

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
OCTOBER 14, 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
Michael Winslow
Gerianne Smart, FVOH
Sierra Bertrand

MINUTES: Minutes to the September 23rd meeting were approved as written on a motion by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor. Minutes to the September 30th Special Meeting / Public Hearing were also approved on a motion by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

WARRANTS: The Warrant totaling \$77,658.12 was circulated for review and signatures of approval.

STORMWATER GRANTS: Manager Hawley reported there is a round of funding available through the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation under the Ecosystem Restoration Program. Currently, the stormwater permit for the detention pond and stormwater collection system in Crosby Farms is in the name of the City. The storm shed is quite different since the construction of the Champlain Valley Christian School and other construction in the area, he advised. Based on flooding issues in the past, an assessment and design for that area needs to be done before the City renews the permit when it expires. Mike Winslow, a staff scientist at the Lake Champlain Committee (LLC) and member of the planning commission stated the LLC is willing to prepare the application and administer the grant for their standard 10 percent administrative fee. He reported the application would be for a project of about \$15,000. The criteria awards points if there is a local match which can be as simple as calculating the City Manager's time involved with the project. Mr. Winslow advised he will need a letter of commitment at a later date. It was the consensus of the Board to move forward with this with a more specific proposal discussed at the next meeting.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND PROGRAM: Mike Winslow, Chair of the Otter Creek Basin Task Force, advised his group will be meeting later this evening and he wishes to discuss possible projects eligible for a grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. If a potential project is cited, he advised a pre-application would have to be submitted by October 31st with a completed application due by February 16, 2015. Eligible projects include acquisition of land for parks and public outdoor recreation or development of new facilities and/or renovation of existing facilities for outdoor recreation. Mr. Winslow reported the City can only apply for one grant and there is a one-to-one match required. It was understood that if a potential project surfaces, they will come back to the City Council with a project and budget for consideration at the next meeting.

RECREATION FACILITIES: Alderman Joe Klopfenstein reported that David Raphael's 'recreation facilities design' class at the University of Vermont, consisting of approximately 30 students, visited the basin area on Thursday. The class was split up with half on each side of the river looking for ways to provide a recreation path and walking trail that will connect. They will provide a presentation at the end of the semester.

FORMER POLICE DEPARTMENT SPACE: Mayor Benton stated that it is time to look at what we want to do with the space at City Hall recently vacated by the Police Department. He advised that Gerianne Smart has requested the ticket booth for the benefit of the Opera House. He would like to see the entire City Hall building floor plan layed-out so it can be looked and various ideas considered. Gerianne stated that at the very least they want the ticket booth area but would love to have the Chief's former office too for an office of their own. She went on to advised that they have met with an attorney out of Burlington, who is working for FVOH on a pro-bono basis, to go through the lease and see what changes need to be made to add the space on the ground floor before submitting it to the voters for acceptance. FVOH would like to have a memorandum of understanding in the meantime, she advised, so that they can get into that space to clean, paint and make improvements. Alderman Perry felt the ticket booth at the very least should go back to associated use with the Opera House and hopefully the Chief's office as well. Alderman Mike Daniels pointed out the

situation with the toddler playground and the accusations that were made that no one was aware of the project. He felt we needed to make it known that the space will be available before making specific claim to the FVOH. Mayor Benton stated the space should be checked to see if we have any building code issues before any work is put into it. We also need to look at our own long-term use of space, he advised. Manager Hawley talked of the extremely limited basement space that houses the furnace, sprinkler system and fire pump and that if the furnace needs to be replaced in the future, it won't fit in that space. Consensus was for Manager Hawley to contact resident Christopher Pettibon to assist with drawings of the building, get the word out to the public, and re-visit this at the next meeting. Mike Winslow and Gerianne Smart departed at 6:40 pm.

CITY ORDINANCE REVIEW/UPDATE: Mayor Benton suggested City Council members get back to the ordinances that were being updated several months ago.

VACATION ROLLOVER: In accordance with the personnel policy Manager Hawley requested approval to carry over any vacation hours that were on the books at his anniversary on September 27th; he estimated approximately 40-48 hours. He further advised he would use that time by December 31, 2014. Alderman Mike Daniels moved to approve the request with the condition the previous year's vacation time be used by January 31, 2015. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

BUDGET REPORT: Manager Hawley advised the Counseling Service of Addison County was paid twice in error but they have returned \$2,500. He reported that he created a revenue line item for VELCO's payment of about \$13,000 that was received. He pointed out that interest earnings has taken a hit and is somewhat concerned with police revenue but perhaps the September revenue has not arrived yet. Alderman Donnelly inquired what Crime Coverage was for in the administration budget and stated that it appeared to be overspent if only one quarter had been paid. Manager Hawley explained that crime coverage is insurance to cover crimes such as embezzlement, theft of personal property by employees, etc. and that he will investigate the amount charged to this line item.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Hawley reported that representatives from the auditing firm were here and everything is good; the fund balance carryover is about \$149,000 for the general fund and about \$159,000 for the sewer fund which is the same as originally projected. Their report will be available to the City Council soon. Peter McDurfee has been hired in the Public Works Department to fill the vacancy created when Christopher Bearor was selected to work for VTrans. An application for a \$50,000 loan from the Vermont Municipal Equipment Loan Fund for their purchase of a Ram pickup truck has been submitted. The State's inspection of the wastewater treatment plant resulted in a list of deficiencies at the plant. The inspection resulted in an "unacceptable" rating, he advised, but the items will be addressed as soon as possible.

MAYOR'S REPORT: Mayor Benton reported Chief Merkel has met with him and is very concerned with the underage purchasing and drinking that is going on with the Northlands Job Corps students. They are gathering in groups of 5 or 6 of both genders where excessive alcohol consumption is taking place. Mayor Benton stated that perhaps the City needs to contact Lauren Morales, Interim Center Director at Northlands Job Corps, to advise them this is not acceptable behavior and suggest they get wifi on campus so the students have less incentive to come up-street. Changing topics, Mayor Benton reported he met with Terri Arnold, Director of the Middlebury Recreation Department and asked her to look at us and what we have to offer and create recommendations for the recreation community. City resident Dustin Hill, who also works for the Middlebury Recreation Department, has offered to volunteer to help us get organized, he advised.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:05 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