**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council**

**Held August 6, 2024**

**Council Chambers-Barre City Hall**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Thomas Lauzon at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall, Barre, Vermont. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilor Sonya Spaulding and Councilor Emel Cambel; from Ward II, Councilor Amanda Gustin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Michael Deering and Samn Stockwell .City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storellicastro, and Clerk/Treasurer Cheryl Metivier.

**Absent:** none

**Adjustments to the Agenda:**

Request for executive session following regular Council meeting (personnel and real estate)

**Visitors & Communications:** none

**Approval of Consent Agenda:**

1. Approval of Minutes:
	1. Regular meeting of July 23th, 2024. **\*\*Corrected\*\***
2. Clerk’s Office Licenses and Permits; none
3. Authorize the Manager to execute contracts; none
4. Assign state operating funds as FY25 revenue, assign FY24 unexpended funds FY25 undesignated fund balance up to 5 percent, and approve $50,000 transfer to Capital Improvement fund.
5. Approve creation of a special fund to track flood expenses
6. Approve waiver of vacant building fee for flood-impacted properties
7. Approve amendments to the Grants Management Policy

\*\*amend “D” for ratification of **Consent Agenda** for Council meeting scheduled on August 20th\*\*

4-a. Approval of City Warrants

 A. Ratify warrant from Week of July 31th, 2024

 B. Approve warrants from Week of August 7th, 2024

**Moved for approval by Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Cambel. (Councilor Spaulding abstained) Approved**

**City Clerk & Treasurer Report –**

Clerk reporting continued momentum with the August Primary elections. Absentee ballots are trickling in, reporting of the 648 ballots issued, to date only 326 have been documented as returned to the office. The clerk urging voters to cast their votes early enough to allow defective ballots to be cured (corrected) and counted in the election. Ballots may be requested by calling the Clerk’s office or visiting My Voter Page and requested one on that site.

**Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board –** None

**City Manager’s Report-**

Dumpsters have been removed.

Auditorium is on stand-by.

Relief groups still available-Red Cross, Barre Up & Southern Baptist

Code enforcement still has (2) properties “red tagged” (1) = set to be removed once foundation is poured

 (1) = long term/ house fire and significant damage

\*\***Storm warning\*\*** remnants of hurricane Debby potentially could bring heavy downpours and flooding. Prepare for the worst, but hope for the best. City crews are working on clearing trash racks, culverts and storm drain in preparation. Please sign up for VT Alerts for emergency notices and information.

**Bennington Martens Flood Relief Basketball Game**

***Event Date: August 31, 2024***

Join us in Barre as we continue our recovery.

We are honored that Vermont’s only pro-basketball team, the Bennington Martens, will be hosting a skills clinic and exhibition flood relief game vs Barre First Responders at the historic Barre Auditorium. All the funds raised will go towards the Barre Community Relief Fund.

**Date:** Saturday, August 31
**Time:** Exhibition game starts at 8PM

The City is still working on EPA grants and Downstreet applications

**RIVER-Update**

The RIVER team presented the projects list based on Council input of importance. However the Council did make it clear, the RIVER team are the experts and want the Team to make the decision based on which projects will make the biggest impact and remain cost effective.

Project slides depicted the rivers in Barre long ago, when they were wider, now narrowed historically building up to embankments so buildings could be placed on rivers extended edge.

The Team and Council also decided moving forward with a study of the City’s hydraulics/underground/hydrology systems, so to understand the volume of water these systems can withstand during storms dropping large water amounts in a short time would benefit in the implementation of future projects.

**BUYOUTS-Updates**

The Manager presented slides showing areas where current buyouts underway, interested or newly submitted due to July 2024 flooding. Most areas had “clusters” of homes, but not just in one specific neighborhood, but several throughout the City. Some of these areas would be used as resting areas for water, and some could be mitigated and flood resistant multi-unit housing would/could be built.

**Flood Resiliency Plan-Update (Councilor Gustin, Councilor Waszazak)**

As this plan progresses, the necessity for adaptation to the project RIVER has been working on will be integrated. Additional features will likely be added, such as, a timeline of previous flooding/response/recover for reference, and an established appendix with ongoing list of potential projects. The formatting would be easy to follow, and provide updates as projects progress or are completed.

More input is desired from community forums as well as the Council and professional mitigation teams.

Councilor Gustin and Waszazak hope to provide updates on 1 or 2 projects at Council meetings, and full review biannually.

**Approval of FY25 municipal and local tax rate-Clerk**

The clerk review the Tax Rate calculations for the FY25 municipal tax rate.

Municipal tax rate = amount to be raised by taxes + total voter approved allocations to social service agencies + capital/street/sidewalk amount approved by voters + any other special amounts approved by the voters divided by (municipal grand list total divided by 100). This number is carried out to 4 decimal places

Local agreement rate is the education taxes that need to be collected from voter-approved tax exempted properties and tax stabilization properties so the state doesn’t lose the education taxes. It also includes the extra exemptions granted to disabled veterans. (The state picks up the first 10K of exemptions, but the city taxpayers pick up the other 30K of exemptions). All other city taxpayers must pay a small amount to make up these exempted ed taxes. The LAR is calculated by taking the following information from the 2nd page of the 411 report:



**Motion moved by Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Waszazak-approved**

**Set Water & Sewer Rates-Manager**

We will request Council approval of new FY25 rates for users of the water and wastewater systems. We are proposing the same increase as was approved last year. While we understand the burden increased fees have on City residents, we also have structural budgetary deficits to address in wastewater, and both systems are in need of timely updates to continue to reliably operate. Further, an Assurance of Discontinuance that we reached with the state due to an illicit discharge will also increase costs in order to come to compliance

In order to continue to rebuild the structural deficits in the Wastewater Enterprise Fund, and to prevent a similar outcome in the Water Enterprise Fund, City staff recommends the same increase as was adopted last year:

• Water: 3% base rate; 3% use rate, -1% change

• Sewer: 5% base rate; 21% use rate, +1% change

**Moved by Councilor Cambel, seconded by Councilor Gustin**

**Round Table**

Councilor Spaulding-Lacrosse Tourney was attended and thoroughly enjoyed. She wishes the turf would be used year round. Kudos to the DPW for repairing a water main break located in her neighborhood in a timely manner and efficiently.

Councilor Gustin-Red Cross is experiencing a blood shortage, PLEASE donate if you can.

Councilor Deering-Reiterating the goodness for the community and young people the turf at the BOR brings.

Mayor Lauzon-Be mindful of the storm coming this weekend. Pay attention to the City website, sign up for VT Alerts and be diligent.

Next Council meeting is August 20th, 2024.

**Motion to call an executive session for personnel or real estate matters moved by Councilor Stockwell and 2nd by Gustin.**

**Motion to enter executive session moved by Councilor Spaulding, seconded by Councilor Stockwell at 9:41pm.**

**Exit Executive Session: Councilor Stockwell moved, Councilor Cambel seconded.**

**Adjourn: Councilor Waszazak moved, Councilor Spaulding seconded**.

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

 Respectfully submitted,

#  Cheryl A. Metivier, City Clerk