

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held October 4, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 7:00 PM at Barre City Hall. In attendance in person or virtually were: From Ward I, Councilors Emel Cambel and Thom Lauzon; from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Michael Deering and Samn Stockwell. City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storrellicastro, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, Finance Director Dawn Monahan, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron, Public Works Director Bill Ahearn, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: The Council made the following adjustments:

- Moved the ACCD grant resolution from the consent agenda to its own approval item immediately following the consent agenda. Mayor Hemmerick noted he oversees this program as part of his work at ACCD, and will recuse himself from the discussion and action.
- Moved new business item re. voting delegate for VLCT Town Fair to the consent agenda.
- Moved new business item six-month look ahead calendar to the consent agenda.
- Added a discussion on the Diversity & Equity Committee to the end of the new business agenda.

Visitors and Communications –

Dexter Lefavour introduced himself and said he's running for Washington County state senator.

William Toborg said he has objections to Article 22, one of the proposed constitutional amendments being voted on at the November 8th General Election. Mr. Toborg said there are unintended consequences and he stands in opposition to the article.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of September 27, 2022.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2022-40, dated October 5, 2022:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$1,744,128.37
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$137,120.03
- C. 2022 Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Approval of the Barre Area Veterans Council Request for the Veterans Day Parade
- E. Authorize application for an Agency of Commerce and Community Development bylaw modernization grant to update zoning and approve resolution 2022-10 [moved to separate action below]
- F. Designation of Manager Storrellicastro or his designee as Voting Delegate at VLCT Town Fair. [moved from new business]
- G. Six-Month Look Ahead Calendar. [moved from new business]

Mayor Hemmerick recused himself from the following action item due to conflict of interest. Councilor Boutin assumed chairing the meeting.

Council approved authorizing application for an Agency of Commerce and Community Development bylaw modernization grant to update zoning and approve resolution 2022-10 on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

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Mayor Hemmerick resumed chairing the meeting.

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Ballots for the November 8th general election have been mailed to all active voters. Ballots will continue to be mailed to new voters as they register. Voters can either return the voted ballots before the election, or bring ballots with them to the polls on Election Day.
- Barre City received its first National Opioid Settlement payment of \$7,187.88. We're expecting to receive similar annual payments for the next 18 years. The City will need to determine usage of the funds within the guidelines from the settlement. It was suggested local partners be included in the discussions, including Barre City public safety departments, Turning Point Center, and Peoples Health & Wellness Clinic.

Liquor Control Board – NONE

Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storellicastro noted the following:

- Hosting a winter preparedness round table next Tuesday evening at 6PM in Alumni Hall.
- Yard waste drop off at the Barre Town stump dump began over the weekend and continues to the first weekend in November.
- The fire chief position has been posted.
- Working with staff on the FY24 budget. An overview will be presented to Council at the October 18th meeting, along with presentations on the administration, manager, finance, clerk and election budget sections.
- Held two town hall meetings with staff members in City Hall and the Civic Center. Preparing for meetings with DPW and public safety staff members.
- Thanked recreation director Stephanie Quaranta for hosting a Recreation Committee meeting last night at Garfield playground to discuss the recent removal of the unsafe playground equipment, and what improvements can be made to the playground.
- Holding meetings with the various community partners, including a meeting with the Justice Center, and an upcoming meeting with Capstone Community Action.

Unfinished Business – NONE

New Business –

A) Designation of Manager Storellicastro as Voting Delegate at VLCT Town Fair.

Moved to consent agenda.

B) Six-Month Look Ahead Calendar.

Moved to consent agenda.

C) Discussion of Potential Changes to the Animal and Fowl Ordinance.

Councilor Boutin said with the disbanding of the Dog Park Committee, references to the committee should be removed from the ordinance. He said the current ordinance language allows dogs in the cemeteries under certain conditions, however, the Cemetery Committee would like the ordinance changed to disallow dogs anywhere in the cemeteries. Councilor Boutin said he would like to vest authority in the Cemetery Committee to establish rules around animals in the cemeteries. There was discussion on enforcement. Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron said the committee has rules & regulations that specifically disallow pets in the cemeteries. Councilor Boutin said the ordinance should match the rules.

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William Toborg, Heather Pipino, Ilene Gillander, Romni Palmer and Bernadette Rose spoke of enforcement, removing references to the Dog Park Committee from ordinance, prohibiting dogs from the cemeteries to maintain them as sacred spaces, the existing signs posted at the cemetery entrances that say no dogs allowed, and confusion over the discussion around removing Dog Park Committee references in ordinance and revising the language to disallow dogs in the cemeteries.

Mr. Bergeron will bring up the discussion to the Cemetery Committee at its next meeting.

D) Presentation of Draft Capital Improvement Plan.

Manager Storrellicastro said department heads have been working with Grant Gager from Public Advisory Group on the current draft of the capital improvement plan. Grant Gager said the plan and executive summary are unpinning by a large database that includes capital projects and large equipment purchases over the next five years. These are living documents and should be incorporated into budgeting and reviewed annually. Mr. Gager reviewed the executive summary, which highlighted projects over the next two years, and possible funding sources. Next steps will be implementation, depending on project management capacity, procurement process, technology support, funding, and prioritization.

Public Works Director Bill Ahearn said the plan doesn't reflect current ongoing projects and expenses, such as the planning work being done for the DPW campus. There was discussion on use of ARPA funds, capacity to expand facilities at the wastewater treatment plant to co-locate certain DPW departments, using the CIP to unlock grant funding and regional planning resources, and establishing a method for prioritization taking into consideration staff and elected officials' recommendations.

Bernadette Rose said as chair of the ADA Committee, she wants to know who is speaking for citizens with special needs. How do we ensure building upgrades and projects include accessible components?

Amy Galford said there are some massive needs, like the DPW campus, and how does this scale with available staffing. The plan should prioritize those projects that are critical to safety and public health, regulatory, nice upgrades, or wish list items.

There was additional discussion on prioritization and phasing, adjusting for capacity, emphasizing streets and sidewalks, use of local options taxes, including revenue forecasting in the plan, and accessing state and federal opportunities.

Added) Diversity & Equity Committee – response to last week's meeting video

Councilor Lauzon said he was disappointed when he watched the video of last Thursday's Diversity & Equity Committee meeting. There was discussion on proper procedure for requesting the committee name be changed, inappropriate opening comments by the chair, responsibility of the Council with regards to the behavior of committee appointees, giving the committee space before taking any action, dissolving the committee, and possibly engaging a consultant, facilitator or mediator.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to accept the D&E Committee's report, appoint a City staff person to serve as representative on the VLCT diversity committee, and disband the Barre City D&E Committee. The motion was seconded by Councilor Deering.

There was continued discussion on constituents losing faith in the committee, the committee learning to work together, reflecting the City's political diversity through the committee members, and using the committee to have difficult discussions and address issues.

Sarah Helman said the committee's work can be fruitful, however the chair painted the Council in a negative light, and slandered a committee member.

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John LePage said having a D&E Committee is a big step for the City, and the council doesn't have a clean record with regards to discord. He said this was a faux pas, and everybody should move on.

Rosemary Averill said if the committee chair was an employee, her behavior would have led to her being fired. Ms. Averill said the real world allows for differences of opinion, not hypocrisy and intolerance, and Council members need to deal with their own biases.

Laurel Maurer said it was disturbing to watch the videos of the last two D&E Committee meetings, with one person bullying another. Ms. Maurer said maybe there should be a different person serving as chair of the committee, or some members should be asked to take a break from serving on the committee. She said the Council gave the committee grace last week, but the committee failed.

Bernadette Rose said she asks the Council to reconsider providing a facilitator or mediator for the committee. Ms. Rose said the committee asked for assistance. She said there are negative social media attacks being made, and there needs to be less public vitriol.

Garrett Grant said this was another week pitting people against each other. Mr. Grant said let mediation proceed. The D&E Committee hasn't been given time to work through its differences. The issue looks like the City prioritizes drama over progress.

Rachel Nelson said she questions how quickly there is a call for shutting down the committee. Ms. Nelson said all our biases are showing tonight, and children would be expected to work out issues by diving into them. The Council needs to watch out for any member of a committee looking to stop the personal rights of any other member of a committee.

Amy Galford said the work of the D&E Committee feeds into all the work of the City.

Terry Reil said the outcome of last week's Council meeting was appropriate, and the Council needs to address the behaviors and actions of the D&E Committee members.

William Toborg, D&E Committee member, said slander is not a difference of opinion, and he is considering filing a lawsuit against the D&E Committee chair. Mr. Toborg said if the Council doesn't do anything they are condoning slander.

Greg Quetel, D&E Committee member, said he's not sure where the committee is going. Mr. Quetel said they have a good goal to achieve, but are currently in turmoil, and experiencing a leadership problem. He said the committee needs restructuring, and they can't move forward without support to try and get the committee members together.

Councilor Boutin withdrew his motion, and moved for findings to go into executive session. There was no second to his motion.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to suspend the Diversity & Equity Committee for three weeks to allow time for reconciliation and direction from the Council. The motion was seconded by Councilor Cambel.

There was continuing discussion on solutions, the difficult nature of the work of the committee, following civil processes, and incorporating this into the current review of committees and evaluations of committee members as public officers.

Council voted on motion as presented. Motion carried, with Councilors Waszazak and Stockwell voting against.

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Upcoming Business –

Continuing discussion on the development of the FY24 budget will be on the October 18th meeting agenda. There is no Council meeting next week.

Round Table –

Councilor Deering said this is election season, and people shouldn't vote based on the letter next to a candidate's name.

Councilor Lauzon thanked his wife, Karen, for her 15 years serving as president of the OUR House board of directors.

Councilor Stockwell said she's glad she attended last night's meeting at the Garfield playground.

Councilor Waszazak said he had a great tour of Capstone Community Action, and there was a well-attended gathering with congressional candidate Becca Balint at Pearl Street Pizza yesterday. He recommended people do their own research on the constitutional change, Prop 22.

Mayor Hemmerick said the Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce Athena Leadership awards event is November 5th.

Executive Session – Councilor Boutin made the motion to find that premature general public knowledge of real estate negotiations around 22 Hill Street, legal issues, and evaluation of public officers would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussions be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

Council went into executive session at 9:57 PM to discuss real estate, legal issues, and personnel under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. Manager Storlicastro and Clerk Dawes were invited into the executive session. **Motion carried.**

Councilor Stockwell left the portion of the executive session addressing negotiations on 22 Hill Street at 10:30 PM due to conflict of interest.

Council came out of executive session at 10:40 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

There was no action taken.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

The open portions of this meeting were recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk