

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
APRIL 28, 2015
MINUTES

Mayor William Benton called the 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	Gerianne Smart, FVOH
Senior Alderman Renny Perry	Susan Schaeffer, FVOH
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	Debbie Emerson, FVOH
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	Lynn Perry, FVOH
Alderman Joe Klopfenstein	Karen Petersen, FVOH
Alderman Michael Daniels	Susan Walsh, FVOH
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Franz Collas
City Manager Mel Hawley	Heather Potter
City Clerk Joan Devine	Shannon Haggett

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL HEARING: Mayor Benton read the notice of informational hearing for the upcoming vote on the proposed amendment to the lease with Friends of Vergennes Opera House, Inc. dated November 6, 2003. Mayor Benton reported the article will be presented to the voters on May 5, 2015. The so-called “ticket booth” would be added to the description of the leased premises if approved by the voters. The purpose of this hearing is to answer any questions and listen to comments regarding this proposal. Friends of Vergennes Opera House President Gerianne Smart explained some of the renovations they have been doing in the opera house that included doing away with the office upstairs and using that space for their cleaning supplies and equipment as well as being used as storage space for their new lift. Having use of the ticket booth located in the lobby downstairs has been a welcomed improvement and they are looking forward to converting it to serve as their new office as well. She said they are also hopeful that the space can be manned by volunteers in the future as a welcome center. She went on to advise they have shifted their energy and have invested approximately \$168,000 in improvements over the last two years. President Smart stated that they are now a 100 percent volunteer organization and appreciate how the community has supported them.

VISITORS: Franz Collas, d/b/a SoJo Tennis, LLC, introduced himself and thanked the City Council for their approval of his use of the tennis courts. He reported that he specializes in starting and developing tennis programs for communities. He is currently the Director of tennis at the Town of Middlebury’s Park and Recreation Department. His usual method of operation is 80 percent of lesson fees go to his business and the towns receive 20 percent for their role in the administrative work. Because that is not going to be the situation here, he advised, he thought maybe the 20 percent could be used for students who cannot afford the lesson fee. Manager Hawley confirmed the City is not set up to handle the administrative work this year but would like to see the program run to its full potential and have the numbers reported back to the City Council. Mr. Collas advised they did receive the grant for the equipment and that has all been ordered and delivered. The program starts June 23rd, he advised.

MINUTES: Senior Alderman Perry moved to approve the minutes of April 14, 2015 as presented. The motion was seconded by Alderman Daniels with all voting in favor.

WARRANT: The Warrant totaling \$18,893.30 was circulated for review and signatures of approval. Manager Hawley reported the warrant also includes a check for \$5,450 that will be mailed next week to the high bidder at a tax sale as the owner of the property came in and paid the delinquent taxes and fees today. He wanted to allow enough time for the property owner's check to be processed before this transaction occurred.

VERGENNES REVOLVING LOAN FUND COMMITTEE: Mayor Benton reported that City Manager Hawley has spoken with Christopher LaPierre (a banker) and he had contacted Nancy Larrow (a realtor) and they have both confirmed they would be willing to serve on the Vergennes Revolving Loan Fund Committee. Senior Alderman Renny Perry moved to make those appointments, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor. Mayor Benton said he will have a recommendation for the remaining available seat which must be a business or commercial property owner.

PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUND PROJECT: Manager Hawley reported he has contacted Chrissy Gilhuly and requested an extension for getting the pre-school playground project under way as requested by the City Council. He advised Chrissy needed to contact the committee members of their decision and agreed to get back in touch with him earlier today. He reported he is still waiting for that contact. City Manager Hawley recommended the City Council change the allocation of funds from the Water Tower Fund to the Watershed Fund as the City Council received clear authority from the voters in 1996 for the allocation funds for recreational purposes. Senior Alderman Perry did not feel we should make any changes to the project until we get through the court procedure. Alderman Daniels agreed with Senior Alderman Perry; he also felt we should wait until we get through the court procedure first. Senior Alderman Perry reported injunctions usually get quicker action. Alderman Donnelly stated she was concerned that legal expenses are building.

L.F. BENTON COMPANY LAND PURCHASE: City Manager Hawley advised we still do not have a boundary survey.

VTRANS CLASS 2 ROADWAY GRANT: Manager Hawley reported that we will likely be awarded a \$175,000 VTrans grant to repave all of Panton Road (.57 miles) and to repave the south end of South Maple Street from the City line to Victory Street (.60 miles). We will also likely receive a structures grant for \$50,000 that we will use to replace the culvert on South Maple Street just south of Victory Street. There is \$75,000 remaining in the budget for highway improvements that will be used to repave from the Otter Creek Bridge north as far as the money can go, he reported.

REDEVELOPMENT OF GEVRY PARK IN WALTHAM: Manager Hawley advised the so-called Gevry Mobile Home Park, located in Waltham, was connected to the City sewer system in the 1960s. At that time, the City Council simply made motions authorizing out-of-town connections as long as the recipient paid for the pipe and its installation; there were no formal agreements. Over the past decade, the Gevrys purchased the deteriorated mobile homes and

continued to pay a sewer assessment to the City for 14 units since the Park closed, he advised. It is the intention of the Addison County Community Trust, if their proposed plan is approved, to demolish the existing 13 vacant mobile homes and replace them with 7 duplexes. The opportunity is here for the City to get a formal agreement with the property owner for sewer service outside of the City as we have done with the Vergennes Ferrisburgh shopping center owned by F.I.C., LLC and the State of Vermont for the train station. City Manager Hawley advised he was looking for consensus from the Board to do this, which he received, so that when he goes to the public hearing in Waltham on May 13th he can testify that there is no formal agreement for sewer service to the property and such an agreement is desired..

PLANNING COMMISSION UPDATE: Planning Commission Chair Shannon Haggett reported they have almost completed their formal review of the zoning and subdivision regulations. He said they will soon hold a public hearing on their proposed amendments and then submit them to the City Council for its review. He also reported that his group that is involved with administering the Strong Communities, Better Connections grant is now interviewing two finalist (there were six firms that responded to the request for proposal) to develop a master plan for improvements in the basin area, Main Street and for pedestrian accessibility. City Manager Hawley also announced that the Planning Commission now meets on the fourth Monday of each month instead of the third Monday of the month.

COMMENTS: Alderman Daniels reminded everyone that Green-Up Day is this Saturday and they will be on the City Green from 7 a.m. until noon. Green-Up Day bags and gloves will be given out to the participants. He advised last year they had 190 participants.

ADJOURNMENT: At 6:55 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Perry with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk