

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held January 18, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Lucas Herring at 7:06 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, Finance Director Dawn Monahan, Fire Chief Doug Brent, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: Manager Mackenzie said the TIF discussion is deferred to next week.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Special meeting of January 11, 2022
 - ii. Regular meeting of January 11, 2022
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2022-03, dated January 19, 2022:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$262,841.79
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$123,751.50
- C. 2022 Licenses & Permits: NONE

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Town Meeting information is posted on the City website, including a list of officers to be elected, nominating petitions, and consent forms. Currently nominating petitions are still required, and the deadline is January 24th. However, the legislature passed S.223, which will waive the petition requirement. The bill will go into effect as soon as the Governor signs it.
- Receiving lots of absentee ballot requests in response to the postcard mailed out last week.
- The legislature has passed emergency changes to the Open Meeting Laws (S.222), which would allow fully remote meetings again, due to COVID. Waiting for the Governor to sign.
- The charter changes approved by City voters last year (H.444) are being considered by Senate Government Operations.

Liquor Control Board - NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Mackenzie added the following to his written report:

- Reminder that campaign lawn signs aren't allowed in City rights-of-way. Signs will be removed and stored at the city garage for pickup.
- Strategic planning proposals are being reviewed, and a recommendation will come to Council at the February 1st

Visitors and Communications – Resident Bernadette Rose said the Vermont Foodbank will have its VeggieVanGo at the BOR on Friday, January 28th, to distribute fruits and protein foods. All who have a food needs are welcome. Contact Ms. Rose if you need help with transportation or delivery.

Old Business – NONE

New Business –

A) TIF District Options – Due Diligence Update & Draft Parking Study Review.

This item is deferred to next week.

B) 2nd Quarter FY22 Budget Status Report.

Finance Director Dawn Monahan reviewed her report, and noted revenues are running ahead of budget, and expenses are running under. The enterprise fund budgets aren't available, as the December collection cycle was not reconciled in time for this report. There are some general fund savings due to vacancies, including swimming pool staff which were covered through a grant during summer 2021. It was noted it's too early in the season to predict the condition of the salt budget. Manager Mackenzie noted ambulance revenues are currently running ahead of budget.

D) Act on Rotary Club Request for Revised Wheelock Building Lease.

Manager Mackenzie said Council had previously approved executing a lease with the Barre Rotary Club for use of a room on the 2nd floor of the Wheelock building. The draft lease agreement includes insurance requirements and payment of 1/3 of the utilities costs for the building. Rotary president Tony Campos said the club is requesting a no-cost lease. They worked with the Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create a storage space on the second floor of the building to house supplies needed by foster families. Supplies include clothing, diapers and toys for children removed from their families. Mr. Campos said there is no heat in the area being used for storage. The Club installed shelving and a security lock accessible to those needing to collect supplies. The space isn't staffed at any time, and the Club can't afford a lease.

There was discussion about other possible storage locations, supporting the work of the Club and foster families, and future use of the building. Manager Mackenzie recommended Council authorize execution of the lease without any payment. Council approved the recommendation on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

E) Discussion on Usage of Wheelock Building.

Council moved into a discussion on current and future usage of the Wheelock building. Councilors talked about keeping the building as a community asset, selling the building to add back to the grand list tax rolls, needs for accessibility improvements, current operating costs and deferred maintenance, merits of having non-profit organizations as tenants, highest & best use, housing the Barre Partnership and Barre Area Development in the building, and having a Council site visit to the building. Resident Bernadette Rose asked if there is other City-owned space that could be used by the Partnership and BADC.

There was discussion on creating a report on the building to include structural and environmental information, current operating costs and deferred maintenance. Former Mayor Thom Lauzon offered to work with his contractors and City staff to create such a report as a donation to the City. Mr. Lauzon said it would take 60-90 days to complete. Council approved accepting Mr. Lauzon's offer for a report to be presented to Council in three months on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

C) Warning 8:00 PM: Public Hearing Re: FY23 General Fund Budget Review & Tentative Approval.

Mayor Herring opened the public hearing at 8:17 PM and invited comments and questions from the public and Councilors. Manager Mackenzie gave a brief overview of a few revisions made since the last review, and noted the projected tax rate increase is 1.61%. Councilor Boutin said he supports a 0%

increase budget based on comments from constituents, and believes there should be adjustments to the proposed new staff positions. Councilor Waszazak said such a budget would not be responsible governance, and that it takes staff to invest in the community while being financially responsible. There was discussion on feedback from constituents, use of federal ARPA and infrastructure funds, and compromises reached during budget discussions and workshops.

Council approved the FY23 budget as presented by Manager Mackenzie on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried on roll call vote, with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

It was noted there were commentary comments being entered in the Zoom chat. Mayor Herring reminded people the chat function was not to be used in such a manner.

F) Discussion on Proposed Charter Changes for 2022 Town Meeting.

Mayor Herring reviewed City Attorney Oliver Twombly's legal opinion with regards to the proposed charter changes. Council concurred with Mr. Twombly's second option for the proposed change to section 104, and option A for the proposed change to section 409.

There was discussion on whether the proposed local options tax language should be included on the ballot, with several Councilors speaking in favor of removing the language from the ballot, saying the timing wasn't right, and there was no support in the community, while other Councilors said a local options sales tax would spread the burden associated with capital improvement expenses over more people including those who frequent the City but aren't residents.

G) Discussion/Decision to Warn Local Option Sales Tax Ballot Item.

Manager Mackenzie recommended placing the local options sale tax charter change revision on the ballot, as it's an alternative revenue source, and doesn't add to the property tax rate. Councilors were divided on their thoughts about placing the charter change language on the ballot.

Councilor Boutin asked that the local options tax charter change be taken up separately from the other proposed charter changes for consideration.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to place all proposed charter changes as previously revised this evening on the ballot, with the exception of the local options tax changes. The motion was seconded by Councilor Hemmerick. **Motion carried on roll call vote, with Mayor Herring voting against.**

Mayor Herring asked for a motion to take action on the local options tax charter language, as to whether it should be placed on the ballot. No such motion was made. Mayor Herring noted the local options tax charter change language will not appear on the ballot.

H) Review Draft Annual Meeting Warning.

Clerk Dawes reviewed the draft warning, and noted the final budget numbers and charter changes approved this evening for inclusion. The final draft warning will come to Council for approval at next week's meeting.

Round Table –

Councilor Hemmerick thanked those who have gotten vaccinated and boosted against COVID.

Councilor Waszazak acknowledged yesterday was Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and noted Dr. King shares a birthday with Betty White and Michelle Obama.

To be approved at 01/25/2022 Barre City Council Meeting

Councilor Reil thanked people for reaching out with donations of warm clothing for those in need.

Mayor Herring said contingent upon Gov. Scott signing bill S.222, Council can have a discussion next week about returning to virtual meetings. Next week's meeting will definitely be hybrid.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 PM on motion of Councilor Cambel, seconded by Councilor Stockwell.
Motion carried.

The meeting was recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk

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