

**Special Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held December 2, 2019**

The Special Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order by Mayor Lucas Herring at 6:00 PM at Barre City Hall. Councilors in attendance were from Ward I, Councilors John Steinman and Jeffrey Tuper-Giles; and from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin (arrived 6:08 PM) and Teddy Waszazak. Also present were City Manager Steve Mackenzie, City Finance Director Dawn Monahan, Police Chief Tim Bombardier, Deputy Police Chief Larry Eastman, Sergeant Troy Kirkpatrick, Sergeant Steve Durgin, Officer Jake Frey, Officer Jonathan Bullard, Fire Chief Doug Brent, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Washington County State's Attorney Rory Thibault, Barre City Representative Peter Anthony, Aldrich Library board president Nancy Pope, Aldrich Library executive director Loren Polk, and City Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: From Ward III, Councilor Rich Morey. There is a vacant seat in Ward III.

Manager Mackenzie began a brief overview of draft #1 of the proposed FY21 budget, and noted there is a decrease in projected revenues and an increase in projected expenses. There is a small deficit being carried forward from FY19, and the overall projected increase is 5%+.

Police Chief Tim Bombardier talked about the need for additional police officers. The Chief noted St. Albans City and Barre City are similar, and St. Albans has 26 police officers to Barre City's 20. The additional officers allow St. Albans to perform motor vehicle stops and other pro-active enforcement. He said he is looking to properly staff the street crimes unit (SCU), and said Barre City is the busiest police department in central Vermont. The Chief spoke of the positive effects seen since the implementation of the SCU, and said he would like to see six officers added to the department, but would settle for four. The COPS Grants program would cover the majority of the costs associated with new officers for their first three years, with the City committing to cover the costs in full in the fourth year. The Chief estimated that with the COPS Grants, the City could hire four new officers for the cost of one and a half officers. More officers would help alleviate overtime expenses, and would improve officer safety. He said the estimated cost per additional officer is \$85,000 - \$100,000 per year, plus a one-time fit-up cost of approximately \$6,800 per officer.

Other officers present spoke of the benefits associated with adding police officers to the department. There was discussion on the following:

- Difficulty filling blue light patrols.
- The high number of calls received by the Barre City department.
- Management of evidence and the evidence room.

Washington County State's Attorney Rory Thibault said there have been improvements in public safety since the implementation of the SCU. Mr. Thibault talked about the populations served by the police department, and the soft social work the officers are engaged in. He said the strain of the additional work over the past year is beginning to show, and increasing the number of officers will address concerns about turnover and burnout, and will increase property values and community satisfaction.

Representative Peter Anthony said many of the calls answered by police officers have a mental health component. Washington County Mental Health is looking to mirror a program operating in Chittenden County that embeds a mental health clinician in the police departments to help reduce the burden on the departments and the hospitals. The plan calls for Washington County Mental Health, Central Vermont Medical Center, and the police departments in Barre City and Montpelier to fund the position, with the clinician splitting their time between the two police departments. Rep. Anthony recommended Barre City include funding of approximately \$25,000 in its budget.

Aldrich Library executive director Loren Polk said they are requesting \$230,000 from the City, which represents a 3.8% increase. Ms. Polk said the increase is needed to restore staffing levels, and help cover costs associated with overhead and ongoing maintenance needs. Manager Mackenzie said the current draft includes a 3% increase. Councilor Waszazak, who serves as the Council's liaison to the library board, said there is a need for ongoing maintenance and upkeep for the facility. He said he is requesting a 5% increase. Ms. Polk said the library has been working hard to contain costs by reducing the number of public computers and monitoring utilities.

There was discussion on seeking funding from other communities, the social services being provided by the library, and funding received from Barre Town. Library board president Nancy Pope said library staff and volunteers would help "sell" the budget to encourage approval by the voters.

Manager Mackenzie reviewed the expense side of the budget, and noted those items that are new or have significant changes. Council discussed overtime in public safety and Civic Center fee adjustments.

Councilor Boutin left at 8:00 PM.

Council will hold its next budget workshop on Saturday, December 21st beginning at 8:00 AM. Capital needs will be discussed at that time. Manager Mackenzie said there is some consideration being given to taking a summer off from paving to allow the street department to get caught up on other outstanding projects. There was discussion on how to be compensated for the large number of calls the police and fire departments respond to in Berlin.

Manager Mackenzie said he will get an updated draft out to Councilors by December 18th.

The Council meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM on motion of Councilor Tuper-Giles, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

There is no audio or video recording of this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk