

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held May 23, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 7:10 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, Assistant City Manager Dawn Monahan, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Public Works Director Brian Baker, Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron, Fire Chief Keith Cushman, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Community Outreach Specialist Brooke Pouliot, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Others Present: NONE

There were technical difficulties with the Zoom connection. The meeting started at 7:10 PM without the Zoom connection or recording. The Mayor rearranged the agenda in hopes the issues would be resolved shortly.

Adjustments to the Agenda:

- Defer approval of the Polli resolution until the technical issues are resolved.
- Add a new item to the consent agenda to approve a grand list filing extension request to the VT Department of Taxes Property Valuation and Review Division.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Special meeting of May 8, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Ratification of Week 2023-20, dated May 17, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$142,615.72
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$133,887.47
 2. Approval of Week 2023-21, dated May 24, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$255,907.32
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$131,767.83
- C. 2023 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits:
 1. Entertainment Licenses:
 - i. Community dinner in City Hall Park, Saturday, May 27th, from 5-7 PM
 - ii. Earthly Wonders opening event, 321 N. Main St., Saturday, May 27th, from 11AM – 4PM
- D. Accept the resignation of committee, task force, board, and commission members
- E. Authorize Manager to execute a contract and accept a Vermont DWSRF loan application for lead pipe inventories as required by the U.S. EPA
- F. Authorize Manager to execute contracts:
 - i. Replace the pool house roof
 - ii. Perform environmental services at Enterprise Aly
 - iii. FY24 fuels
 - iv. FY24 public works supplies
- G. (added) Authorization to submit Grand List lodging extension request to VT Department of Taxes

Property Valuation and Review Division.

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Election results from the May 9th BUUSD special election to vote on the budget are posted on the City website.
- Fourth quarter property taxes were due May 15th. The final delinquency rate was 4.74%.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storellicastro noted the following:

- There are 46 interviews to be conducted by Council over the next few meetings for incumbent and new committee and board members.
- Today was the last day for City residents to drop off yard waste at the Barre Town stump dump. The City has reached out to the Town to request an extension.
- The Public Works Department will make one swing around the City to pick up yard waste that's bagged and bundled and set at the curbside as of tomorrow morning.
- Treatment of the grub infestation at Hope Cemetery has begun.
- Painting of the municipal pool is underway in advance of opening for the season.
- Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth has been elected the new president of Capital Mutual Aid.
- Last week was National Police Week, and this week is both National EMS Week and National Public Works Week. Barre City honors the hard work and dedication of its workers in those essential fields.

Technical problems were resolved, and the Zoom connection and recording were established at 7:18 PM.

Approve a resolution honoring Louis Americo Polli, the first Italian-born Major League Baseball player.

Clerk Dawes read the resolution and Council approved it on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

Those in attendance offered applause in recognition of Mr. Polli's accomplishments, and a copy of the resolution was given to relatives in attendance. It will be part of a permanent display at the Montpelier Mountaineers baseball field.

Visitors and Communications – NONE

New Business –

A) Volunteer appointments/reappointments

i. Cow Pasture Committee – Janette Shaffer (reappointment)

Ms. Shaffer expressed her interest in continuing to serve on the Cow Pasture Stewardship Committee. She spoke of her expertise in grant writing and project management. Council approved the reappointment on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

B) Update on preparations to address the end of the state's motel housing program.

Manager Storellicastro gave a Powerpoint presentation on the coalition of municipalities and organizations that have been meeting to discuss the end of the state's motel housing program, and the impact on local communities and service agencies. The Manager said most recent data says there are 302 adults and 85 children, representing 223 households, in Washington County. There is a possibility of

opening the BOR as a temporary shelter until September 1st, provided the state provides staffing and services for the site. There was discussion on building a transition plan for what would happen beginning September 1st, and camping options in municipalities and state parks.

Lisa Liotta said season passes to state parks is not a viable option as the passes don't allow staying overnight. Overnight camping in state parks is limited to no more than two weeks. Most camping sites are booked well in advance, and don't provide access to transportation, food or services.

Ericka Reil from the Barre City Homelessness Task Force said camping is already going on in Barre City. Ms. Reil said it's hard to build a transition plan when there's no available housing. People need access to services and funding assistance.

Ken Russell from the Montpelier Homelessness Task Force said the state has been trying to transition this issue down to the local level and people are falling through the cracks.

Alison Calderara from Capstone Community Action said between October 2022 and March 2023 they have served 139 households, and were only able to find housing for 39 of them. They have one staff person working with motels on relocations, and there is need for long-term solutions.

There was discussion on whether plans will be in place for July 1st when the motel program ends, developing a uniform policy across municipalities for first responders with regards to encounters with campers, developing a regional approach, and humanely connecting people with services.

Barre City Representative Jonathan Williams said the legislature has included \$102M in housing assistance and \$121M in affordable housing appropriations in the FY24 budget. The funds include \$17M for the Housing Opportunity Program (HOP). Representative Peter Anthony said some of the funding embedded in the FY24 budget hasn't been approved yet.

There was discussion on use of funds to support campers, finding ways to share needs across all regional communities, creating permanent housing, getting a commitment from the state, proposed legislation to open state facilities as housing options, possible emergency declarations that would mobilize the National Guard.

Council will hold a special meeting next Tuesday to get an update on the situation. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 30th, at 5PM, and will include representatives from the City's police, fire, and EMS departments.

Sue Higby of Studio Place Arts said the ARPA Community Innovation Fund presentations scheduled for later in the meeting might be deferred, as the ARPA funds might be needed for the homelessness situation.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to table the ARPA Community Innovation Fund discussion, seconded by Councilor Deering. It was noted such a motion is non-debatable, and Clerk Dawes said it requires a 2/3 vote to approve. **Motion did not carry with Councilors Boutin, Deering, Lauzon, Cambel and Stockwell voting in favor, and Mayor Hemmerick and Councilor Waszazak voting against.**

[N.B. The Clerk noted to the Mayor afterwards that five affirmative votes out of seven is more than 2/3rd, so the motion should have carried.]

Ellen Kaye said these are human beings in our community, and this is sheltering outdoors, not camping, which implies recreation.

Beth Mueller asked what the capacity of the BOR would be as a shelter. Manager Storellicastro said that would be established working with the state.

C) ARPA Community Innovation Fund presentations and authorize funding for selected projects.

Shawn Trader from the Rainbow Bridge Community Center spoke of their request to fund establishing a library of books at the RBCC. Their funding request is \$4,500.

Cathy Hartshorn from the Barre Area Senior Center spoke of their request to fund purchase of equipment to allow for outreach to those who can't access the center. Ms. Hartshorn said they have 343 members, of which 104 are Barre City residents. Their funding request is \$4,875.

Karen Lane from the Old Labor Hall spoke of the request to finish installation of a lift that will serve all floors, and facilities upgrades for sound, lighting & projection equipment, curtain tracking and additional seating. Their funding request is \$15,000.

Karol Diamond from Circle spoke of their need for technology upgrades, infrastructure improvements and new appliances at their shelter location. Their funding request is \$18,000.

Sue Higby from Studio Place Arts spoke of the proposed art installation and lighting improvements in the walkway between the Merchant's Row parking lot and N. Main Street. The funding request is \$24,924.

BUUSD Superintendent Chris Hennessey said he was grateful for the earlier discussion on homelessness, which impacts the schools. He asked to be included in the ongoing coalition discussions.

Ed Rouse from the Spaulding High School Foundation; SHS principal Luke Aither; BUUSD facilities director Jamie Evans; and BUUSD board chair Giuliano Cecchinelli spoke of the need to develop an updated budget and engineering place for athletics field upgrades. Their funding request is \$26,800. A similar request is going before the Barre Town selectboard at its next meeting.

Emily Ruff from Sage Mountain Botanical Sanctuary spoke of plans to expand their outdoor classroom and other facilities. They serve students from the surrounding communities including Barre City and Barre Town, and provide transportation to and from area schools to their campus in Orange. Their funding request is \$20,000.

Jordan Bergeron from Barre Community Baseball spoke of the plans to install lighting at the privately owned Bond Field in Barre Town. Mr. Bergeron said they serve 241 kids between 4 and 12 years old, with approximately 40% coming from Barre City and the balance from Barre Town and surrounding communities. Mr. Bergeron said the Bond Field is home to Barre's Little League Baseball teams. Their funding request is \$75,000, and a similar request is going before the Barre Town selectboard.

No action was taken by the Council at this time.

D) TIF Update.

Stephanie Clarke and David White from White + Burke Real Estate Advisors reviewed the history of the work they've been doing with the City to identify possible new projects for the TIF district. Mr. White said the next phase will be to create an action team of local stakeholders for outreach to those who might be interested in participating in downtown projects that could benefit from public investment. The team will include representatives from Barre Area Development Corporation, Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, Barre Partnership, and at least two members of the Council. Ms. Clarke said they have reached out to Mayor Hemmerick and Councilor Lauzon to invite them to participate due to

their knowledge of TIF districts and institutional knowledge of the City's district. Other Councilors who might be interested in participating should reach out to the Manager. The intention is to finalize the members of the action team at the next Council meeting.

E) Ordinance #2023-01: Community Investment Ordinance – second reading and public hearing warned for 7:30 PM.

The public hearing opened at 9:30 PM. Councilor Waszazak reviewed the changes incorporated from the last meeting. There was discussion on whether the ordinance will place additional burdens on smaller businesses, making it more difficult for them to work with the City. It was noted there are waivers and exemptions in the ordinance that help address certain situations.

Council adopted the ordinance as presented on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried with Mayor Hemmerick and Councilors Cambel, Stockwell and Waszazak voting in favor, and Councilors Boutin, Deering and Lauzon voting against.**

F) Authorize \$45,297.78 in undesignated FY23 fund balance to purchase replacement fire gear.

Manager Storlicastro said the current fire gear is ten years old, which is the end of its useful life. The cost is too big to absorb in the Fire Department's budget in one lump sum, but future replacement purchases will be more cyclical.

Council approved the purchase with FY23 undesignated fund balance on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Upcoming Business –

- Committee interviews beginning June 6th
- Capital Improvement Plan update
- Annual review from Clerk Dawes, including compensation request June 6th

Round Table –

Councilor Deering said he's been enjoying spending time at the Farwell recreation field with his daughter's soccer team.

Councilor Stockwell thanked those who are working on the homelessness housing plan.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk