

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held January 31, 2023**

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, Barre, Vermont. 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, Interim Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Fire Captain Keith Cushman, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Police Chief Braedon Vail, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Others Present: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda:

1. Remove the Accounts Payable Policy from the consent agenda; deferred to a future meeting.
2. Remove the Downstreet community development warrant from the consent agenda, as the funds haven't been received yet.
3. Move the purchase of a police cruiser from the consent agenda to a new action item.

Visitors and Communications –

Jesse Rosado said he sent an email to Councilors with information about Green Mountain Transit and the current reduced levels of service. Mr. Rosado said the Council should take the lead in contacting the GMT board to request service be restored. Copies of any correspondence should be shared with our legislative and congressional delegations.

Bernadette Rose thanked Mr. Rosado for his advocacy. Ms. Rose said we are meeting on unceded Abenaki land, and tomorrow begins Black History Month.

Ellen Kaye said she takes the daily commuter bus to Burlington, and has found GMT responsive. They are experiencing difficulties finding and keeping drivers.

Ericka Reil said the bus shelters are blocked by snow and need better maintenance. Steve Finner said he is a frequent bus rider, and the Homelessness Task Force is offering classes on using the bus system. Mr. Finner suggested additional covered bus stops be installed.

Councilors Deering and Waszazak will draft a letter to the GMT board. The letter will come to Council for review at next week's meeting.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of January 24, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2023-05, dated February 1, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$127,484.40
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$136,864.11
- C. 2023 Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Approval of updates to the Accounts Payable Policy (deferred under adjustments)
- E. Authorize the purchase of a police cruiser (moved to new business under adjustments)
- F. Special Community Development Warrant: Transfer ACCD grant funds to Downstreet Housing for Recovery Residence final draw (deferred under adjustments)

To be approved at 02/07/2023 Barre City Council Meeting

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Yesterday was the deadline for nominating petitions for town meeting elections. The warning and ballot names will be sent to the printer tomorrow. Ballots will be available by February 15th.
- Have received just over 300 absentee ballot requests to date.
- The City is working with Senate Finance Committee and House Ways & Means Committee on companion bills to grant a two-year extension for incurrence of debt for the TIF district.

Bernadette Rose said she never received the postcard sent by the City reminding people to sign up to receive an absentee ballot by mail.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storrellicastro noted the following:

- The Fire Department has been training with new equipment at the auditorium.
- The Wheelock House has been listed for sale, and interest is already being expressed.

Manager Storrellicastro announced that Capt. Keith Cushman has been named the new Barre City Chief of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, effective February 3, 2023. The Manager thanked Interim Chief Joe Aldsworth for overseeing the department for the last several months since former Chief Doug Brent's retirement. Capt. Cushman thanked the Manager for the opportunity to continue his service to the community.

There was discussion on emergency planning around the upcoming severe cold weather predicted for later this week. Interim Fire Chief Aldsworth said they have been in contact with the library about the warming shelter, and with Good Samaritan Haven about being open for additional daytime hours. Manager Storrellicastro said notifications will be posted on the City website and social media pages, and on VTAlerts. It was recommended people call Good Samaritan Haven or 211 for information on available services. Ericka Reil said people can also call her, and gave out her cell phone number.

New Business –

A) Authorize the allocation of \$250,000 in ARPA funding to Downstreet in support of the Granite City Apartments project.

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to remove this item from the table and put it back before the Council for discussion, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to approve the allocation of \$250,000 of ARPA funds to Downstreet for the Granite City Apartments project, seconded by Councilor Stockwell.

Renita Marshall from the Renita Marshall Helping Hands Foundation said she wanted to thank the Council and people of Barre for feeding the parking meters during the free holiday parking period, and raising \$3,890 for the foundation. She apologized for speaking at this point in the meeting, but the Council moved past the consent agenda so quickly, she didn't have a chance to respond at that time.

Returning to discussion on the Downstreet allocation, Councilor Boutin said he would only support it if the question is added to the ballot, or an amendment is incorporated into the allocation so that it is a loan rather than a grant.

Joe Reil said he supports the grant, and Downstreet is taking steps towards solutions to housing issues.

Amy Galford said the streets and sidewalks in the Ward 5 school neighborhood are crumbling, and investing in infrastructure supports housing. She would like the Council to commit the funds to infrastructure improvements in that area.

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Rosemary Averill said she agrees with Ms. Galford's comments. She looks forward to seeing the Ward 5 school renovated, and the ARPA money belongs to the people.

Jesse Rosado said restoring the Ward 5 school is preserving an historic piece of the City, and a beautiful building.

There was discussion on planning for and prioritizing infrastructure, using the outcomes from the public outreach around ARPA funds to determine where to allocate the funds, other sources of funding for improvements, influx of federal and state money, review of the financial plans and budgets for the Granite City Apartments project, and looking for ways to leverage the available funds.

Ericka Reil said the proposed redevelopment of the vacant Ward 5 school is a gift to the City.

Garrett Grant said he trusts Downstreet as they fill housing vacancies, restore historic buildings, and address housing issues.

There was additional discussion on supporting residents in public housing and using such housing as a way to raise families up to more stable housing options.

Councilor Boutin offered an amendment to place the funding request on the ballot. The motion was deemed out of order as it conflicts with the original motion.

Councilor Boutin offered an amendment to provide the funding as a loan instead of a grant. The motion died for lack of a second.

Downstreet Housing and Community Development executive director Angie Harbin said it's not possible to turn the grant into a revolving loan. Ms. Harbin said a low income housing project like this has various restrictions on how funding is used, and how revenues, expenses and cash flow are managed. She said there will be services onsite to assist residents.

Mayor Hemmerick read a letter of support from Hill Street residents Joanne and John Reynolds.

Councilor Boutin moved to stop debate and call the question, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

Council voted on the original motion to allocate \$250,000 ARPA funds to Downstreet for the Granite City Apartments project. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

Jesse Rosado said Downstreet is a great partner.

B) Approval of FY22 Annual TIF Report.

Clerk Dawes said the City is required to submit an annual report to Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC). There was discussion on the legislation being drafted to extend Barre City's deadline for incurrence of debt, and extend the retention of increment, and what other options there might be for the current district, or some future version. Representative Peter Anthony said he is happy to support the City's bills through the legislature to find a path forward.

Council approved certifying the TIF annual report on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

Added from Consent Agenda) Authorize the purchase of a police cruiser.

There was discussion on how the purchase of this vehicle relates to the seven vehicles authorized earlier this fiscal year, and why the recommendation is to use a different vendor than the previous purchases. Manager Storrellicastro said it's a different type of vehicle than those previously purchased, and Police Chief Vail said the main point of contact from the former vendor has moved to the new vendor, and the new vendor also offered a lower price. It

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was noted this purchase will be paid for in FY24, and the vehicle is a hybrid. Councilors asked the Chief to review the current 3-year vehicle replacement cycle to consider a longer timeframe.

Council approved the purchase on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

C) Approval of March 3, 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warning. [N.B. correct date for annual town meeting is March 7, 2023]

Councilor Boutin made the motion to approve the warning, seconded by Councilor Deering.

Councilor Waszazak offered a friendly amendment to adjust the Barre Area Development Article VII to reflect the \$60,853 BADC funding included in the general fund budget. The mover and seconder accepted the friendly amendment.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to close discussion and call the question, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

Council voted on the warning as amended. **Motion carried.**

Upcoming Business –

- Executive session before next week’s meeting to discuss TIF with White & Burke consultants.
- Mayoral proclamation next week honoring Studio Place Arts executive director Sue Higby on 20 years of service.
- Councilor Waszazak said he’s exploring the creation of a community investment ordinance.

Round Table –

Councilors offered get well wishes to Councilor Lauzon and Manager Storrellicastro, who are attending remotely due to illness. Councilors shared their thanks for this evening’s robust discussions.

Councilor Boutin said he’s excited about having the Wheelock House on the market, and encouraged people to be careful in the coming extreme cold weather.

Councilor Stockwell said after the recent tour of the wastewater treatment facility, it’s remarkable to have access to clean water and wastewater services.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk