

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL  
NOVEMBER 25, 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	Alderman Lowell Bertrand
Deputy Mayor Randall Ouellette	City Manager Mel Hawley
Alderman Michael Daniels	City Clerk Joan Devine
Alderman Joe Klopfenstein	Reporter Andy Kirkaldy
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	

MINUTES: Minutes to the November 11th meeting were amended on the second page in two places. Under City Ordinance Review, Alderman Perry is only working on Chapters 1,7,15 and 16. Under Budget Report it was corrected to read that Public Works has paved the parking lot at Vergennes Falls Park; there was no enlargement. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to approve the minutes as corrected, seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

WARRANT: The Warrant totaling \$958,066.33 was circulated for review and signatures of approval. Manager Hawley reported the Warrant includes the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter school assessments (\$671,719.35) and about \$180,000 for lagoon cleaning. He went on to explain he had expected to pay about \$140,000 for the cleaning but due to the amount of sludge (800,000 gallons) in lagoon #1, the cost increased. He estimated the last time lagoon #1 was cleaned was in 2008 but explained that lagoon #1 should be cleaned every 4 years and lagoon #2 cleaned every 8 years. The budget is \$50,000 a year that is put into the bio-solids fund to cover these costs, he advised. He reported both lagoons are in good shape at this time. Also included in the Warrant is the purchase of two trucks; a 2014 Ram 3500 for the Public Works Department and a 2005 Ford Ranger for the Sewer Department.

CITY HALL FIRST FLOOR SPACE ASSESSMENT: City Manager Hawley highlighted changes to an earlier drawing by Chris Pettibon that he has discussed with Mayor Benton. He is suggesting the removal of the entire wall that separates the clerk's office from the second lobby and moving the counter forward. This will significantly increase the space in the Clerk's office that will allow work stations to be moved and a table put in for researchers' use. He also suggested that a door not be installed for direct access to the meeting room from the manager's office as it was not necessary and would take up seating space in the meeting room. Mayor Benton felt the changes discussed would be a good phase I; the offices in the back, along with the new storage area and mechanical room can be phase II. Manager Hawley pointed out that the double doors between the front lobby and the expanded Clerk's office have to be able to be locked which is not currently the case. This open scenario means the meeting room should be limited for the security of the clerk's office. Mayor Benton felt that as long as Manager Hawley and Clerk Devine are here, this will work. If the clerk's office wants more privacy in the future, he advised, a glass wall can go up then. One part of this phase, use of the ticket booth area for events, started at the request of the Vergennes Opera House. Mayor Benton advised he has heard the ticket booth is working out good and they may not need the office. Manager Hawley advised he wants to start on the meeting room now. Replacement of the furnace will have to be paid out of the Water Tower Fund if purchased this year or be a part of next year's budget because his City Hall maintenance budget only has \$20,000. The roof at City Hall was checked out and it is not leaking, he reported, but some slate repair is needed and removal of the gutters. Apparently, the dormers had an ice jam and the ice melted around the dormers, he advised.

TODDLER PLAYGROUND: Mayor Benton reported he and Manager Hawley have met with school administrators regarding the toddler playground being located next to the ice rink/basketball courts and came away with the understanding that Principal June Sargent could not support that site for various reasons; she will support the park but not there. Also, they have determined that we are installing a pre-school park based on the size of the equipment that is being installed. A third meeting before the VUES Board of Directors was considered but that request will be withdrawn, he advised. Mayor Benton said that a decision of the City

Council is needed soon as the grant administrators require the City to break ground prior to June 2015. Alderman Daniels wondered what the public wanted in the survey – a toddler park or a pre-school park. Alderman Klopfenstein felt it was just terminology as the proposed park was designed for 2-5 year olds. Alderman Donnelly stated that she has no objections to the park but has concern moving forward given the petition that was signed by those opposed to the park next to the pool. Have we listened to those who signed the petition? We have not heard from any group in support of that location, she advised. Personally she would prefer to put the park down at the basin area but she understands the issues there. Alderman Daniels advised he agrees with Alderman Donnelly; have we listened to the petition signers. Are we going to service 10 or 30 kids is another question, he advised. Also, he is hearing more about wanting walking trails from the public. Alderman Klopfenstein, also Chair of the Recreation Committee, stated that David Raphael and the Committee feel the lot adjacent to the pool is the perfect spot. He advised the Committee deserves an up or down vote on their recommendation. Senior Alderman Ouellette was ready to vote it now and find a new location if it failed. Lowell Bertrand reported he agrees with both sides and was not sure if he was ready to vote; still straddling the fence. Mayor Benton advised we tried to change the location and we talked of a scaled down version that might pass muster with the neighborhood. The Committee has done their work and deserve an answer, he stated, and scheduled a vote for December 16<sup>th</sup> on the Committee's recommendation. Manager Hawley advised we have to start construction by June 2015 and there is still zoning approval required which will take a few months. He said that time is running out and the City Council's options are to either move forward with the Recreation Committee's recommendation of a \$42,000 project on the lot adjacent to the pool, or a scaled down version (removing the boat) at the same site as discussed, or to send the money back. Senior Alderman Ouellette supported voting on the Committee's recommendation first, the scaled down version second, and the final vote to send back the money.

VERMONT TOWN ROAD AND BRIDGE STANDARDS: Manager Hawley recommended the City Council adopt the Vermont Town Road and Bridge Standards. He advised it is the right thing to do, to have adopted standards will be advantageous to the City in the case of a catastrophic event eligible for FEMA funding, and lastly, eligibility for increased grant funds from VTrans. Should there be a catastrophic event, FEMA would reimburse up to the level of the standards which is an improvement over existing conditions, he advised. Other reasons for adopting the codes and standards are to improve public safety, reduce life cycle costs, and address environmental concerns. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to adopt the road and bridge standards and to sign the Certification of Compliance. The motion was seconded by Alderman Bertrand with all voting in favor.

CITY ORDINANCE REVIEW: Chapters distributed for review were 1, 5, 6, 7, 15 and 16 of the City Ordinances. Mayor Benton reported he found a little duplication and some enforcement divisions that need to be cleaned up. Any potential changes need to be brought to the next meeting, he advised.

BUDGET REPORT: Manager Hawley reported penalty fees for Homestead Declarations filed late are down \$1,100 but the good news is that people are beginning to understand they need to do this filing annually. Also, our assessment to Vergennes Area Rescue Squad was billed incorrectly. A revised bill will be sent to us reflecting the increased contract fees.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:10 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Vergennes City Clerk