

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 28, 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
Senior Alderman Renny Perry
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz
Alderman Lynn Donnelly
Shannon Haggett

Alderman Michael Daniels
Alderman Lowell Bertrand
City Manager Mel Hawley
City Clerk Joan Devine
Mark Koenig

MINUTES: Corrections were made such as ‘restraints’ was changed to ‘constraints’ and ‘reorganized’ was replaced with ‘cleaned and painted’. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the minutes of July 14, 2015 as corrected. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Renny Perry with all voting in favor.

WARRANTS: Two warrants were presented for approval. One warrant was for June expenditures totaling \$20,843.73 and the other for July expenses totaling \$119,427.97. Both were circulated for review and signatures of approval.

PUBLIC ASSEMBLAGE PERMIT- An application was submitted by Allison Rimmer requesting a public assemblage permit for a community get-together on South Water Street. The event is planned for August 30th from 5 until 8 p.m. and will involve closing the road between Roberts Street and South Maple Street. Barricades will be placed at each end that will be able to be moved in case of an emergency. Alderman Mike Daniels moved to approve the request with the condition that Vergennes Fire Department, Vergennes Police Department and Vergennes Rescue Squad are notified of the road closing. Alderman Lowell Bertrand seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

VERGENNES PARTNERSHIP – CITY HALL USE: City Manager Hawley advised the voters authorized an amended lease for Vergennes Opera House that includes the ‘so called’ ticket booth. The City did retain a right-of-way for access to the vault. Use of the Police Chief’s former office by the Partnership was discussed at our last meeting, he advised, and suggested a Memorandum of Understanding be established for its use. Alderman Perry felt it was not wise for the City Council to commit beyond a three-year time frame. Alderman Perry, who is also President of Vergennes Partnership, advised the Friends of Vergennes Opera House Board of Directors is meeting tonight where Gerianne Smart, President of Friends of Vergennes Opera House, will propose to her Board of Directors the possibility of co-habitation of the ticket booth with the Partnership. He advised it may end up being a permanent location for them but they just wanted to have a start-up location and he feels the space will work well for both of them until the needs at City Hall change. They are looking for an executive director, he advised, so it would be good to know where we will be located. Mayor Benton supported the idea of a Memorandum of Understanding that would indicate a 3-year commitment, or a 12-month commitment, with adequate notice by either party for vacancy issues. Alderman Daniels stated that he likes strong transparency and inquired if the Partnership would be paying a portion of the fuel to heat that space as is the case for Friends of Vergennes Opera House. Alderman Perry advised the Partnership would expect themselves to be a “no-cost” tenant. City Manager Hawley advised the Memorandum should cover phone use, internet access, fuel, air conditioning, photo copies, etc. The cost of fit-up needs to be clarified and whether the Partnership will participate, he advised. He also pointed out that the City Council has allocated \$15,000 to the Partnership for FY2016 which should not be exceeded by there tenancy. Alderman Lynn Donnelly suggested, to start with, just a 1-year agreement with a 60-day

vacancy notice from either side. City Manager Hawley was asked to work on a draft Memorandum of Understanding for review at the next meeting.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD APPOINTMENTS: City Manager Hawley advised he made an error at the last meeting. He recommended the re-appointment of Tim Cook for a two-year term but discovered that his term does not expire until August 1, 2016. He said Brent Rakowski's term expires on August 1, 2015 so he is the one who needs to be reappointed. Alderman Bertrand moved to rescind the prior action involving Tim Cook and re-appoint Brent Rakowski for a two-year term that will expire August 1, 2017. Senior Alderman Perry seconded the motion, with all voting in favor.

PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENTS: City Manager Mel Hawley recommended the re-appointments on the Planning Commission of Mike Winslow, Morgan Kittredge, Jason Farrell and Tim Cook for two-year terms. He advised Morgan Kittredge has requested an 8-month leave of absence as she has a new baby. She is a valuable asset to the Planning Commission, he stated, but wanted to make sure it was understood that she will step away for a short time if reappointed. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the recommended appointments and grant the leave of absence for Morgan Kittredge as requested, seconded by Senior Alderman Renny Perry, with all voting in favor.

GRAND LIST ERROR: According to statute any change in the grand list, other than a homestead and/or house site value, requires approval from the legislative body, advised Manager Hawley. Frederic Lowen owned the property containing the buildings at 184 and 188 Green Street and received subdivision approval in 2010 creating two parcels. Ashley Robinson purchased the property at 188 Green Street in July, 2014 and shortly after transferred it to Rest Assured Investments, LLC. Frederic Lowen still owns the property at 184 Green Street. In the grand list, the property owned by Rest Assured Investments, LLC property was listed at \$408,800. The Lowen parcel showed a value of zero. The Board of Listers requests permission to correct the 2015 Grand List by listing the property of Rest Assured Investments, LLC at \$222,400 and the property owned by Frederic Lowen at \$186,400, he advised. Alderman Daniels moved to approve the request, seconded by Alderman Fritz, with all voting in favor.

SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND POLICY: Mayor Benton stated he would like a Sidewalk Improvement Plan and Policy developed. Nothing has been done on the sidewalks in the last two years even though we have budgeted \$10,000 each year, he advised. Shannon Haggett, a member of the Transportation Task Force, reported he will contact Jay Stetzel at VUHS to see if we can do a joint effort involving students to help with the inventory. Greg Edwards has also offered to help. Mr. Haggett advised the Transportation Task Force meets next week and they may take this project on. Alderman Fritz, Chair of Northlands Job Corps' Community Relations Committee, volunteered students from Northlands to help with the inventory and stated he would be happy to facilitate the effort.

Manager Hawley advised he was unsuccessful with the South Maple Street streetscape grant he applied for but the owner of the theatre property would still like the improvements done. David Pierson wants to participate in this project; he owns the commercial property. That area is still in the central business district and it is not a very large project, approximately 80' needs to be done. He advised Jim Larrow's priority right now is culverts, mowing and trimming. He encouraged creating a plan and having something to point to at budget time. Alderman Joe Klopfenstein asked that the record reflect that the Transportation Task Force has been charged with creation of a sidewalk improvement plan for presentation to the City Council by the end of September.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: City Manager Hawley reported our June 30, 2015 fund balance is between \$145,000 and \$150,000 but still has to be audited; \$103,000 was used to offset the tax rate. Delinquent taxes are a real problem this year, he advised. For FY2016 the capital improvement for the police department will be the upgraded server. Balance of the Water Tower Fund on June 30, 2014 was

\$99,046.23; plus revenues of \$79,223.01 and minus expenses of \$47,795.85 left a June 30, 2015 fund balance of \$130,473.39. Educational tax rates from the State for both homestead and non-residential properties were not received until July 17th so property tax bills did not go out until that day, advised Manager Hawley. He also presented a report explaining how the City local tax rate of \$.0034 was calculated.

OTHER: Alderman Daniels reminded everyone that the falls are lit at night and encouraged everyone to go down and see them. At the City docks he reported there have been 265 boats so far this year compared to 234 last year for this same time period. Alderman Klopfenstein suggested a web cam that would show dock availability. Alderman Daniels felt more dockage is needed and claimed that if you have it, they will come.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:06 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Jeff Fritz, with all voting in favor. The next regular City Council meeting will be held August 18, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jan Devoe". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name of the signatory.

Vergennes City Clerk