

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 23, 2014
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
Deputy Mayor Randall Ouellette
Alderman Michael Daniels
Alderman Lowell Bertrand
Alderman Lynn Donnelly
Alderman Joseph Klopfenstein
Alderman Renny Perry
City Manager Mel Hawley

City Clerk Joan Devine
Representative Diane Lanpher
Darren Donovan
Jennifer Johnson
Reporter Andy Kirkaldy
Stephen and Margaret Lowe
Greg Edwards (7:30 p.m.)
Sierra Bertrand

MINUTES: Minutes to the September 9th meeting were approved on a motion by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

TAXI LICENSE: An application for a License to Operate a Taxi was submitted by Anthony Porter who will be a driver for Small City Taxi. City Clerk Devine advised the application is complete with the exception of the insurance coverage which does not list him as an operator. She reported Rick Loyer, owner of Small City Taxi, informed her that the insurance company has to re-write the policy to include Mr. Porter as an additional driver and add another vehicle that is being used. Alderman Mike Daniels moved to approve the application but not to release the license until proper insurance papers are on file. The motion was seconded by Alderman Bertrand with all voting in favor.

WARRANTS: The Warrant totaling \$70,767.23 was circulated for review and signatures of approval.

TODDLER PLAYGROUND PROJECT: Alderman Klopfenstein, who is Chair of the Recreation Committee, advised they have met and discussed the options available for the location of the toddler park and have voted 5 to 1 to maintain their recommendation to the City Council to site the toddler playground in front of the swimming pool bathhouse. He went on to advise that David Raphael has offered for his students to assist us in inventorying what we have available for recreation facilities and what we need. Manager Hawley reported he proposed a different site for the toddler playground at the last meeting and has since attended the Vergennes Union Elementary School Board of Directors' meeting. He brought a map of the area, he advised, and discussed with them whether they would consider the idea of using both City and school property next to the basketball/skating rink area for the location of the toddler playground. He said their Board took no action but would consider it at their October meeting. Mayor Benton said the City Council has four options at this point for the project; give the grant money back, go with the Recreation Committee's recommendation, look at the reduced scale of the project at the site recommended by the Recreation Committee or wait for a definitive response from the VUES Board of Directors. Manager Hawley advised the grant will not be retracted by the State despite the error in the application but the City must keep the State informed on the project. Alderman Daniels felt the back of the school doesn't help the parking situation but the visibility is good for the other playgrounds on site. Alderman Donnelly stated she went to the Early Elementary Education (EEE) playground designed for 3-5 year olds which is quite nice but agrees you cannot watch your other children from that location. There are lots of things going on at the skate park area so it is appealing in that way so she would pursue behind the school. Alderman Klopfenstein advised he is in favor of the Recreation Committee's recommendation but willing to let the school idea play out. Senior Alderman Ouellette felt behind the school was the best option. He reported he could not support the front lot because the project is too large for the lot and also disclosed that his mother-in-law is an abutting property owner who is not in favor of the project. If it does go into the front lot it needs to be significantly reduced. Alderman Lowell Bertrand reported he does a lot of coaching at VUES and the proposed site near the skate park area would be great for parents who can watch the game and their children at the same time. Alderman Perry would like the school/city location out back. If the project is scaled down he would like the first phase to stay within the confines of the grant. Alderman Klopfenstein advised the cost for the current design includes land preparation, design, and equipment. Alderman Perry stated he was totally fine with their original plan but would like to pursue the school/city option. If the school opposes to the idea, advised Manager Hawley, the tennis backboard area (about 20' X 30') could possibly be ripped out as a potential site for a small toddler playground. Alderman Donnelly suggested getting a number on the kids coming

into pre-K before we spend \$41,000. Manager Hawley will go back to the school board to follow up on his presentation.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION: A Resolution for Sustainable Education Funding Reform in Vermont was presented to the Board by Alderman Donnelly for consideration. Mayor Benton advised education cost increases are not sustainable and this document will freeze education tax rates for two years while the legislature works on funding reforms. He does not support this document because there is nothing about cost containment. He reported he and Mayor Weinberger of Burlington are working on a task force looking for solutions; the nine Vermont mayors are looking at this problem. Mayor Benton felt the resolution was just flawed as written. Alderman Renny Perry stated he had a problem with capping the costs and its affect on the local level but agrees something strong needs to come from the cities and towns. Alderman Klopfenstein stated that so much of education spending is mandated and was not sure what would happen if capped. If we don't do something as a City we will never have anything due to affordability, advised Alderman Donnelly. It matters that we speak "halt", she said. Mayor Benton agreed and suggested we have something in writing before the legislature goes into session.

STRONG COMMUNITIES, BETTER CONNECTIONS PROGRAM: Greg Edwards advised he was advocating for a commitment to apply for the Strong Communities, Better Connections Program grant. He reported \$200,000 is available in funding and the applications are due October 3rd. The projects are funded 80 percent federal, 10 percent state and 10 percent local. The funds would allow us to seek professional help with developing and implementing a master downtown-basin plan, he advised. Senior Alderman Ouellette moved to authorize the application and provide a letter of intent committing up to \$8,000 from the Water Tower Fund as the local match. Alderman Perry seconded the motion with all voting in favor. Mayor Benton advised this grant would deal with bikes, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic that are all using our narrow Main Street. Our parking will also be observed. Alderman Perry commented that we have not had a master plan in fifteen years; it is time.

GREEN STREET BUS SHELTER: Manager Hawley reported there has been discussion in the past for a bus stop shelter adjacent to Hollyhocks Flowers on Green Street; we knew there was funding programs out there to accomplish this. ACTR has received a grant to do this but they are looking for the local share match of up to \$1,700 from the City, he said. Alderman Renny Perry moved to proceed with the project and provide the local match up to \$1,700 from the Water Tower Fund. Alderman Mike Daniels seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

FIRE STATION POLICY AMENDMENT: Manager Hawley advised FEMA would like access to the use of our fire station in the event of a disaster so the policy has been amended to include the following: "The station may also be used by FEMA as a Disaster Recovery Center where representatives from federal, state and volunteer agencies can disseminate information to the public to assist in recovery from a disaster in the community". Alderman Mike Daniels moved to approve the policy as amended, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

SEWER CONNECTION FEES: Manager Hawley advised the Bio-solids Management Fund, used to clean out lagoons, which currently stands at \$151,500 can and should be adequately funded in the future by the operating budget. He recommended that future connection fees no longer go to the Bio-solid Management Fund as they have in the past but go to the Sewer Capital Improvements Fund and fees for allocation letters be treated as sewer fund miscellaneous revenue. Senior Alderman Ouellette moved to accept the Manager's recommendation, seconded by Alderman Bertrand, with all voting in favor. As suggested by Alderman Daniels, the sewer connection fee once paid by VTrans for the train station project will go to the Sewer Capital Improvements Fund net of reimbursement to the Sewer Line Replacement Fund used to extend the sewer main beyond the new police station in anticipation of the extension.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: Mayor Benton reminded everyone that the final public hearing on the proposed changes to the municipal development plan will be held Tuesday, September 30th, at 6 p.m. at the Fire Station.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:15 p.m. Alderman Mike Daniels moved to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk