

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 2, 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	Martha DeGraaf
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	Shannon Haggett
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Randy Hawkins
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	Barry Tracy
Alderman Mathew Chabot	Brian Goodyear
City Manager Mel Hawley	Cheryl Brinkman
City Clerk Joan Devine	

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING: Mayor Benton read the notice of the public informational meeting regarding the upcoming Special Meeting to vote on petitioned articles by Vergennes Area Rescue Squad, Inc. and Vergennes Masonic Association, Inc. for renewal of their property tax exemption for another five years. Both articles will be voted by Australian ballot on Tuesday, August 9, 2016. City Manager Hawley, who also provides administrative and technical assistance to the Board of Listers, made a public apology for not reminding the two entities that their exemption expired on March 31, 2016. These articles are normally petitioned for and voted at the Annual City Meeting in March, he advised. Representatives from both organizations were in attendance to answer any questions the public may have. As there were no questions, the public informational meeting was closed.

VERGENNES JUNIOR FISHING DERBY: Martha DeGraaf, one of the organizers of the fishing derby, announced the 33rd Junior Fishing Derby was a big success with 267 registered anglers. First and second place prizes were awarded for a 15 and a half pound carp and a 14 pound carp. Prizes were also awarded for each age division, she stated. Martha reported they received \$8,600 this year in donations and thanked the City Council for their continued support of this event.

WARRANT: A Warrant totaling \$2,404.90 for FY2016 expenses and another totaling \$138,210.57 for current fiscal year expenses were circulated for review and signatures of approval.

MINUTES: The minutes to the July 19th meeting were reviewed. An amendment was made on the first page under ‘Bixby Memorial Free Library’. The last sentence was amended to read, ‘Mayor Benton and Alderman Matt Chabot expressed interest in representing the City Council at the meeting.’ Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Alderman Lynn Jackson, with all voting in favor.

OUTSIDE CONSUMPTION PERMIT: An application for an amended Outside Consumption Permit was submitted by Julianna Jones, LLC d/b/a Vergennes Laundry. She applied for permission to expand their outside consumption area to include along the sidewalk on the uphill

right side of the stairs to the lamppost. A diagram was submitted with the application. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the request, seconded by Alderman Fritz, with all voting in favor except Alderman Chabot who recused himself.

SOUTH WATER STREET BLOCK PARTY – PUBLIC ASSEMBLAGE: An application for a permit to hold a public assemblage on South Water Street was submitted by Mark Koenig. City Manager Hawley advised they would like to have a block party for residents of the street and their guests on Sunday, August 28th, from 4 to 8 p.m. The residents are requesting permission to block off South Water Street from Roberts Street to Victory Street as they have done in the past couple years for the block party. They will provide notice to the Fire Department and VARS and will also post signs at the closures. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the request, seconded by Alderman Matt Chabot, 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. A barbeque plus deli foods will be available on August 26, 2016 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. during the Arts Walk sponsored by Vergennes Partnership. Appropriate insurance information and license fee have been submitted to the City Clerk. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the application, seconded by Alderman Jeff Fritz, with all voting in favor.

WINTER PARKING BAN ORDINANCE: City Manager Hawley advised he would like to understand the depth to the problem with the winter parking ban. He advised he thought a permit process with contact information (cell phones or emails) would work but would ideally like one with fewer flaws. There would be lots of work involved with this one. Alderman Bertrand suggested letting the people park on Park Street and just clear that road later. Alderman Donnelly felt we have a reputation for the best kept streets in the winter and suggested people are allowed to park at the library. Manager Hawley also reminded the City Council that 9 parking spaces at Settler's Park are available in the winter. Consensus was these are good alternatives and we will continue to discuss amending the current language in the applicable ordinance.

DOWNTOWN-BASIN MASTER PLAN: Mayor Benton advised Beth Isler of Toole Design Group, Planning Commission Chair Shannon Haggett and he went to Montpelier and presented the draft Master Plan to State officials that funded the planning project. Those on the Steering Committee plan to release the draft plan for additional public comment sometime in September. Shannon Haggett advised the Planning Commission is updating the Municipal Development Plan and plans to incorporate much of the Master Plan.

SIDEWALK INVENTORY AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN: Mayor Benton advised there is a draft list of recommendations for sidewalk improvements being developed by the Planning Commission. Shannon Haggett advised that Planning Commission member John Coburn has fine-tuned the inventory which was originally conducted by VUHS students and they plan to finalize the document at their next meeting. He will get this information to City Council members. The Public Works Department budget has contained a \$10,000 line item for the last two years for sidewalk improvements and virtually none has been spent, he stated.

TENNIS COURTS RESURFACING: City Manager Hawley reported the last time the tennis courts were resurfaced was 2011 and is needed again. He stated he has received three bids for

various levels of repair and advised there are alternatives with corresponding cost differences. The more expensive is a 15-20 year fix compared to just re-surfacing that will last 3-5 years. The City Council would need to authorize funds from the Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund or the Water Tower Fund for this project as funds are not in the operating budget. There is \$28,700 in the Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund of which \$9,000 has been allocated for the operation of the Sam Fishman Memorial Swimming Pool. Mayor Benton reported he received an email from Alderman Mark Koenig who is opposed to this repair while we are still debating the pool inspection. It is Alderman Koenig's feeling that hundreds of people use the pool and have expressed desire for continued repair and maintenance of it compared to the tennis courts that do not generate money and only one person has asked for it to be resurfaced. Alderman Koenig felt it would be hypocritical to have no concern spending \$10,000 to resurface the tennis courts but continually worry that \$4,000 is too much money to understand the current status of the City's 50+ year old swimming pool. City Manager Hawley recommended that all members of the City Council go to the tennis courts to be familiar their condition. If the cracks are not properly filled, he advised, accelerated deterioration will occur. Resurfacing the tennis courts will be kept on the agenda for the next meeting.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD APPOINTMENT: City Manager Hawley advised Timothy Cook is willing to serve another term on the Development Review Board. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to reappoint Timothy Cook to the Development Review Board with a term expiring August 1, 2018. Alderman Matt Chabot seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

APPOINTMENT OF CITY MANAGER AND CITY CLERK/TREASURER: Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to reappoint Mel Hawley as the City Manager, seconded by Alderman Fritz, with all voting in favor. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to reappoint Joan Devine as the City Clerk/Treasurer, seconded by Alderman Lynn Donnelly, with all voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Hawley reported he did not produce a budget report as there were very few expenses in the current fiscal year. He did provide an update of the Sam Fishman Memorial Swimming Pool budget that reflected a negative fund balance of \$2,301.38. Manager Hawley advised \$9,000 will be transferred from the Watershed Recreation Reserve Fund soon, the Fishman family will likely send their annual \$2,000 donation in December, and Mary Johnson Summer Program and ISSP will both be billed for their use of the pool. He said once the transfer and other revenues are processed, the fund should reflect a positive fund balance for the season.

MAYOR'S COMMENTS: Mayor Benton advised there has been a lot of car and truck traffic this summer in the downtown business district. He stated he has had several complaints on the South Maple Street / Main Street crossing and asked if we could get 2 more "pedestrian crossing" signs; they cost about \$300 each. He would also like to see more police foot patrol.

VV II HOUSING ASSOCIATES, LP APPEAL: City Manager Hawley advised the decision by the Vermont Tax Department, Division of Property Value and Review, has been issued regarding the appeal by VV II Housing Associates, LP of the Board of Civil Authority's determination of appraised value of their property at 12 Walker Avenue. The decision confirmed the appraisal of

\$412,100 as determined by the Board of Civil Authority stands. VV II Housing Associates, LP has the right to appeal this decision to the Superior Court within 30 days of issuance of the decision.

He reported that the Board of Listers appraised this property at \$566,400 in the 2016 grand list. A grievance with the Board of Listers was filed and the Listers reduced the value to \$511,600 at their meeting held just prior to the City Council meeting. VV II Housing Associates, LP can appeal the appraised value to the Board of Civil Authority.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: At 6:59 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved for an executive session to discuss an evaluation and compensation of the City Clerk/Treasurer. The motion was seconded by Alderman Matt Chabot with all voting in favor. At 7:15 p.m. the Clerk/Treasurer departed. The City Council came out of executive session at 7:30 p.m. and took no formal action but agreed to state the following:

The City Clerk made some good points relative to salary determination and equity. The City Council needs more wage transparency. The Board agreed to implement a more detailed and systematic review system for both the City Manager and Clerk/Treasurer.

The City Council fully supports the need to close the City Clerk's office, if necessary, so the City Clerk/Treasurer and her Assistant can attend the Vermont Municipal Clerk and Treasurer Association meetings and other educational opportunities that will further their understanding and knowledge of their positions.

The City Council also intends to put the refurbishment of the Clerk's office back on the agenda. All agreed that the space is out of date and not becoming of the City of Vergennes. This project needs to be undertaken ASAP.

The regular meeting adjourned immediately by motion of Alderman Lowell Bertrand, seconded by Alderman Matt Chabot, and unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk