

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 15, 2015
MINUTES

Mayor William Benton called the 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 Mark Koenig
Senior Alderman Renny Perry	Alderman Michael Daniels
Alderman Jeffrey Fritz	City Manager Mel Hawley
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	City Clerk Joan Devine
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	

WELCOME: Mayor Benton welcomed Alderman Mark Koenig to his first meeting; he was appointed to fill the vacancy created by former Alderman Joe Klopfenstein moving to Oregon. City Clerk Devine advised he has taken his oath of office. Mayor Benton announced he is amending the agenda to include discussion regarding an out-of-town sewer extension request.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY: Manager Hawley advised because there is a new member of the City Council the Conflict of Interest Policy should be signed. The document was passed for signatures.

MINUTES: Minutes of the November 24, 2015 meeting were amended on page one with “moot” to replace ‘mute’ and again on the third page; caption “JOE KLOPFENSTEIN” was replaced with “COMMENTS”. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to accept the minutes as amended, seconded by Alderman Mike Daniels, with all voting in favor.

WARRANT: The warrant presented for approval in the amount of \$191,752.63 was circulated for review and signatures of approval.

NORTHERN VT ROUTE 22A/ROUTE 17 TRUCK BY-PASS PROPOSAL: The draft truck by-pass proposal, as prepared by Mayor William Benton, was distributed in the agenda packet. Mayor Benton advised prior truck by-pass proposals for Route 22A never materialized. The northbound truck traffic proposal could reduce up to fifty percent of truck traffic by this or a similar proposal if successful. This is the third draft, he advised, and many at VTrans as well as our representatives have copies of it and feel it has some potential. Mayor Benton reported he is looking for City Council endorsement of the concept so the document can be released to the public and he can gather letters of support from the businesses and homeowners. City Manager Hawley advised the alternative to the truck traffic on Main Street needs to be safety driven. That is why we do not have a traffic light at the intersection of Macdonough Drive, South Water Street and Main Street, he advised. In the winter time we do not want trucks having to stop on that hill. Alderman Daniels questioned if we were selling ourselves short with only one bridge; are there other areas we should be looking at such as a by-pass. Alderman Fritz felt the document could be used as a springboard to move us in the right direction towards a solution. Senior Alderman Perry moved the City Council endorse the concept of re-routing the truck traffic as recommended in the proposal. The motion was seconded by Alderman Bertrand.

Alderman Daniels did not feel the City Council has taken enough time to think this through. Stopping trucks from coming through the city will reduce police revenue. A red light at the intersection on the hill will deter a lot of the trucks from going through town. A vote on the motion showed all to be in favor except Alderman Daniels who was opposed.

AMENDED POLICY FOR MALT AND/OR VINOUS SERVING PERMIT: City Clerk Devine advised the State of Vermont now allows libraries and museums to be included with art galleries and bookstores to serve malt and/or vinous beverages in their business with a permit recommendation from the City and approved by the Vermont Department of Liquor Control. She advised our Policy needs to be amended to include the two new users. Alderman Bertrand moved to approve the revised Policy, seconded by Alderman Fritz, with all voting in favor.

SEWER EXTENSION DISCUSSION: City Manager Hawley updated the City Council with a history of action taken by the City Council regarding the possible extension of sewer service outside of the city. In 1994 we went to the voters asking for permission to extend sewer into Ferrisburgh to designated areas for restricted uses. The only way this would happen is if the Town of Ferrisburgh voters also approved the request which would create an inter-municipal agreement between the two towns. The article passed in Vergennes but failed in Ferrisburgh, he advised. The City amended the Charter which now requires voter approval of the extension of sewer serving property outside the city. A realtor and Tom Denecker have called him recently, advised Manager Hawley, regarding the Denecker property in Ferrisburgh to the east of U.S. Route 7. He advised them to go to the Ferrisburgh Selectboard with their intent first and then come back. Alderman Lynn Donnelly felt we could not make a decision without knowing the proposed use of the building. Mayor Benton felt the restrictions on the 1994 vote may be outdated and perhaps we should review them and update them if necessary. Manager Hawley reported he can deal with a case-by-case basis but would like some guidance with uses. Alderman Donnelly stated that the downtown has to be the focus to assure that businesses just outside the city do not leave an empty downtown. Senior Alderman Perry advised VLCT could help us with policies that are already in place in other areas.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: City Manager Hawley reported the December 15, 2015 budget for the Public Works Department is the best he has ever seen as it relates to salt, sand and overtime. He advised the City Hall building maintenance budget is \$10,000. He reported that \$5,825 was spent on the roof and about \$1,800 for recent repairs to the sprinkler system. The expenses related to renovating the former Chief's office for use by the Vergennes Partnership and the "ticket booth" for Friends of Vergennes Opera House have included about \$1,600 for carpentry, \$1,000 for refurbishing the floor, about \$1,600 for electrical work, \$150 for the ceiling tiles. There will be additional expenses related to telephone and the fire alarm system. Mel said he will likely seek an allocation from the Water Tower Fund once the project is complete to cover this renovation project.

FERRISBURGH POLICE COVERAGE: A copy of a proposal to the Ferrisburgh Selectboard for law enforcement coverage by the Vergennes Police Department was available. If they choose to go with 10 hours a week of motor vehicle enforcement, he advised, we would assume the current responsibilities outlined in their contract with the Addison County Sheriff's Department. If they choose a 40-hour week of coverage, another fulltime officer would be

required. U.S. Department of Justice COPS grant could cover 75 percent of the cost of a new fulltime officer for three years.

SEWER DEPARTMENT STAFFING: City Manager Hawley advised he has hired one new employee for the Sewer Department replacing Joseph Sullivan who passed away in October. The start date for the third position in the department has been put off until March since this position will focus on the distribution system.

MAYOR'S REPORT: Mayor Benton stated as has been discussed before that he would like to see our website upgraded similar to other towns where it would be friendlier to use. Alderman Koenig volunteered to be a part of this effort as he has prior experience with this and that it would take about five or six weeks to accomplish. We will look at this again after the first of the year, advised Mayor Benton.

ADJOURNMENT: At 6:55 p.m. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Mark Koenig, with all voting in favor. The next regular City Council meeting will be held January 12, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Diane DeWine", is written over the typed name of the Vergennes City Clerk.

Vergennes City Clerk