

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL  
JUNE 14, 2016  
MINUTES

Mayor William Benton called the regular meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. at the Vergennes Fire Station meeting room located at 50 Green Street. Those in attendance were:

Mayor William Benton	City Manager Mel Hawley
Senior Alderman Renny Perry	City Clerk Joan Devine
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Andy Kirkaldy
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	Robert Trepanier
Alderman Mathew Chabot	Rena Trepanier
Alderman Mark Koenig	
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	

WARRANT: The Warrant totaling \$63,661.51 was circulated for review and signatures of approval.

MINUTES: Minutes to the May 24, 2016 meeting were approved after a minor spelling correction. Alderman Lowell Bertrand made the motion, seconded by Senior Alderman Perry, with all voting in favor.

BIKE RACK ON THE CITY GREEN: Senior Alderman Renny Perry, who is also President of Vergennes Partnership, requested permission to put an additional bike rack on the City Green. City Manager Hawley advised the City Green Policy authorizes him to approve such requests but he likes the City Council to be aware of and approve all changes to the City Green. Senior Alderman Perry advised the Partnership will purchase the rack and seek out sponsors later. He further advised the rack will be moveable and is intended to serve patrons of the restaurants so they would like to locate it in the southeast corner of the City Green. Alderman Mathew Chabot stated that the southeast corner of the City Green has high visibility and did not feel a bike rack should be seen at first glance. Alderman Donnelly said that corner is vital to the Farmers' Market and this would be the third item added to the City Green in two months. Alderman Lowell Bertrand suggested maybe the rack could be installed on the backside of the information booth. Senior Alderman Perry explained that bicyclists have very expensive bikes and they want to be able to see them and know they are safe while they are in the restaurants. Currently they are locking them to the metal rails in front of the restaurants. The city of Vergennes is referenced on multiple bike routes, he advised. Alderman Mike Koenig recommended the rack be located further down on the southeast corner closer to the bandstand where the bicyclists could still see them but not in the prime space being discussed. Senior Alderman Perry advised the Partnership will purchase a good bike rack and locate it there. If that location is not working out, it can be moved elsewhere, he advised. Alderman Lynn Donnelly moved to go ahead with the bike rack with a location agreeable to both parties. The motion was seconded by Alderman Bertrand with all voting in favor.

WI-FI AT VERGENNES FALLS PARK AND MACDONOUGH PARK: Senior Alderman Renny Perry, again speaking on behalf of Vergennes Partnership, requested an allocation from the Otter Creek Basin Improvement Fund to install Wi-Fi in the basin area and Vergennes Partnership will cover the monthly cost. City Manager Hawley confirmed that fund is to provide for infrastructure in the basin. He reported he has met with Matt Daniels, who lives adjacent to Macdonough Dock, and Matt is agreeable to a COMCAST line going into his attic with an antenna mounted on the back of his house or garage. The monthly fee for Wi-Fi is about \$90 and he would like the Vergennes Partnership to own it and sell advertising. Mayor Benton advised the improvement may also result in increase donations for docking space. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to allocate necessary funds from the Otter Creek Basin

Improvement Fund for the installation of this improvement at the basin. Alderman Mark Koenig seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

VERGENNES JUNIOR FISHING DERBY: City Manager Hawley advised the Vergennes Junior Fishing Derby Committee has requested permission to close the portion of Macdonough Drive from Comfort Hill to High Street on June 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> to allow for additional parking and safety. Last year was the first time the road was closed, neighbors and emergency organizations were notified, and there were no complaints, he reported. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve closing the road as requested for this year and future years. Senior Alderman Perry seconded the motion with all voting in favor. City Manager Hawley will write a letter to residents of Macdonough Drive, Comfort Hill, and High Street.

DOG WARRANT: A Dog Warrant listing 18 dogs that are not registered as required by law was presented to the City Council for signatures. City Clerk Devine reported each pet owner has received two letters advising they needed to register their dog. The Dog Warrant was passed for signatures of approval and will be given to Police Chief Merkel for further action including possible impoundment.

VOTED PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS: City Manager Hawley provided a copy of the law that states charitable and fraternal organizations that own real estate may be exempted from taxation if voter approved. He reported that two such properties, Vergennes Area Rescue Squad, Inc. and Vergennes Masonic Association, Inc. were approved in 2011 for tax exemption which expired with the 2015 grand list. Typically the organizations would file a petition for continued exemption for an additional five years in January and the voters would vote on the article on Town Meeting Day. This did not happen this year, he said, and did not come to his attention until the 2016 grand list was printed. At this point there are two errors in the 2016 grand list as both properties are listed as non-taxable, he stated. Discussion was held on alternatives available to correct this over-sight. It was agreed that both organizations would be notified of the findings and given the opportunity to petition for a Special City Meeting, with filing dates for the petition, so that it would coincide with the Primary Election being held August 9<sup>th</sup>.

WATER TOWER FUND ALLOCATION: City Manager Mel Hawley requested an allocation of \$5,476.58 from the Water Tower Fund for costs associated with the Vergennes Partnership / Ticket Booth renovation project at City Hall. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve that request, seconded by Alderman Koenig, with all voting in favor.

REDIRECTION OF AT&T LEASE PAYMENT: A request for a one-time redirection of \$2,400 of the AT&T cell tower lease payments was made by City Manager Hawley. Manager Hawley explained how our lease agreement was set up originally with a rental payment and there was a \$600 monthly credit on the AT&T bill which was primarily for Police Department cell phones and air cards. This spring AT&T put additional equipment on the water tower so the lease agreement was re-negotiated. Payment to the City was increased and at the same time they eliminated the \$600 monthly credit on the phone bill causing an unbudgeted expense to the Police Department while unexpected funds have been going to the Water Tower Fund. Alderman Matt Koenig inquired if this redirection of funds would comply with the Water Tower Fund Policy. Manager Hawley advised it would not but AT&T changed the rules mid-stream. Senior Alderman Renny Perry moved to allow a one-time redirection of \$2,400 (\$600 times 4 months) to off-set unbudgeted expenses. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

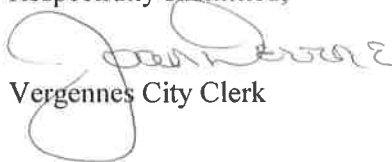
CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: City Manager Hawley reported he has communicated with Casella and rates reported last week at \$50 per ton of recyclables are no different today. He went on to report he ran final projection figures for the Sewer Department and is recommending an increase in the rate from \$87.50 per quarter to \$96.00 beginning the first billing in FY2017.

Addressing the proposed FY2017 general fund budget, City Manager Hawley advised each penny added to the current city tax rate, based on the current grand list value, will raise \$22,000. If the general fund budgets are adopted as proposed, when using \$60,000 as a fund balance carryover, the tax rate would increase from 75 cents to 84 cents. He explained the Police Department's sizeable increase is due to the inclusion of costs for two new cruisers as well as wages for Detective Ouellette who is no longer funded by the Drug Task Force.

Alderman Mathew Chabot requested department heads with their budgets be present at the budget work sessions.

ADJOURNMENT: At 5:55 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Mark Koenig, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vergennes City Clerk", is written over the typed name.

Vergennes City Clerk