

City of Barre, Vermont

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC)**

**December 15, 2021, 6:30 PM**

Conducted in City Council Chambers, City Hall and virtually via a Zoom link



**MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting packet was posted and available online for the committee members and public.

**1. Call to order**

- a. The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.
- b. City staff present: Steve Mackenzie Bill Ahearn, Eli Morgan, and Larry Eastman
- c. Transportation Advisory Committee members present: Michael Hellein (Chair), Jake Hemmerick (minute-taker), Joshua Akers, Art Bombardier, Giuliano Cecchinelli (Vice-Chair)
- d. Public present: Ericka Reil (Chair of ADA), Dan Souza (Chair of Paths, Routes & Trails)

**2. Adjustments to the agenda**

- a. The Chair noted that there must be a majority of six to establish a quorum according to the City's rules of procedure, and he recommended re-approval of the October minutes with a quorum of six which were inadvertently approved with only five members present.

**3. Approval of the minutes of October**

- a. Hemmerick moved to approve the October Minutes from October, second by Akers. Approved unanimously.

**4. Approval of minutes of November 17, 2021**

- a. The Chair explained the original and amended minutes.
- b. Motion by Hemmerick to approve the minutes as amended, second by Akers. **Approved unanimously.**

**5. Visitors and communications: input from the public for items not on the agenda.**

- a. Hemmerick noted the letter submitted and mentioned by Amy Galford last meeting, on Berlin Street and inquired if everyone received it. Manager Mackenzie requested a copy.

**b. FOLLOW-UP ACTION ITEM: Hemmerick will send a copy of the letter to Mackenzie.**

**6. Department of Public Works monthly transportation report**

- a. **Department staff reports on transportation work and planning since the previous meeting**
  - i. Director Ahearn summarized the report in the packet including:
    1. Revised signage for a speed enforcement zone on Washington street;
    2. Paint thickness experimentation with various stop bar and lane separation line painting at various intersections;
    3. Trial of an equipment-mounted power broom for snow removal downtown prior to sand and salt application; and
    4. Winter storm response and the acquisition of 110 tons of salt to date.

- ii. He also mentioned the lowering of the stop sign on Merchants Row, placement of several speed limit signs in the Fecteau residential area, roadside cleanup, and potholes.
- b. **Note new resident concerns as raised to staff**
  - i. Director Ahearn requested from a resident to get a speed table at Cassie and Onward where there is a daycare. He noted that this is a good candidate for some type of intervention.
  - ii. **FOLLOW-UP ACTION:** Chair Hellein and/or staff will add this to the tracking sheet.

## 7. New business

- a. **Election of Secretary**
  - i. **Nomination** by Chair Hellein to appoint Hemmerick as the committee's secretary. **Second** by Akers. **Unanimously approved.**
- b. **Review proposed Capital, Streets, Sidewalks Plan (60 minutes)**
  - i. Background: *It is a City Council priority for the Transportation Advisory Committee; Paths, Routes and Trails Committee; and Americans with Disabilities Committee to review and assess the plans as presented in this meeting by the Department of Public Works. Members from relevant Committees have committed to attend this meeting.*
  - ii. The Chair prompted the committee to consider items paraphrased as:
    - 1. Offer feedback to city staff and Council; and questions:
    - 2. Does the plan represent responsible stewardship of infrastructure?
    - 3. Will this plan implement relevant goals of the City's Municipal Plan?
  - iii. Director Ahearn explained that the voters annually consider a ballot item to provide funding for Streets, Sidewalks and Equipment -- which is allocated to projects -- often in coordination with water and sewer investments (funded through the water/sewer enterprise fund capital investments). The packet materials listed an inventory of capital needs identified by the Department of Public Works, broken into Department-wide needs, streets, water, and sewer. The exhibits further detailed the annual allocations of approximately \$400,000 per year for FY23, FY24, FY25, FY26, FY27 for streets. Similar lists were provided for water and sewer.
  - iv. Hellein suggested a look at the FY23 items, and Bombardier inquired if the items included year-to-year inflation. Director Ahearn explained that these were not inflation adjusted, but expressed at today's rates. Director Ahearn further explained an assumption that the items would be City-performed work, noting this may be too optimistic and contract work may be part of the mix, affecting estimations. Reil asked if ADA curb cuts, driveways and aprons will be accounted for when proposed streets are raised or improved, and the TAC discussed the merits of asphalt overlays on the sidewalks. Reil noted this isn't the best surface for persons with limited mobility and Hemmerick noted that the condition of asphalt sidewalks throughout Vermont municipalities, including Barre, are generally in very poor and unlevel condition. Director Ahearn explained that this is an effort to make pedestrian infrastructure dollars go

further to achieve level surface than could be achieved with concrete replacement, albeit with a shorter lifespan.

- v. Chair Hellein noted the paucity of overall funding to maintain the system and achieve the maintenance goals of the plan, which would require three to five times as much per year to achieve municipal plan goals, let alone and catch up on a 100-year estimated backlog (a timeframe based on the current spending and total estimated need). The Chair thanked the Director for the plan and the leap forward it makes for the City, in terms of understanding existing conditions, assessing needs, prioritizing those needs, and realizing projects that have been under addressed.
- vi. Hemmerick suggested that the committee consider street standards that lower the expense of paving, such as narrowing streets where appropriate to make limited dollars go further. He also inquired if the Department is considering how to make sure the plan positions local needs and projects for potential funding from the Build Back Better Federal Infrastructure Bill.
- vii. Souza inquired if bikes are allowed on sidewalks? Hellein understands that they are not permitted on sidewalks and Cecchinelli recalled that there are some allowances for certain users. Manager Mackenzie noted that the ordinance prohibits bicycles (and skateboards) on sidewalks without exception.
- viii. Akers inquired if the pavement accounts for the users, particularly the trucking users. Ahearn explained that they look at both speed and users.
- ix. Hellein suggested a focus on implementation of the Summer and Elm Street Plan as an improvement with a high long-term value and payoff. Reil echoed concerns about the danger of this corridor and the recent and frequent pedestrian hits.
- x. Hemmerick suggested that the committee consider making recommendations on revenue sources to catch up on deferred maintenance which considers regional equity for the many people who use the City's roads but don't pay a fair share, including the Mayor's proposal of a 1% general sales tax item for charter change to fund capital improvements, estimated to yield \$800,000 per year.
- xi. Hellein also noted the plan's recommendation to not build new infrastructure and cautioned against accepting new streets as public. Director Ahearn referenced Richardson Road sidewalk gap as a potential new improvement with high equity value. No committee members expressed support a sidewalk on Richardson Road, given maintenance needs and planned priorities elsewhere. Hemmerick suggested a fix-it-first approach with allowances for all school sites in the City.
- xii. Director Ahearn noted the committee's preference to maintain what we have first, and Chair Hellein suggested that maintenance integrate incremental improvements like bulb-outs and important traffic calming measures.
- xiii. Hemmerick **moved** that the committee acknowledge the good work that has gone into the capital items presented here and that the funding resources are inadequate to keep up with maintenance; for instance, the City is paving 1 mile per year and the City needs to be paving 3 miles a year per the Municipal Plan.

**Second** by Cuccinelli. Under discussion, Bombardier noted that this is theoretical and could be derailed by an emergency need. **Unanimously approved.** Manager Mackenzie noted that there are always emergencies (often \$200 to \$500k per year), but this plan provides a framework and Council is discussing using FY21 audited surplus for emergency reserves, as allowed by the Charter. The committee re-iterated their thanks to Director Ahearn.

xiv. **FOLLOW-UP ACTION:** Recommended that Manager Mackenzie relay this recommendation to the Council in his Manager's report.

**8. Confirm date of next meeting: January 19, 2022, at 6:30 PM**

- a. No objections to this date.

**9. Roundtable**

- a. Hellein noted that he is trying to get more information from VTrans on the Merchant Street project but has not gotten anything yet.
- b. Hemmerick provided an update on cross-organization efforts to address the problem of residents getting stranded up at the hospital that need an after-hour ride home.
- c. Bombardier noted that he got a phishing attempt from someone impersonating the Chair. Others noted that this is happening across the city committees. Hellein reported that he has notified the Manager.

**10. Adjourn**

- a. **Motion** to adjourn by Bombardier. **Second** by Cecchinelli. **Unanimously approved.**