

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held February 22, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Councilor Michael Boutin at 7:05 PM at Barre City Hall. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilors Emel Cambel and Jake Hemmerick; from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Ericka Reil and Samn Stockwell. City staff members present were Manager Steve Mackenzie, Fire Chief Doug Brent, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: Old agenda items will be taken up at the end of the new agenda items. Discussion on the Keith Avenue parking lot easement will be had in executive session, and any action will be taken afterward.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

Council approved the following consent agenda items on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Hemmerick. **Motion carried.**

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of February 15, 2022
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2022-08, dated February 23, 2022:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$339,668.20
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$133,216.10
 - iii. Special warrant (Quadient Postage Funding): \$1,057.82
- C. 2022 Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Ratification of Submission of Letter of Interest re: Vermont Afterschool Grant Application.

Mayor Herring arrived at 7:08 PM during the Clerk's report and assumed chairing the meeting.

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Town meeting information is on the City website, including sample ballots. Polls will be open at the auditorium on March 1st from 7AM – 7PM. Masks or face coverings are required.
- More than 700 absentee ballots have been issued, with 266 received back to date.
- Third quarter property taxes were due February 15th. The final delinquency rate was 4.96%.
- Received the 13th installment of the Semprebon Annuity: \$62,609.00. This is the highest annual amount received to date. The funds will be transferred to the annuity bank account.
- Senate Committee on Government Operations is taking testimony again this Thursday on H.444, Barre City's charter changes from last year.
- The Board of Civil Authority is holding its pre-election meeting Thursday, February 24th, at 6PM. The meeting is hybrid including zoom and an in-person option in City Hall.
- There are 4 properties going up for tax sale on Thursday, February 24th.

Liquor Control Board - NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Mackenzie reported on the following, in addition to his written report:

- The mask mandate on City properties is expected to expire end-of-day Friday, March 4th.

Visitors and Communications –

Resident Bernadette Rose is offering rides to folks without transportation to City Hall for early voting or to drop off an absentee ballot, or to the polls on Town Meeting Day.

Resident Michael Deering said last week's visit by WPTZ during the high school hockey games was a blessing, and this week is the last of the home games for the Spaulding teams.

New Business –

A) Introduction of Police Chief Braedon S. Vail.

Manager Mackenzie introduced new police chief Braedon Vail, most recently serving as deputy chief in the Town of Hartford VT. Chief Vail will be starting on March 7th. The Manager thanked Deputy Chief Larry Eastman for serving as interim chief, and for being an important part of the leadership team for the police department.

G) Ratify 3 Year Collective Bargaining Agreement with Fraternal Order of Police.

Manager Mackenzie gave a brief overview of the new agreement, noting there are increases in wages and steps, and increased participation from the employees towards health insurance costs. The Manager said it was helpful to have Councilor Waszazak on the negotiating team, and welcomed him to continue with the upcoming fire department and steelworkers negotiations.

Council approved ratification of the collective bargaining agreement on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

B) Warned for 7:30 pm: Public Informational Meeting for Town Meeting Day Ballot Questions.

Mayor Herring opened the public informational meeting at 7:27 PM. Clerk Dawes reviewed the town meeting ballot, which features articles for Barre City, Central Vermont Public Safety Authority, and Barre Unified Union School District. There is also a ballot for the creation of the Central Vermont Career Center School District. There was discussion on the career center budget and board members, use of BUUSD surplus funds, and the list of social service organizations seeking funding support from the City. Mayor Herring closed the informational meeting at 7:45 PM.

C) Review of the Proposed FY23 General Fund Budget.

Manager Mackenzie gave a Powerpoint presentation on the proposed FY23 budget being voted on at the March 1st annual town meeting, highlighting continuing programs and services, and new staff positions. The projected property tax rate increase is 1.61%.

D) Review of Town Meeting Day Ballot Article VIII re: Local Options Sales Tax.

Manager Mackenzie gave a Powerpoint presentation on the proposed charter change to include sales tax in the Local Options Tax, highlighting the various capital equipment, streets & sidewalks reconstruction, and capital infrastructure & improvements to be covered by the projected revenues. The Manager said the revenues raised through the sales tax LOT would not affect property taxes.

There was discussion on use of ARPA funds for capital improvement needs, what items are taxable and exempt, current and potential future bonding, and responses to the proposed LOT from local merchants.

E) Authorize Purchase Replacement DPW Vehicles.

Public Works director Bill Ahearn reviewed his memo regarding three vehicles that need replacing, and the vehicles he is recommending for purchase. There was discussion on availability of used vehicles, vehicle life expectancies, and costs.

Council approved the purchase of three vehicles as recommended by staff on motion of Councilor Hemmerick, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

F) Authorization to Purchase Replacement DPW Radio Communications System.

Mr. Ahearn reviewed his memo on replacement of the radio system, and noted the current system is all analog, while the proposed new system would be digital. He said this would be paid for out of ARPA funds. There was discussion on sharing the costs across all water/sewer users in both Barre City and Barre Town, developing a process for requesting ARPA funding, and identifying the right funding mechanism.

Council approved the radio system purchase as recommended, and charged staff with identifying the most prudent funding mechanism, on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

H) Authorize Downtown Rentals Easement re: Keith Avenue Parking Lot.

This item will be discussed in executive session. Any action will be taken afterwards.

Old Business –

A) Discussion/Direction re. Policy Updates.

- 1. Food Vendor Policy**
- 2. Accepted Gifts Policy**

Manager Mackenzie will review the last round of proposed changes for the food vendor policy and bring back for Council direction. There was discussion on food trucks, separation distances, and enforcement of VT Department of Health permits. Councilor Boutin will work with staff on this policy.

Manager Mackenzie said there is no accepted gifts policy, but noted it has been mentioned in the past. Councilor Waszazak said the Aldrich Library is developing a similar policy at the moment, and he will get a copy of their draft for Council to review.

Round Table –

All Councilors, Manager, and Clerk thanked outgoing Mayor Lucas Herring for his 11 years of service as Councilor and Mayor. Councilor Stockwell read a Council proclamation naming Barre City Green-Up Day as Lucas J. Herring Green-Up Day going forward. Mayor Herring spoke of the City's accomplishments during his four-year tenure, and thanked everyone who is helping make Barre City a great community.

Executive Session –

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to find that premature general knowledge of property acquisition associated with the Keith Avenue parking lot easement would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Council went into executive session at 9:50 PM to discuss property acquisition under the provisions of 1 VSA sec. 313 on motion of Councilor Cambel, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Manager Mackenzie was invited into the executive session.

Council came out of executive session at 10:01 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

H) Authorize Downtown Rentals Easement re: Keith Avenue Parking Lot.

To be approved at 03/08/2022 Barre City Council Meeting

Council approved authorization of the easement on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried with Mayor Herring and Councilors Boutin, Cambel and Waszazak voting in favor, and Councilors Reil, Stockwell and Hemmerick voting against.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:03 PM on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk

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