

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held February 28, 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 (arrived 7:04 PM). City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storrellicastro, Fire Chief Keith Cushman, Public Works Director Brian Baker, Fire Capt. Robert Howarth, IT Coordinator Ryan Starr, Assistant City Manager Dawn Monahan, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Others Present: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda:

Manager Storrellicastro said there will be an executive session for labor contracts and personnel.

Visitors and Communications –

Health Officer and Fire Marshall Capt. Robert Howarth said this is his last day with the Department, and he thanked the Council for allowing him to have 25 great years serving the City of Barre. Councilors gave Capt. Howarth a standing ovation in appreciation of his years of dedicated service.

Bernadette Rose said we are meeting on unceded lands of the Abenaki people during Black History Month. Ms. Rose said there was an Abenaki storytelling and drumming presentation by the Aldrich Children's Library today. She also welcomed incoming Public Works Director Brian Baker.

William Toborg said he is disappointed in the recent Facebook comments shared by Mayor Hemmerick. Mr. Toborg said he is hopeful people will work together for what is right for Barre rather than what is right for their political party.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of February 14, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2023-09, dated March 1, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$1,884,386.88
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$136,177.00
- C. 2023 Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Ratify the appointment of Councilor Lauzon as an alternate on the Animal Control Committee

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Ballots for the March 7th annual town meeting are available for early absentee voting. To date 529 ballots have been issued, and approximately 220 have been returned. Early voting is available through close of business on Monday, March 6th. Ballots must be returned to the office by close of business on Monday, or close of polls on Tuesday to be counted.
- Manager and Clerk are testifying before Senate Finance on Thursday on the TIF extension request bill, S.94.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storrellicastro noted the following:

- FY24 budget is being voted on at next week's Town Meeting elections. There is information about the budget on the City website, Facebook page, and CVTV.
- The City has entered into a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement with Capstone for their 20 Gable Place campus and their Brook Street School property. This new agreement replaces the old agreements and puts in place an annual increase for each property.
- Met with Bill Krajeski from New England Municipal Consultants, who are preparing to begin the city-wide reappraisal.
- New Public Works Director Brian Baker started yesterday. Mr. Baker introduced himself and thanked outgoing DPW director Bill Ahearn for his ongoing guidance and support during the transition.

New Business –

A) IDEAL Vermont presentation.

Xusana Davis, Vermont Executive Director of Racial Equity, and Shalini Suryanarayana, Vermont Racial Equity Education & Outreach Associate, spoke of the IDEAL Vermont program. IDEAL stands for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Action, and Leadership. Ms. Davis and Ms. Suryanarayana liaise with communities around communications and education opportunities through the IDEAL Vermont program. They gave a Powerpoint presentation that highlighted recognizing the need to prioritize equity and social justice, changing demographics, the application and interview process for joining the program, and determining a community's readiness to participate.

Bernadette Rose asked about limiting language used by some communities in the Declaration of Inclusion. Ms. Davis said the program is looking for the declaration to include additional means of inclusion such as noncitizen voting, community policing, rebranding school mascots, and creating leadership positions.

There was discussion on some available grant funding, technical assistance and online platforms, and how to define diversity, equity and inclusion.

Joseph Nelson asked the meaning of environmental justice. Ms. Suryanarayana said it addresses times when decisions are made that effect one group of people more than others. It's about fairness.

Amy Galford asked about the history of Barre City's wards, and when was the last time they were reviewed. Clerk Dawes said the City gets census tract information a few years after each decennial census, and the Board of Civil Authority uses the data to review the current makeup of the wards for balance of population. Such a review will take place this summer, and the BCA may take other demographics into account besides population.

There was discussion on how equity could play into the upcoming City-wide reappraisal, how to figure out what to focus on first, sharing best practices, and creating a network for continued learning.

Danielle Owczarski said the River Access Task Force is concerned about the impact of riverfront development on people living along the rivers, and will developing the rivers displace people who are traditionally poorer. Ms. Davis said zoning and land use topics are a frequent tool used for segregation, and can be an important part of a town's discussions around equity.

Rachel Nelson asked how can a community proceed when portions of the community don't believe there is inequity or that racism exists. Ms. Davis said the program calls for town government leaders to work

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against vocal minorities. There is a readiness quiz on the IDEAL Vermont website, and links to resources to help grow support for the program.

There was discussion on next steps and how Barre City can engage.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to refer this to the Diversity and Equity Committee to work on an advisory recommendation for how the City administration can get involved in the IDEAL Vermont program, seconded by Councilor Waszazak.

There was continuing discussion on the interview process and who would be involved. Ms. Davis said the City would identify those people they believe should be involved in the interview process. Once accepted into the program, the City would create a team of up to three people.

Councilor Lauzon amended his motion to include having the Diversity and Equity Committee identify the people who would participate in the interview, accepted by the seconder.

Diversity and Equity Committee chair Joelen Mulvaney said it would be more appropriate for the Council to answer the questions on the application, as a higher level of authority should take the lead on this. The City needs to take a leadership role and think about resources that would be necessary. Ms. Mulvaney said the committee can fill out the form from their perspective. And then pass it along to the Council for review.

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

B) Allocate \$40,000 in opioid settlement funds to Turning Point.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to approve allocation of the funds, seconded by Councilor Waszazak.

Bob Purvis and Chip Castle from Turning Point Center talked about the center's involvement with opioid treatment over the years. Mr. Purvis said they recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Barre City Police Department to provide support to police when they encounter people who are in crisis. Turning Point is in the planning phase to restore and expand a property on South Main Street as a new home for the center. The new location will provide recovery services and programs, access to treatment resources, and community activities to help combat the stigmas associated with substance abuse and recovery.

Raylene Meunier thanked Mr. Purvis and Turning Point for their efforts supporting her family.

Mr. Purvis said they originally requested \$50,000 from the ARPA community innovation fund, but they qualify for the opioid settlement funds the City has received to date. Manager Storrellicastro said the City has received just over \$40,000 to date, and additional funds will be coming in the future. The Manager said there is a strong possibility of additional support in the future as more settlement funds are received.

Bernadette Rose said residents at the neighboring Tilden House complex have been using the parking lot at the future Turning Point location, and asked about the relationship between the two properties. Mr. Purvis said they will work closely with Tilden House.

Council voted on the motion. **Motion carried.**

C) FY24 Budget Recap.

Manager Storrellicastro gave a Powerpoint presentation on the proposed FY24 budget, which will be voted on at next week's Town Meeting elections.

D) Warning: 7:45 PM Town Meeting ballot articles informational hearing.

Mayor Hemmerick opened the informational hearing at 8:47 PM and invited questions or comments from the Council and those in attendance on the town meeting ballot articles. Hearing no comments or questions, the Mayor closed the hearing at 8:49 PM.

Upcoming Business –

There is no Council meeting next week. The next meeting is March 14th. There will be a Council refresher at that meeting on open meeting laws, public records, and council policies and procedures.

Councilor Deering said he would like to review the amnesty program offered by previous State's Attorney TJ Donovan, and see how the City could develop something similar for the outstanding parking tickets.

Round Table –

Councilor Lauzon said there is a steering committee meeting tomorrow morning for the Prospect Heights project.

Councilor Deering said Spaulding High School basketball and hockey teams are enjoying successful weeks.

Councilors encouraged people to get out and vote at next week's Town Meeting elections.

Councilor Stockwell said regardless of whether she is re-elected on Tuesday, it's been a great experience serving on Council.

Mayor Hemmerick said Councilors provide service to the community, and the City has been through big transitions over the past few years.

Councilor Lauzon asked Manager Storellicastro if the briefing on the AFSCME union contract planned for executive session has any additional information from what was shared last week. The Manager said there's nothing new. Councilor Lauzon made the motion to ratify the AFSCME union agreement, and authorize the Manager to sign. The motion was seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

It was noted this action will need to be ratified at the next Council meeting on March 14th.

Manager Storellicastro said there was no need for the executive session mentioned back under adjustments to the agenda.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk