

**Special Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held December 18, 2021**

Due to technical difficulties, the Special Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Lucas Herring at 10:12 AM 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 City Manager Steve Mackenzie, Finance Director Dawn Monahan, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron, Buildings and Community Services Assistant Director Stephanie Quaranta, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Fire Chief Doug Brent, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Public Works Director Bill Ahearn, Interim Police Chief Larry Eastman, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: NONE

New Business –

A) Budget Workshop

Manager Mackenzie noted the Barre Community Justice Center stipend had been left out of the draft budget. It was noted other similar agencies had their proposed budget increase reduced from 2.5% to 2%, and was suggested the BCJC stipend also be changed so the increase from FY22 is 2%.

Council reviewed an analysis of the Civic Center revenues and expenses over the past 12 years. Sue Higby, vice chair of the CC committee, said they view the complex as a resource for the community and beyond, and an economic development tool. There was discussion on ways to market the complex to increase revenues, effects of COVID on revenues and usage, improvements needed to make the complex more attractive for renting, continuing to fund the CC marketing position currently funded out of the Semprebon Annuity, Wifi and fiber connection options and uses for the civic center improvement fund.

The Council asked the CC Committee for a list of investments needed to improve the facilities. There was further discussion on seeking funding support from surrounding communities that use the complex, the future of school athletics, and conducting a long term needs and opportunities assessment.

Council talked about use of ARPA funds to help offset costs associated with new staff positions, tracking ARPA-related tasks carried out by staff, the impact of the federal infrastructure bill on ARPA projects.

Council approved allocating \$100,000 of ARPA funds to support general fund staff expenses on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Hemmerick. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

There was discussion on producing a quarterly newsletter, to be edited out of the Manager's office.

Council discussed use of some of the FY21 surplus to reduce the FY23 projected tax rate increase, designating the fund balance for capital needs, seeking voter approval of a local options sales tax, and what percentage of Barre City sales tax is collected from City residents as opposed to out-of-City residents.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to approve \$50,000 from the fund balance for the FY23 budget, \$30,000 for the FY24 budget, and \$20,000 for the FY25 budget. There was no second to the motion.

To be approved at 12/21/21 Barre City Council Meeting

There was discussion on not being able to obligate future Councils to budget adjustments.

Councilor Waszazak made the motion of allocate \$50,000 from the fund balance to the FY23 budget, \$200,000 of the fund balance to be held as available for general fund expenses, \$84,997 already allocated to specific expenses, and the balance of the FY21 surplus (\$233,139) to be allocated to the capital fund. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stockwell.

Councilor Boutin offered a friendly amendment to include \$30,000 for the FY24 budget and \$20,000 for the FY25 budget. The friendly amendment wasn't accepted.

Motion carried, with Councilor Hemmerick voting against.

There was continued discussion on imposing a local option tax on sales, collecting taxes from on-line sales, clarifying what people would get for the money, and taxability of cannabis sales.

Finance Director Dawn Monahan noted the adjustments made today bring the projected property tax increase down to 1.99%.

There was brief discussion on the technical difficulties experienced at the beginning of the meeting, and what is required for digital access under open meeting laws. Mayor Herring said he will reach out to VT League of Cities and Towns for clarification.

Mayor Herring adjourned the meeting at 12:50 PM.

The meeting was recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk