

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 28, 2016
MINUTES

Mayor William Benton called the regular 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	City Manager Mel Hawley
Senior Alderman Renny Perry	City Clerk Joan Devine
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Brett and Sue Ratkowski
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	Michelle Eckels
Alderman Mathew Chabot	Martha Kenfield
Alderman Mark Koenig	Lisa Casey
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	Shannon Haggett

WARRANT: Two Warrants were circulated for review and signatures of approval. One Warrant totaling \$43,903.03 covered expenses through June 30, 2016. The other Warrant, totaling \$20,938.05, covered prepaid FY2017 expenses.

MINUTES: Minutes to the June 21st meeting were amended in the first paragraph. Alderman “Mike” Koenig was corrected to read “Mark”. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to accept the minutes as corrected, seconded by Alderman Koenig, with all voting in favor.

ACRPC “TAC” APPOINTMENT: Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to appoint Brett Rakowski as the City’s representative on the Addison County Regional Planning Commission’s Transportation Advisory Committee. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Perry with all voting in favor.

ACTR APPOINTMENT: Lowell Bertrand moved to re-appoint Diane Lanpher as the City representative on Addison County Transit Resources’ Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Renny Perry with all voting in favor.

VERMONT COUNCIL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT (VCRD): A request for funding, in the amount of \$150, was received from VCRD. The letter encouraged us to become an organizational member with that donation. Alderman Lynn Donnelly moved to approve the request, seconded by Alderman Matt Chabot, with all voting in favor.

SPECIAL CITY MEETING WARNING: A draft Warning for a Special City Meeting on August 9, 2016 was presented for adoption. A draft notice for a Public Informational Hearing on August 2, 2016 was also presented. The purpose of the Special City Meeting will be to act on petitions submitted by Vergennes Area Rescue Squad, Inc. and Vergennes Masonic Association, Inc. requesting exemption from property taxes beginning in 2016 for a period of 5 years. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adopt the Warning as presented and set the Public Informational Meeting for August 2, 2016 at 6 p.m. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Perry with all voting in favor.

ITINERANT VENDOR LICENSE: An application was submitted by Beth Marr, d/b/a Almost Home Market, for a one-day itinerant vendor license to be used on the City Green. Deli foods will be available on July 22, 2016 during the Arts Walk sponsored by Vergennes Partnership. Appropriate insurance information and license fee have been submitted to the City Clerk. Senior Alderman Perry moved to approve the application, seconded by Alderman Jeff Fritz, with all voting in favor.

FY2017 RECYCLING PROGRAM BUDGET: Senior Alderman Renny Perry moved to adopt the proposed budget and collections for the recycling program. Alderman Jeff Fritz seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

PROPOSED SEWER BUDGET AND SEWER RATE: City Manager Hawley advised there have not been any changes to his proposed budget and is continuing to recommend a sewer rate increase from \$87.50 to \$96.00 per unit per quarter. He reported he has met with Rick Chaput and a lot of the capital improvements have been done. The sewer bond payments of \$123,400 will be final November 1, 2022. Senior Alderman Perry advised the sewer rates have not increased since 2006. Alderman Mark Koenig advised he would rather raise the rates higher this year and not come back for another increase the following year. Alderman Jeff Fritz also supported that approach. The remaining City Council members supported the incremental approach or at least see if the rate can be held level at \$96.00 per unit per quarter. Senior Alderman Perry moved to adopt the sewer budget as proposed and to raise rates from \$87.50 to \$96.00 per unit per quarter. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor except Aldermen Koenig and Fritz who were opposed.

PROPOSED SWIMMING POOL BUDGET: City Manager Hawley reported \$9,000 was budgeted from the Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund last year towards the operation of the pool. He originally proposed to reduce that support to \$7,500 this year but is now proposing the \$9,000 figure. The surplus was about \$1,700 at the end of the season. He went on to explain the maintenance and repair line item in the budget covers shutting down the pool and winterizing it, start-up costs, chemicals, etc. Michelle Eckels asked if anyone was thinking of getting someone professional to inspect the pool. Mayor Benton advised he was not sold on the need to spend \$4,000 on a study. City Manager Hawley reported he has been communicating with Tom Booska of Pool World and has not abandoned anything. He did not recommend an inspection to the City Council. Alderman Jeff Fritz explained that adopting this budget does not mean we are abandoning the pool. Shannon Haggett inquired if any grant funds are available for this type of assessment. Mayor Benton advised he has been speaking with Dustin Hunt, the Middlebury Assistant Recreation Director, and would like him to work with our pool Director Brad Castillo. Manager Hawley advised VLCT did leave a "work list" when they did their inspection which will be addressed. He also reported Water Tower Funds can be used towards recreation. Senior Alderman Perry stated he was in favor of some kind of assessment as pools need continuous maintenance; a professional needs to assess it. Brett Rakowski stated there were perceived problems with the pool and wants someone with more knowledge to look at it to see what is going on beneath the water line.

City Manager Hawley advised in 2010 the City inherited the pool with staff. Roland Guyette, who maintained the pool for decades, taught Public Works Supervisor Jim Larrow and Pool Director Brad Castillo his method. In 2015, patching at the pool was done to fix deterioration. This year there were no visible signs of needing patching, he advised. There is a watch in the child section where a chunk is out from a previous patching but it is not of any danger to anyone at this time. Mayor Benton advised Manager Hawley that the City Council wants him to contact Tom Booska and have him come down and do an inspection. If we have to wait until the pool is empty, advised Mayor Benton, so be it but schedule it as soon as possible. He went on to advise that Manager Hawley will look at options for an assessment and time is of the essence. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adopt the pool budget in the amount of \$55,120, seconded by Senior Alderman Perry, with all voting in favor.

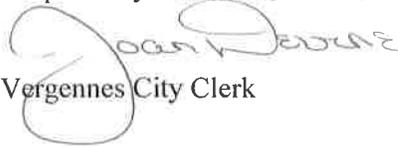
GENERAL FUND BUDGET AND TAX RATE: City Manager Hawley advised he originally used an estimated \$60,000 fund balance to yield a tax increase of 9 cents. He is counting on reducing delinquent taxes from \$40,000 to \$27,000 within the first 60 days of the fiscal year.

Manager Hawley advised he has been doing some creative thinking as it relates to reducing the proposed tax rate increase. He pointed out the Water Tower Continuation Fund has \$68,000; it could loan \$60,000

from that fund plus \$30,000 in the police department budget to purchase two cruisers. The loan could be paid back to the fund in two years. He made it clear that he did not want six cruisers; he wanted to remain at five. Senior Alderman Perry stated he was in favor of borrowing from ourselves to help reduce the tax increase. Alderman Koenig suggested we could also wait until January to buy the second cruiser and the police chief could get rid of one of the other cruisers by then. Alderman Matt Chabot felt this was a good idea as the police budget is topping \$850,000. Manager Hawley advised if we went with the loan, adoption of the budget proposed will require a tax rate of 79 cents. Senior Alderman Renny Perry moved to adopt the General Fund budget as presented by the City Manager with a property tax rate of 79 cents. Alderman Jeff Fritz seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:30 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Senior Alderman Renny Perry, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,



Joan DeWine
Vergennes City Clerk