

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 19, 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	Matt Donaldson
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	Kimberly Donaldson
Alderman Mathew Chabot	Paula Moore, Bixby Library
Alderman Mark Koenig	Reporter Andy Kirkaldy
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	

BIXBY MEMORIAL FREE LIBRARY: Paula Moore, Chair of the Bixby Memorial Free Library Board of Trustees, reported they are going through a major transformation in an effort to deliver what the community needs. She asked the City Council to send a representative to a meeting scheduled for August 11th at 6:30 p.m. to participate in a focus group and strategic planning session on the future operation and services at the library. She reported that the Selectboard of the communities around Vergennes have been asked to send a member to attend and requested that one or two members of the City Council participate. Alderman Matt Chabot expressed interest in representing the City Council at the meeting.

WARRANT: Two Warrants were circulated for review and signatures of approval. One Warrant totaling \$182,991.23 covered purchases and services on or before June 30, 2016 which will be reflected in the FY2016 accounting period. The other Warrant, totaling \$86,674.71, covered FY2017 expenses.

MINUTES: The minutes to the June 21st meeting were reviewed and two amendments were suggested. Alderman Renny Perry said the third sentence of the last paragraph on the first page should be replaced with “Senior Alderman Renny Perry suggested lease/purchase options where you lease the vehicle for 3 years and own it at the end of the 3rd year.” Alderman Mark Koenig said the sixth sentence of the third paragraph on the second page should be replaced with “Michelle Eckels pointed out there is outdated equipment at the pool such as the pool vacuum.” Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the minutes with those amendments. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Renny Perry with all voting in favor.

Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to accept the minutes to the June 28th meeting as presented. Senior Alderman Renny Perry seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

OUTSIDE CONSUMPTION PERMIT: An application for a one-day Outside Consumption Permit was submitted by American Legion Post #14. They applied for permission to serve alcohol on August 21st in an enclosed area on their lower parking lot. Senior Alderman Perry moved to approve the request, seconded by Alderman Lynn Donnelly, with all voting in favor.

WINTER PARKING BAN ORDINANCE: The current ordinance says no vehicle can be left on any public street between the hours of 2 a.m. and 6:30 a.m. of any day during the months of January, February, March and December of each year. Matt and Kimberly Donaldson were present to address what other options may be available. Mr. Donaldson advised they own the property at the corner of Green Street and Main Street which contains an apartment upstairs. Their tenants are hesitant to renew their lease this year because there is no place to park their vehicle during the winter months. Mayor Benton advised Kathy Rossier, who ran early morning yoga classes out of that building last winter, came to the City Council with the same problem. Participants could not park on Main Street at 6 a.m. to attend her class without being in jeopardy of getting their vehicles ticketed or towed. Mayor Benton stated that it may be time for change and we could check with Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) to see what alternatives might be available. Manager Hawley advised the ordinance works well for the Public Works Department as it allows them the ability to plow vehicle-free streets and remove snow in the Central Business District. He also acknowledged the ordinance is extremely slighted to the Public Works Department's needs even though we may not have snow for many two-week periods. He questioned whether it was possible to have a system that will work for everyone. Discussion included a flashing light in the center of town, sending phone messages like the school district does for snow days, emailing property owners, etc. Giving notice to the public will be the issue, advised Manager Hawley. Finding out how many vehicles we are dealing with would be helpful, he stated. Mayor Benton requested everyone come up with alternatives and bring those ideas for discussion at the next meeting.

SWIMMING POOL INSPECTION: Mayor Benton advised the City Council that we need a plan for the pool and need to keep it updated. City Manager Hawley reported he has been speaking with John Emerson on some of the issues. J.W. & D.E. Ryan, Inc. has been involved with the pool infrastructure since the mid-1960s when the pool was constructed. The pool will need to be drained this fall, he advised, as there is a drain in the deepest end that runs at a 90 degree turn to the wet well. On this line there is a valve that does not seat so some water is getting into the pump house. We cannot have that, he advised, and John Emerson is recommending replacing the valve this fall. To do so, we will have to dig outside and expose the valve to know what needs to be ordered. We will also patch the wall in the far right corner of the shallow section of the pool at the same time. Manager Hawley advised Tom Booska, owner of Pool World, told him he would be down to give us some advice. The concrete deck around the pool is in pretty good shape for its age but does need some attention. To accomplish some of these projects the rates at the pool may have to increase or the City will need to further subsidize the costs, he stated. Senior Alderman Renny Perry stated, based on his experience, that it is very difficult to run a pool totally dependent on user fees; that it will need to be subsidized is reality, he stated. City Manager Hawley advised he does not recommend spending \$4,000 on a professional study. He went on to say that Alderman Mark Koenig, Alderman Matt Chabot and Alderman Jeff Fritz went to the pool on June 30th and met with some of the swim team committee members and he would like them to report to the City Council their opinion of what they found. Alderman Lowell Bertrand visited the pool on another day for the same purpose.

Alderman Matt Chabot suggested a more formalized operation and maintenance routine be established and posted for public access to the information. He also supported City Manager Hawley's process to have Tom Booska down. He reported he did not see the pool area falling

into the ground. Alderman Mark Koenig reported he has been trying to speak with a few towns that have municipal pools. He spoke with the activities person in Winooski and they are in the process of rebuilding their pool. He also contacted Rutland but they have closed their pool. A contact in Waitsfield will come over to our pool when they are in the area for a 20-minute assessment and will make recommendations, he advised. Pool directors do not need to be certified in Vermont, advised Alderman Mark Koenig, but there is a pool director's certification available in Albany, New York which is a 2-day course that costs \$250; that might also be something to look into. Alderman Jeff Fritz stated he was a little surprised at what he found; he was expecting the facility to be more dismal. He felt it was not bad when considering it is operating on a \$50,000 annual budget. It is a 50-year old pool and he is not a pool expert, he advised, so he feels it is a good first step to start with Tom Booska. He did feel we can improve our appearance with items like new paper towel dispensers as well as more exposure as suggested by Alderman Matt Chabot.

SIDEWALK INVENTORY AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN: Mayor Benton advised the Planning Commission is meeting next Monday so we will defer discussion on this until the next meeting.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE: City Treasurer Joan Devine reported this is the third year she has provided this document to the City Council as required by law. The intent of the form is to provide disclosure on operating procedures in the treasurer's office. Mayor Benton signed the document attesting to its submission.

PLANNING COMMISSION AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD APPOINTMENTS: City Manager Hawley reported there are three members on the Planning Commission whose terms expire on August 1st and recommended their re-appointment for another two years. Senior Alderman Perry moved to reappoint Shannon Haggett, Cheryl Brinkman and John Coburn to the Planning Commission with terms expiring August 1, 2018. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

As for the Development Review Board, Manager Hawley said there are three members with expiring terms. He reported Peter Garon and Jason Mullin have agreed to serve another term and recommended their reappointment. He advised that Tim Cook is undecided if he wants to no longer be a member of the Development Review Board and only serve on the Planning Commission. Senior Alderman Renny Perry moved to reappoint Peter Garon and Jason Mullin to the Development Review Board with terms expiring August 1, 2018. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

APPOINTMENT OF CITY ATTORNEY: At the recommendation of City Manager Hawley Alderman Lowell Bertrand made a motion to reappoint the firm of Ouimette & Runcie as the City Attorney. The motion was seconded by Alderman Mark Koenig with all voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Hawley provided a June 30, 2016 budget report. He advised the year-end fund balance for the general fund is now projected at \$173,998.01 which is slightly higher than his earlier projection. He is expecting the credit card bill for June expenditures that will be about another \$1,000 from that number. He also reported that in

closing the year it was found that the State did not process one of the police grant reimbursements and the grant was closed out. He reported efforts to re-open the grant have been made and was confident we would likely still receive that approximate \$2,600 reimbursement. The year-end fund balance for the Fire Department was \$50,356.82 and the Sewer Department was \$52,374.32 subject to confirmation by our auditing firm.

City Manager Hawley explained how the so-called local tax rate is calculated. He advised we have eleven veterans who qualify to have their appraised value reduced by \$40,000. The State requires the City recapture the education property taxes on \$30,000 of the \$40,000 through the local tax rate. The local tax rate also covers the education taxes not collected as result of any voted-approved exemptions other than real estate owned by a fire or rescue agency. If the voters approve the tax exemption for the Vergennes Masonic Association, Inc., the City will need to pay the education property taxes on the property valued at \$197,100 using funds collected by the local tax rate.

Communication regarding a License Agreement with Vermont Gas Systems enabling them to put their distribution lines in the street right of way has been ongoing, advised Manager Hawley. He has been working with City Attorney James Ouimette. They also need an easement for in the back right-hand corner of the City Green. Other than the City right-of-ways, Vermont Gas Systems claims this is the only easement affecting land owned by the City. He advised he feels an easement will also be needed for the wastewater treatment plant area for the distribution line that will run under Otter Creek. He hopes to have a draft agreement for the August 2nd meeting. He will also bring the two tennis court proposals for capital improvements to that meeting.

At 7:07 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to go into executive session to discuss evaluations and salaries for the City Manager and the City Clerk/Treasurer. Senior Alderman Perry seconded the motion with all voting in favor. At 7:27 p.m. Alderman Bertrand moved to adjourn the executive session, seconded by Senior Alderman Perry with all voting in favor. Alderman Matt Chabot departed at this time.

Back in regular session, Alderman Lynn Donnelly moved to give raises in the amount of 2.5% to the City Manager and the City Clerk/Treasurer. Alderman Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

Mayor Benton declared the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Vergennes City Clerk