

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 14, 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	Jon Deming
Senior Alderman Renny Perry	Hannah Deming
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	Gerianne Smart
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	Diane Lanpher
Alderman Michael Daniels	Bill Funcannon
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Greg Edwards
City Manager Mel Hawley	Jennifer Russell
City Clerk Joan Devine	Stephen Lowe
Reporter Andy Kirkaldy	Margaret Lowe
Shannon Haggett	Scott Gaines
David Raphael	Connie Houston
George Sabol	Shanon Atkins
Michelle Tisbert	Molly Goodyear
Julie Basol	

VTRANS BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PROGRAM APPLICATION: Mayor Benton read the notice of public meeting announcing that the City is considering making application to the 2015 VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program and is seeking comments from the public. If successful, the project would extend the sidewalk on the east side of Main Street from the Vergennes Redemption Center to Champlain Discount Foods, he advised. Greg Edwards, representing the Transportation Task Force, presented a draft application. The application must be filed by July 17, 2015. He advised they have addressed the evaluation criteria and included several photos and a detailed cost estimate of \$305,000. The local share is 10 percent. City Manager Hawley advised he had tried twice unsuccessfully to obtain a grant for this project under this program. The first application failed because the reviewing committee felt the cost of the project was underestimated. The second application reflected an increase in the cost to \$250,000 but was also unsuccessful due, in part, to the quality of the application. Shannon Haggett, Chair of the Planning Commission, advised this project is called out in our municipal development plan which should strengthen the application. Greg Edwards has been working with Josh Donabedian, Transportation Planner at Addison County Regional Planning Commission, on this much-improved application, advised Manager Hawley. As there were no additional questions, Mayor Benton closed the public comment period at 6:12 p.m.

WEEKS SCHOOL MASTER PLAN: David Raphael, of LandWorks in Middlebury, advised he has been retained by the State of Vermont to create a master plan for the so-called Weeks School property. A sizeable amount of outreach and work has already been completed towards that goal. The Plan will address continued use by Northlands Job Corps Center and its possible discontinuance, what other purposes could occur at that location, and include an evaluation of whether the property may be subdivided and sold. Mr. Raphael reported this is a busy property offering education opportunities, agricultural uses and home to historic buildings. He will explore the potential for energy generation options, possible additional housing, developing recreational trails, and even the sale of specific parcels. He does not see a need for industrial/commercial activity in this area but is looking at alternatives and exploring them, he advised. Mayor Benton had it confirmed that the City's McIntosh Park parcel is not part of this study. Manager Hawley reported that the zoning map identifies the Northlands Job Corps campus to be in the public district and the surrounding land is in the agricultural and rural residential

district. Margaret Lowe expressed a desire to see the older buildings become a tourist attraction; or a picnic area created at the very least. Mr. Raphael reported he will have his report done by the end of August. He departed at 7:25 p.m.

VERGENNES PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION: Senior Alderman Renny Perry advised he is the President of the Vergennes Partnership; an organization that has been in existence for 16 years fulfilling one of the requirements of the City's downtown improvement district (Downtown Designation). In the past they had to give up their executive director due to financial restraints but they are now reorganized and operating under new bylaws. In the last year they have raised \$13,000 and have established four working committees that will address areas in the City such as economic development and community programs. He then introduced the members of the Board of Directors who were present at the meeting. He went on to advise that next month they are sponsoring the Arts Walk by means of a grant board member Julie Basol was successful in obtaining. We have provided and maintain the flowers on the bridge, have upgraded our web page, have reorganized the information booth and are starting a newsletter for our members, he advised. Gerianne Smart, a consultant for Vergennes Partnership reported her services were enlisted by the Partnership early in the year to look into what it would take to create an energized and effective Partnership to meet the needs of the citizens, businesses and city administration. Her first suggestion was to continue to build on the economic development side as well as looking at where we were and where are we headed. She advised she has looked at other downtown programs in Vermont and found most of them run by volunteers with a manager of sorts. The Board of Directors will do all the fundraising and the coordinator will do communications and work on projects with the support of the committee chairs. A new coordinator's position would call for a minimum of 15-20 hours per week so assistance with that is needed, she advised. They are requesting \$7,500 from the Water Tower Fund. City Manager Hawley advised economic development would qualify for funding from the Water Tower Fund. Mayor Benton wondered what the relationship would be between the City Council, City Manager, the Partnership Board of Directors and the coordinator if the City funded that. Senior Alderman Perry also advised the Partnership would like to be located at City Hall in the former police chief's office. City Manager Hawley advised the Vergennes Partnership is a 501(C) (3) non-profit corporation that is connected to the City; our Downtown Designation requires an organization such as this to be in existence and affiliated with us. The Partnership is connected to us due to the designation so he would be comfortable with assisting them. Senior Alderman Perry stated that we are all here to improve the City. Alderman Jeff Fritz moved to allocated \$7,500 from the Water Tower Fund to the Vergennes Partnership. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion. Alderman Mike Daniels advised he was not aware this request was coming to the City Council and feels we should think about it for a while before making a decision. He moved to table action on this request until the next meeting. There was no second on the motion. Mayor Benton called the original motion to a vote. Five voted in favor of the motion and Alderman Daniels did not vote.

MINUTES: Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the minutes of June 30, 2015. The motion was seconded by Alderman Jeff Fritz with all voting in favor.

WARRANT: Two warrants were presented for approval. One warrant was for June expenditures totaling \$16,487.98 and the other for July expenses totaling \$92,433.78. Both were circulated for review and signatures of approval.

LUIGI'S – LIQUOR LICENSE APPLICATION: An application was submitted by Luigi's Italian Specialties for a 1st Class liquor license. Alderman Mike Daniels moved to approve the application, seconded by Senior Alderman Perry, with all voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER AND CITY CLERK/TREASURER APPOINTMENTS: In accordance with the City Charter, the City Manager and the City Clerk/Treasurer shall be appointed annually at the first City

Council meeting of the fiscal year. Alderman Daniels moved to appoint Mel Hawley as the City Manager and Joan Devine as the City Clerk/Treasurer. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

PUBLIC NOTICE PUBLISHING AND POSTING DESIGNATION: Manager Hawley advised the City Council must designate which newspaper the City will use for advertising public notices and set the three posting locations. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved that City Hall, the Vergennes Post Office, and Small City Market be the official posting locations and designate the Addison Independent the newspaper for the legal public notices. Senior Alderman Perry seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS: City Manager Hawley asked the City Council to defer action on this until the next meeting as he did not have confirmation of their intent from all of the members with respective terms expiring on August 1.


DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD APPOINTMENTS: City Manager Hawley recommended 2-year reappointments for Jason Farrell, Timothy Cook, Donald Peabody and Steven Rapoport. Alderman Bertrand moved to confirm the appointments. The motion was seconded by Alderman Daniels with all voting in favor.

AUTHORIZATION FOR VTRANS BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PROGRAM APPLICATION: Mayor Benton advised if the City Council wants to proceed with the 2015 VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program application, the City Council will need to allocate funds for the project. Alderman Michael Daniels moved to authorize submission of the application, allocate up to \$30,500 from the Water Tower Fund as the local share, and that City Manager Mel Hawley be designated as the City's authorized agent for the purpose of this grant. The motion was seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand with all voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: City Manager Hawley reported that Tom Jackman signed a [corrective] quit claim deed from Jackman Fuels, Inc. to the City of Vergennes with no compensation thus clearing title of the lot on the river between the L.F. Benton Company parcel and the parcel acquired from Wilfred Pollender/Pollender Real Estate and Eileen Clark, Executor of the Estate of Gregory Clark.. He recommended that \$20,000 be allocated from the Water Tower Fund to purchase the L.F. Benton Company lot which appraised for \$30,000 by professional real estate appraiser Charlene Stavenow. Senior Alderman Perry moved the recommended purchase and allocation. The motion was seconded by Alderman Bertrand with all voting in favor except Mayor Benton who recused himself.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:32 p.m. Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Senior Alderman Perry, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,


Vergennes City Clerk