

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 28, 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	Michael Winslow, LCC
Deputy Mayor Randall Ouellette	Darren Donovan
Alderman Michael Daniels	Susan Ferland
Alderman Renny Perry	T. Christopher Pettibon
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	Clara Comeau
Alderman Joseph Klopfenstein	P. Michael Collette
City Manager Mel Hawley	Christine Collette
City Clerk Joan Devine	David Austin
Shannon Haggett, PC	Rick McDurfee (7:35 p.m.)
Gerianne Smart, FVOH	

MINUTES: Minutes to the October 14th meeting were approved as written on a motion by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

WARRANT: The Warrant totaling \$252,200.51 was circulated for review and signatures of approval.

CITIZENS COMMENTS: Alderman Mike Daniels stood away from the table and stated that he was speaking as a firefighter and resident of the City. He gave a very brief history of the Vergennes Fire Department before bringing it to the City Council's attention that there is a set of metal goblets and a pitcher at the antique shop that were dedicated in 1883 to Theophilus C. Middlebrook, Stevens Hose Company No. 1's Fire Chief. Today's Stevens Hose Company is trying to acquire this item for \$1,800 but needs to act quickly, advised Mike Collette. He reported he is donating \$300, former Ferrisburgh Fire Chief Bob Jenkins is donating \$100, another life member of the Department has offered \$100 this evening, and Stephens Hose Company will contribute some amount but they are hoping the City can cover the remaining share before the item is sold. Life member Rick McDurfee, who arrived at 7:35 p.m., announced he will give \$500. Manager Hawley advised our Fire Department budget is funded by the City and by contract with the Towns of Ferrisburgh, Panton, and Waltham and feels the budget should only be used for fire protection related expenses. Alderman Perry wondered about the Ray E. Davison Capital Equipment Fund and Mel advised the expenditure does not meet the criteria as set forth in the Will. Others suggested soliciting donations on Front Porch Forum, doing a fundraiser or perhaps a loan from the City. Mayor Benton advised he was confident he could approach Greg Hamilton, owner of the antique shop, and request a hold on the item for a few weeks. Manager Hawley advised the City Council needs a formal request from Stevens Hose Company before the Council can take any action at the next meeting.

CITY HALL SPACE ASSESSMENT: Christopher Pettibon discussed six different floor plans that he prepared to assist the City Council which varied from just moving furniture around to taking down walls. Many of the plans included newly created offices that would be used by a zoning administrator, an administrative assistant, listers, a recreation coordinator, and an economic development coordinator. Currently City Manager Hawley performs or shares several of these positions but a future City Manager may not and separate office space will be needed. Mayor Benton suggested everyone take the plans home and review them and mark them up with what each would like to see and share that information with him or City Manager Hawley. It was also suggested the plans be posted on the City's website for public comment. This is going to take some time to get through the various stages, he stated, but he and Manager Hawley think the ticket booth area could be used by the opera house for events in the meantime. Clara Comeau expressed that if the opera house ends up leasing the ticket booth space in the future, she would like a new lease to be created for just that space. She also was curious if they would be paying any rent or paying for the utilities to use that space. Manager Hawley advised he is fine with the opera house using the ticket booth space for events only but wondered if the City Council was comfortable with that and was the opera house happy with that agreement. Gerianne Smart, President of Friends of Vergennes Opera House Board of Directors, reported they will be looking for a dozen or so volunteers to work the ticket booth area and the Chief's office area on a regular basis where guests can be welcomed. It is their vision to have volunteers basically run a welcoming center out of this space in the future. For now, she advised, they would be happy to be allowed to utilize the ticket booth space when they have events. Gerianne went on to advise that the Friends of Vergennes Opera House has had the luxury of managing this space with great benefit to the

City; helping maintain its economic vitality, and bringing new revenue to local businesses. We bring great value to our community, she advised. Alderman Perry questioned whether there was any incompatibility in use with something else that would prevent them from using it more. Manager Hawley advised he would be uncomfortable leasing out the ticket booth without voter approval but felt fine with allowing them to use the ticket booth area for events only as the space would not be for their exclusive use. Alderman Joseph Klopfenstein moved to allow Friends of Vergennes Opera House to use the ticket booth area for events only, seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND: Mike Winslow, Chair of the Otter Creek Basin Improvements Task Force, advised his group and David Raphael, whose class from UVM is doing a study to improve and connect walking trails in the basin area, would like the City Council to proceed with an application for a \$40,000 matching grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for improvements of public outdoor recreation in the basin area. They envision modest dock expansion, improved trail lighting, installation of a web-cam, and developing a landing area for canoes, kayaks and dinghies as potential improvements. A preliminary application is due October 31st with a completed application due by February 16, 2015, he advised. Manager Hawley reported he has been in touch with Green Mountain Power(GMP) regarding the remaining funds in the Green Mountain Power Co-Operative Agreement Fund (\$33,500). In the recent past, matching funds for grant application involving improvements to the basin area have come from this account that was set up years ago for this purpose. He advised he has tentative approval from GMP that those funds can be used towards this matching grant and suggested the remaining \$6,500 match come from the Water Tower Fund if we are successful with our application. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved for the City to apply to LWCF for a \$40,000 grant for improvements to the basin area and commit remaining funds in the Green Mountain Power Co-op Fund (\$33,500) and \$6,500 from the Water Tower Fund as matching funds. The motion was seconded by Alderman Renny Perry with all voting in favor.

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM: Mike Winslow, a staff scientist at the Lake Champlain Committee (LCC), reported they are looking for a letter of support for their application for a grant from Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation that will improve a stormwater detention pond the City owns and maintains in the Crosby Farms Development. Manager Hawley advised Mike Winslow and Brent Rakowski, a civil engineer working for Otter Creek Engineering, are working together on this project that will be advertised, administered, and managed by LCC if the grant is awarded. Manager Hawley recommended an allocation of \$2,800 from the line item in the Public Works Department budget for stormwater management as matching funds. Alderman Mike Daniels moved to support LCC's grant application and commit \$2,800 from the Public Works Department's budget for this project. The motion was seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand with all voting in favor.

AFFIRMATION OF TODDLER PARK MATCHING FUNDS: Manager Hawley reported that Chrissy Gilhuly, Grants Administrator for Vermont Department of Building and General Services, is looking for a status update on the toddler park project and there needs to be a confirmation of secured matching funds. The Recreational Grants Committee requires updated status reports from grant recipients who need additional time to complete a project, he advised. Before this can be done, Manager Hawley advised he needs an affirmation of \$21,000 from the Water Tower Fund and a commitment that the project will be completed by the end of 2015. He advised they understand that the location is not settled. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to confirm that as a motion, seconded by Alderman Klopfenstein, with all voting in favor. Sue Ferland asked how we are going to show the project is of economic benefit if it is on school property. Mayor Benton advised the project does not need to be on City property if it is a capital project but reminded her that location has not yet been determined. Susan questioned an allocation for a project that has not yet been fully designed or approved. Manager Hawley said that it is common for grant applications to not have completed designs at the time of application.

GREEN UP VERMONT APPROPRIATION AND APPOINTMENTS: Green Up Vermont is a non-profit corporation that coordinates and funds much of the cost of Green Up Day with some support from the State and contributing municipalities. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to allocated \$150 to Green Up Vermont as requested and to appoint Mike Daniels and Craig Miner as co-coordinators again this year. The motion was seconded by Alderman Daniels with all voting in favor.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTMENT: Shannon Haggett advised the Planning Commission unanimously supports and formally nominated the re-appointment of Mel Hawley as the City Zoning Administrator. Alderman Renny Perry moved to appoint Mel Hawley as the Zoning Administrator with a term retroactive to July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2017. Alderman Daniels seconded the motion with all voting in favor.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: City Manager Hawley advised the City can request that the Municipal Development Plan be formally reviewed for hopeful approval by the Addison County Regional Planning Commission. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to request regional approval of our recently adopted Municipal Development Plan, seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

LOCAL OPTION TAXES: City Manager Hawley reported that Mayor Benton wanted the Vergennes Economy Task Force that is charged with exploring local option taxes, which is an additional one percent sales tax and consumption tax to fund community and economic development in the city, to do their work and bring the information back to the City Council. He advised he would like City Council support before they begin the process. If this is something the City Council is not in support of, he advised, they do not want to waste their time. Alderman Mike Daniels reported he has heard from several in the community who do not support this. Alderman Joe Klopfenstein moved that Manager Hawley be authorized to research and gather information for consideration and possible implementation of local option taxes. The motion was seconded by Alderman Daniels with all voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Hawley reported he looked into the Crime Coverage line item in the budget that was questioned at the last meeting and found an error had occurred in the account posting and he has made the correction. He also found that the City did not lose \$8,000 in earnings on general fund investment last month as reported by the Treasurer, he advised. The actual loss for the month was just over \$2,400 based on market value after consideration of both money drawn down and an investment.

He said that wastewater treatment plant operators will begin drawing down lagoon #1 next week for sludge removal. Notice has been put in the newspaper as there may be some odors involved. The sewer extension agreement with the State for the train station is slowly moving forward via email exchanges.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:40 p.m. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk