadside. The sign location has also been discussed. He said it is still hoped this project will be done before Memorial Day.

OTHER: Manager Hawley reported Carrie Barrows has resigned from the Development Review Board. He also reported that Alexandria McGuire has given early notice that she is not interested in serving beyond her August 1, 2014 term on the Planning Commission and Development Review Board. Lowell Bertrand and Clara Comeau are alternates to the Development Review Board and will attend meetings until the vacancy is filled. Also, he advised, eighteen high school students worked with the Public Works Department during their spring break.

ADJOURNMENT: Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m. The motion was seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk