

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 21, 2016
MINUTES

Mayor William Benton called the special meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. at the Vergennes Fire Station meeting room located at 50 Green Street. The purpose of the meeting was to work on the proposed FY2017 City budget and to receive an updated status of delinquent taxes. Those in attendance were:

Mayor William Benton
Senior Alderman Renny Perry
Alderman Lowell Bertrand
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz
Alderman Mathew Chabot
Alderman Mark Koenig
Alderman Lynn Donnelly

City Manager Mel Hawley
City Clerk Joan Devine
Reporter Andy Kirkaldy
Michelle Eckels
Police Chief George Merkel

City Manager Hawley reported there are no changes to the previously submitted proposed Recycling Program budget. The Sewer Department budget as amended, combined with the fund balance, is in need of a rate increase from \$87.50 to \$96.00 per quarter, he advised. As for the Swimming Pool budget, he advised Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) did a safety inspection of the pool site and recommends a lightning detection device on site. He also advised he is considering a separate building for storage of the 300 gallons of chlorine and other chemicals used at the pool. The existing area is used for the lane lines and starting blocks for swim team, lesson equipment, as well as storage of chemicals. We can apply for funding through VLCT-PACIF that will pay up to 50 percent of the cost.

Delinquent Tax Collector Mel Hawley advised that delinquent taxes were at \$40,999.00 on June 15, 2016 compared to last year's number of \$40,624.80 on August 29, 2015. The billing is over \$4,000,000 so the amount of delinquent taxes is impressive, he stated. Taxes not collected by August 29, 2016 (60 days after the end of the fiscal year) are treated as deferred revenue and thus are not counted in determining the fund balance. He predicted the balance on August 29, 2016 to be about \$18,000; the approximate \$22,000 difference can reduce the tax rate by one cent by increasing the fund balance accordingly

The swim team currently has 102 members this year compared to 78 last year, advised Manager Hawley, although some may drop out by this Thursday; the deadline for getting a refund of the registration fee. The new diving boards have been installed.

Mayor Benton advised if the proposed budget is adopted as presented, it will require a nine cent increase in the City tax rate.

Grievance results are in the mail, advised Manager Hawley, and those property owners can appeal to the Board of Civil Authority. The VV II Housing Associates, LP appeal to the State is still pending. The Board of Civil Authority set a value of \$412,100 in the 2015 grand list. The Listers have that property assessed at \$566,400 for in the 2016 grand list and awaiting the results of the appeal that may result in a required adjustment of that number as well.

Addressing police cruisers in need of replacement, City Manager Hawley advised we have five cruisers; a 2004, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011. He recommends selling the 2010 and purchasing two new cruisers. Senior Alderman Perry suggested lease/purchase options where you lease the vehicle for 3 years and then purchase it. Interest is very low, he advised, and it would spread the \$100,000 cost over 3 years. Police Chief George Merkel stated we should get 5 or 6 years out of each car if maintained properly. Mayor Benton stated he would like to pursue the lease/purchase options because the police department budget is

showing a 19 percent increase. Senior Alderman Perry inquired if we could survive with just one new cruiser this year. Chief Merkel stated that we could but if one of the vehicles goes down, we will be short. Mayor Benton stated he is struggling with 6 cruisers in one square mile and when people complain he does not know how to justify it. Manager Hawley advised it is not his intent to maintain 6 cruisers in the fleet but they cannot determine which of the remaining 5 cruisers should be removed from the fleet upon delivery of the new cruisers.

City Manager Hawley advised he will likely seek funding from the Water Tower Fund for the tennis courts upgrade. The courts need the cracks filled and then resurfaced. The estimated cost is \$10,000. The Vergennes Falls Park dock has major needs and will also require another \$10,000. He advised he may request an allocation from the Water Tower Fund at the next meeting for one or both projects. Neither project is included in the budget. Senior Alderman Perry commented that both projects are actually rebuilds and could be considered capital improvements.

Alderman Jeff Fritz inquired of Manager Hawley what additional pool costs he was anticipating. Manager Hawley advised a new roof on the bathhouse is needed as well as a chemical storage/supply area; combined cost of \$10,000. When the pool was drained in the spring, he reported, no patching was needed. Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) did a safety inspection but did not do a pool structure inspection. Mayor Benton stated that we need to take care of the pool and the City Council will support that. Michelle Eckels pointed out that the pool vacuum is old. She also inquired if any improvements were planned for extra cleanliness. Based on what was seen this year, Manager Hawley felt there is no need for the pool to be drained this fall for repairs.

City Council members questioned a few budgeted line-items and what they cover. Mayor Benton reminded everyone we had a very mild winter with reduced expenditures.

The next meeting will be held June 28, 2016 at 6 p.m. at the Fire Station Meeting Room.

ADJOURNMENT: At 5:45 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Mark Koenig, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Vergennes City Clerk