

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 12, 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 and announced that the agenda is amended to consider the request by Nick Patch for extended use of the municipal docks. Those in attendance were:

Mayor William Benton	Stanley Hotte
Senior Alderman Renny Perry	Michelle Eckels
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	Susan Rakowski
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	Sarah Cowan
Alderman Michael Daniels	Kevin Rooney
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Barbara Saunders
City Manager Mel Hawley	Ilana Snyder
City Clerk Joan Devine	Nick Patch

VISITORS: Barbara Saunders, Co-Director of the Mary Johnson Children's Center (MJCC) in Middlebury, reported they are requesting support from the City in applying for a grant to conduct a planning study for a children's center to be located off Armory Lane. Sarah Cowan advised she and Kevin Rooney act as an ad hoc advisory group to MJCC for early daycare or pre-school needs. As Vergennes does not have a public daycare facility, she said they would like to create one that will be overseen by a reputable organization. Mary Johnson Children's Center can purchase land on Armory Lane from Housing Vermont and would like to construct a facility that will service 30 children between the ages of 18 months and 5 years old who come from low to moderate income households and the new center would create 6 to 8 new jobs. The planning grant, if successful, would be \$30,000 from the Vermont Community Development Program awarded to the municipality with MJCC being a sub-grant recipient. Sarah Cowan advised the planning project will cost about \$100,000. They have already secured a \$50,000 federal grant earmarked from Northlands Job Corps, \$25,000 Walter Cerf Community Fund commitment, \$5,000 commitment from the Turrell Fund, and Mary Johnson Children's Center will contribute \$20,000. Manager Hawley advised this process is not new to us. We have used Vermont Community Development Program funds for the renovation of the old Maynard Auto Supply building, the John Graham Emergency Shelter renovation project, and the senior housing center. Manager Hawley reported the request would need City Council authorization to warn a public hearing and a resolution will be needed at some point. Alderman Michael Daniels moved to authorize the City Manager to proceed with advertising a June 9th public hearing required for the application and to prepare necessary documentation as needed. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor. Mayor Benton asked if they had a time table established for this project. Ilana Snyder, Co-Director of MJCC, reported they plan to submit their application in August, should hear a decision by mid-fall, and the planning would begin. Mayor Benton felt that was fabulous and long overdue.

MINUTES: Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to table the minutes of April 28, 2015 as they were not the final version, seconded by Alderman Fritz, with all voting in favor.

WARRANT: The Warrant totaling \$58,374.83 was circulated for review and signatures of approval from the Board

VERGENNES SWIM TEAM COMMITTEE REQUEST FOR FUNDING: A detailed letter was submitted by the Vergennes Swim Team Committee with statistical information as well as procedures they maintain each year. The purpose of the letter was to inform the City Council that they have reached a point where it is becoming difficult to be completely self-funded due to declining memberships and

paying coaching staff competitive wages. Swim team families volunteer for bottle drives, car washes, furnish food and work the concession stands to raise funds, advised swim team committee member Susan Rakowski. Financial funding from the City would provide a cushion to fundraisers and allow them to guarantee coaching salaries without having to scramble to have a fundraiser. They proposed a line item in the City recreation budget for the Vergennes Swim Team that could be reallocated if it was not needed. Swim team practice begins June 8th so they will not have a membership total until closer to that date, she advised. Senior Alderman Perry stated he would be supportive of some financial support if it was found to be necessary.

REQUEST TO USE CITY DOCKS: Nick Patch advised the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum has a rowing team involving high school students that utilizes the basin area and would like extended use of dock space for their program. They have 30-40 students who participate in the after-school spring and fall rowing seasons, he advised. Time periods they would like to use the docks is the last week in April through the first week in June and then again from mid-September through mid-October. Manager Hawley advised that the ordinance for use of the docks prohibits docking a boat for more than 48 consecutive hours however the ordinance provides for an extension if approved by the City Council. Alderman Donnelly moved to give permission for the times requested and consider it a small contribution towards school activities. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Perry with all voting in favor.

PRE-SCHOOL PLAYGROUND PROJECT: City Manager Hawley advised Attorney James Ouimette has heard from the court and they have rescheduled the status conference to July 9th for the suit filed by John O'Donnell. He also reported that Chrissy Gilhuly emailed him and advised the committee that acts on the State recreation facilities grants has denied our request for an extension of the June 30 deadline for which the pre-school playground project must be well underway. Because of the law suit and because the project cannot be completed within the \$42,000 not-to-exceed budget set by the City Council, he recommended the City Council rescind the \$21,000 allocation from the Water Tower Fund. Manager Hawley said he has asked the State that the City retain some of the funds to cover all or a portion of the design fees. Senior Alderman Perry moved to rescind the allocation as recommended. The motion was seconded by Alderman Bertrand with all voting in favor. Mayor Benton departed at this time and Senior Alderman Perry presided over the meeting.

MEIGS ROAD SEWER SERVICE: Meigs Road property owner Stanley Hotte advised he has been trying for 7 years to get proper sewer service at his residence and eliminate sewerage that on occasion surfaces on his yard when the sewer line that serves other properties on Meigs Road is not functioning properly. He advised he has been working with Manager Hawley who is creating a map of the sewer lines in the area. Manager Hawley presented a map of the properties on Meigs Road and explained the location of various privately owned pump stations, force mains, and gravity lines that ultimately connect to the sewer main at the south end of Meigs Road. The sewer main runs on the east side of Meigs Road in front of the Hotte property but currently only serves the building occupied by Country Home Products. Stanley Hotte gave his understanding of who bought what property and when and pointed out that the neighbor's (Harold and Helena Leach) sewer line was connected to his sewer line without an easement. Manager Hawley explained a septic system used to serve the property now owned by Harold and Helena until they connected to the system. There was an error in the deed for the Leach property. It was described as a 5-sided parcel at 100' on each side so when they connected to the sewer line it was thought that they were on their property. The Leach property has since been surveyed and the lot is much smaller and only 4-sided. Mel advised, as City Health Officer, he is concerned with what appears to be sewerage in the ditch near Field Automotive and the Quonset hut owned by Feed Commodities International. There are multiple parties involved but if sewer is surfacing it needs to be addressed. Mr. Hotte reiterated that the Leach property is connected to his sewer line illegally and thousands of gallons of sewerage run on the ground when the line fails. He would like the City to put in a new sewer main on the west side of Meigs Road for himself, the Leach property and possibly the property owned by the Newton family.

Senior Alderman Perry advised the City Council understands his request and will look into it but cannot give him an answer tonight. Mr. Hotte departed at 7:20 p.m.

L.F. BENTON COMPANY LAND PURCHASE: Alderman Daniels stated he was concerned with the press announcing that the City has a formal agreement to buy a parcel of land from the L.F. Benton Company as that is not the case. Manager Hawley advised L.F. Benton Company has verbally agreed to sell the lot to the City for a purchase price that has not yet been publically disclosed. A draft survey of the property along Macdonough Drive from the Potash Brook to the municipal dock property prepared by Tim Cowan was reviewed. City Manager Hawley pointed out that there appears to be a parcel of land between the Benton property we are considering purchasing and the City's property to the south. There is some possibility that the heirs of T Mack, as stated on the draft survey, may have claim to that lot. Alderman Donnelly advised she wants to wait on making a decision to purchase until we can find out from Attorney Ouimette how we could acquire the newly discovered lot if indeed it is abandoned. Senior Alderman Perry advised the City is trying to acquire all that land for public access and future development through grants. Alderman Daniels pointed out that someone in the Mack family could choose to keep that parcel and that would interfere with our goal. Manager Hawley stated he would be curious to look at the grand lists from 1933 on to see what the Mack's owned until 1956 when the Bentons bought their property. Senior Alderman Perry suggested we forego any action on this until more information is available. Manager Hawley advised the purchase price offered by L.F. Benton Company is \$20,000 and Charlene Stavenow appraised that parcel at \$30,000. The City paid \$20,000 for the Clark/Pollender lot, he stated.

MANAGER'S REPORT: City Manager Hawley advised the City has hired Daniel Flynn, II to fill the vacancy in the Public Works Department. Appraiser Cy Bailey has come and done his fieldwork for the 2015 Grand List, the Listers met last night and Grievance Day has been set for June 1st at 5 p.m., he advised. The cost of offering the recycling program is going to increase significantly this year from about \$5,000 a month to about \$6,100 a month with the possibility of rates changing during the year based on the value of recyclable materials. The value of recycled materials has dropped by two-thirds. He suggested the City Council consider closing down the drop-off program that is currently funded by property taxes. That will leave all residents with only independent curb side pickup service like other communities have done.

COMMENTS: Alderman Daniels reported there were 135 participants on Green-Up Day who picked up 63 bags of trash, several tires, and a chair.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:40 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the regular meeting. The motion was seconded by Alderman Daniels with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Vergennes City Clerk