

VERGENNES CITY COUNCIL
DECEMBER 16, 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	Susan Rakowski
Deputy Mayor Randall Ouellette	Darren Donovan
Alderman Michael Daniels	Nancy Klopfenstein
Alderman Joe Klopfenstein	Susan Ferland
Alderman Lynn Donnelly	Martha DeGraaf
Alderman Renny Perry	Jason Farrell
Alderman Lowell Bertrand	William Northrop
City Manager Mel Hawley	Christy Goyette
City Clerk Joan Devine	Joseph Fortune
Reporter Andy Kirkaldy	Representative Diane Lanpher
Jennifer Johnson	Margaret Lowe
Bob Jones	Stephen Lowe
June Sargent	Sierra Bertrand
Lynnia Pope	

WARRANT: The Warrant totaling \$125,842.98 was circulated for review and signatures of approval.

REPRESENTATIVE DIANE LANPHER: Representative Lanpher announced that a solar array may be installed on five acres of land that is located within Vergennes and Ferrisburgh and owned by the State. RFP's for a renewable energy contract was sent out and 4 applications were received. The

CJ'S HAULER – VENDOR'S LICENSE: Christy Goyette and Joseph Fortune were in attendance to address questions regarding their application to renew their Vendor's License for the 2015 calendar year. Lowell Bertrand made the motion to approve the application as submitted that was seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette. City Manager Hawley advised their will have to be some changes starting in July as a result of Act 148 regarding food disposal. Mr. Fortune reported they are aware of the composting changes that will be coming up and will do what they need to do. A vote on the motion showed all to be voting in favor.

TODDLER PLAYGROUND: Mayor Benton advised the toddler playground will not be located next to the ice rink/basketball courts so a decision will be made tonight on the options available; move forward with the Recreation Committee's original recommendation of a \$50,000 plus project that contains a boat and climbing apparatus, on the East Street lot adjacent to the pool, or consider a scaled down version (removing the boat) at the same site, or send the money back. He reported that if the first option passed, the Council was done. If it doesn't, we will move on to the next option he stated. And if we go with doing a project, it needs to be substantially completed by June 30th. He then went on to advise that the petition that was filed by Susan Ferland, asking the voters if we should build a toddler park adjacent to the Sam Fishman pool at Veteran's Memorial Park at a cost of \$42,000, half of which would come from the City's Water Tower Fund, will be on the ballot in March regardless of the Council's action taken this evening, he advised. Because the non-binding petitioned article was filed with the City Clerk on December 15th and has the required legitimate signatures, it must go before the voters in March. Mayor Benton advised zoning approval still needs to be acquired before a project can begin so we need to start that process now unless we vote to return the grant funds. We can withdraw our application in the zoning process at any time if the voters do not support the park in March and the City Council feels we should not go forward with the project, he advised.

Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette advised he would like the City Council to determine if he has a conflict of interest in this matter as his mother-in-law is an abutting property owner of the proposed park and she is not in favor of the park. Mayor Benton read Section #5 of the City Council's Conflict of Interest Policy, including its definition, and it was determined that a conflict does not exist. Senior Alderman Ouellette moved to vote on the toddler park as recommended by the Recreation Committee. Alderman Renny Perry seconded the motion that was followed by discussion. Recreation Committee Chair Joe Klopfenstein read his prepared statement regarding building livable communities and creating connectivity. This project will create a public space where children and families will connect and interact with one another. He requested City Council support on their proposal. Alderman Renny Perry advised we have received a grant to build this park. We told them we would build it, we said we would fund it, and they expect us to do it, he stated. We may never get another grant if we return the funds, he advised, and felt we needed to follow through and get the project done. A vote on the motion showed Aldermen Bertrand, Klopfenstein, and Perry were in favor and Mayor Benton and Aldermen Donnelly, Daniels and Ouellette were opposed. Mayor Benton, who had to break the tie, advised he voted in the negative as a result of a petition filed previously where the majority of the neighborhood was opposed to the size of the project but he does support a scaled down version.

Moving on to the second option available, Mayor Benton advised the scaled down version does not include the boat and is a \$42,000 project of which \$21,000 will be paid by a grant from VT Department of Buildings and General Services and the remaining \$21,000 will come from the Water Tower Fund. June Sargent, Principal of Vergennes Union Elementary School, felt any park that brings children and families together is an asset to the community. A community park is a space where children learn skills such as being a leader, a communicator, or even a follower and these are all advantages in the long run. She advised no one on the school board is in opposition of the proposed park as they recognize the huge benefit it would be for the children. Alderman Renny Perry stated he feels the scaled down version is next to nothing and very disappointing but he will support it because it will be better than nothing and at least heads us in the right direction. Alderman Joe Klopfenstein supported the sentiment. Manager Hawley advised the scaled down version of the park is forty percent less in size and has no boat. June Sargent stated she has had a longtime interest with the Maritime Museum and would like to see the motion kept open enough to have the boat and climbing apparatus to the boat. Alderman Joe Klopfenstein moved to approve a scaled down version of the park that will be built within the footprint of the pre-school/toddler park be put on this site. The motion was seconded by Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette with all voting in favor. June Sargent, David Raphael and Joe Klopfenstein will serve as an advisory board for the project. Manager Hawley advised he would authorization to have a zoning permit application for this project in front of the Development Review Board on January 5th. Alderman Lowell Bertrand moved to authorize the plan to go before the DRB that was seconded by Alderman Renny Perry. Susan Ferland felt someone from East Street should sit on the advisory committee to represent their neighborhood. Darren Donovan advised he felt the scaled down project approved was a great compromise and he likes it. A vote on the motion showed all voting in favor.

STRONG COMMUNITIE, BETTER CONNECTIONS GRANT: Manager Hawley advised the City received partial funding in the amount of \$40,500 towards the Vergennes Downtown–Basin Plan; we applied for \$72,000 with an \$8,000 City match from the Water Tower Fund. The City Council needs to agree to partial funding if we wish to continue this scaled down project, he stated. Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to accept the amount awarded, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor. Representative Diane Lanpher announced only three grants were issued statewide and Vergennes was fortunate to receive one. Manager Hawley will notify VTrans tomorrow of our acceptance.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT: Manager Hawley reported the budget is in good shape; he has not seen any surprises. The sewer tap-on fee for the train station has been received, he advised. Attorney costs and the sewer line extension expenses have been taken out of that fee with the remaining dollars applied to the sewer capital improvement fund. Manager Hawley reported we have been notified of the proposed Vergennes Solar Project on 9.5 acres of State land off Comfort Hill as required by Act 248. The Planning Commission is aware of this, he advised. A site needs to produce a minimum of 10 kW to be considered. Progress has been made in the old police station in that it is totally empty now and ready for the facelift to begin. The roof repair on City Hall is

estimated at \$5,000 to \$6,000 he reported. The June 30, 2014 audit is done but we don't have copies yet, he advised, but will get them to the Board as soon as they arrive.

MINUTES: Minutes to the November 25th meeting were amended on the second page under City Ordinance Review. "Enforcement divisions" was replaced with 'enforcement provisions". Senior Alderman Randall Ouellette moved to approve the minutes as corrected, seconded by Alderman Lowell Bertrand, with all voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT: At 7:25 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