

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held July 25, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 5:00 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 Storellicastro, Assistant Manager Dawn Monahan, Fire Chief Keith Cushman, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Police Chief Braedon Vail, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Public Works Director Brian Baker, Buildings and Community Services Assistant Director Stephanie Quaranta, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, IT Support Ryan Starr, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Others Present: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: NONE

Visitors and Communications –

Bernadette Rose said the phone number for legal aid given at last night's FEMA town hall meeting was incorrect. The correct phone number is (800) 639-7036

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Emergency meeting of July 14, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Ratification of Week 2023-29, dated July 19, 2023
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$333,923.05
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$195,322.92
 2. Ratification of Week 2023-30, dated July 26, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$446,126.06
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$165,823.94
- C. 2023 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Approve MOU with the Barre Opera House to fund an exterior lighting project.
- E. Approve emergency health orders.

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

City Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes reported on the following:

- Cash flow and financing needs are being watched as flood-related expenses are being authorized. Funding and borrowing options are available if cash flow needs arise.
- The abstract grand list was lodged, and change of assessment notices were mailed out, yesterday. Grievance hearings will be held in two weeks, after which the final grand list will be lodged, and the tax rate can be calculated and approved. This will require the Council to approve another change to the first tax due date, from the recently approved September 15th, to September 30th. This item will be on the August 8th agenda for Council action.
- The Vermont Department of Health is offering a tetanus vaccination and wound care clinic in front of Rainbow Bridge Community Center on Wednesday from 1-4PM. VDH will also have water test kits available for those with wells, and personal protective equipment including gloves, masks, and Tyvek suits.

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- Tax bills are required to reflect property values as of April 1st each year, so the bills that will be mailed out in late August will reflect pre-flood assessments. Property owners who experienced flood damage or destruction will have the opportunity to submit letters requesting a hearing before the Board of Abatement after they receive their tax bills. Hearings will be held in the fall.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager’s Report – NONE

New Business –

A) Flood recovery update.

Manager Storellicastro gave a Powerpoint presentation on flood recovery efforts including:

- Damage assessments of public property and streets
- Debris pick-up
- Landslide risks
- Conditions of rental units and homes
- FEMA assistance for renters
- Relief organizations and FEMA presence
- Volunteer opportunities

Discussion followed on these topics:

- Portable toilets are being installed in the north end starting tomorrow, and ice machines have been installed at the auditorium.
- The Red Cross and state control the shelter at the auditorium. No closing date has been announced at this time. The City will receive at least 48 hours’ notice before the shelter closes. The Red Cross is working with those still staying at the shelter to identify more permanent housing.
- Is it possible to prioritize donated funds for housing assistance?
- Gathering a list of property owners who are not addressing flood recovery. The Fire Marshal is working with people to set benchmarks for repairs to be made.
- What is the number of housing units affected by the flooding? Code enforcement will provide a list, acknowledging that the number changes daily as repairs are completed and housing units are reoccupied.
- Move forward with hiring a Housing Coordinator.

Kim Beinin asked of any short-term plans for addressing future flooding. Manager Storellicastro said the City is constantly monitoring the trash racks and pinch points around the City. Flood response and mitigation will be reviewed for future planning. It was noted the Park Street area was hard hit because of debris that blocked culverts. The debris flowed down from private property, and the City has no authority to travel on private property to clear potential debris.

Amy Galford asked what is happening with vacant properties. The Manager said the recovery efforts are focusing on occupied properties first. Ms. Galford asked if FEMA can access vacant properties in other parts of the City as potential housing for those who have been displaced.

Manager Storellicastro reviewed the following action items, and asked Council to approve the motions included in his memo:

- i. **Amend the Procurement Policy to provide for additional flexibility in emergency purchases and services related directly to flood recovery.**
- ii. **Authorize the Manager to execute a contract with AC Disaster Consulting.**
- iii. **Authorize the Manager to abate water/sewer bills for customers impacted by the flood.**

Councilor Lauzon made the following motions, seconded by Councilor Boutin:

- 1) Move to amend the City's Procurement Policy as described in the Manager's memo, effective immediately.
- 2) Move to authorize the Manager to execute a contract with AC Disaster Consulting.
- 3) Move to authorize the Manager to abate water and sewer bills for customers with usage levels determined likely to have been impacted by the July 2023 flood.

There was discussion on whether the parameters of the procurement policy are broad enough, and it was agreed they are, with the proposed amendment. Manager Storellicastro said the timeline for federal funding for auditorium improvements has been put on hold while the City addresses post-flooding recovery needs. There was discussion on relocating emergency services so as to maintain access during flooding events, and the need for rethinking the replacement and/or relocation of the public works garage.

Danielle Owczarski asked about future planning, noting the City's flood hazard mitigation plan expired in December 2022. Ms. Owczarski said the City should take advantage of local partners for flood mitigation planning and hydraulic modeling, and noted there are funding resources such as the Emergency Relief Assistance Fund. The City should look to increase its ERAF rating to access federal funding. She said the regional planning commission can assist by bringing together the surrounding communities impacted by the same waterways to study ways to make improvements that might include raising bridges and creating space.

Council voted on the joint motions as presented. **Motions carried.**

Ryck Morales, public affairs specialist for the Small Business Administration, gave an update on what recovery options are available from the SBA. Mr. Morales said SBA comes onto play when FEMA denies or refers a claim, and procedures must be completed to qualify. Businesses apply directly to SBA, and individuals might also be referred to SBA by FEMA. You can call (800) 659-2955 to apply, get status updates on applications, and for general information about SBA funding. You can also contact them through their website at disasterloanassistance.gov. Mr. Morales said SBA officers are co-located with FEMA officers at disaster recovery centers.

D) Trestle Update.

Manager Storellicastro noted the trestle update from Rep. Peter Anthony was included in the packet.

Upcoming Business –

- Next Council meeting is August 8th at 5:30 PM.
- A request was made to review the unified development ordinances; looking to make changes to help expedite work.
- The Manager is reviewing a request to provide free access to the pool for the rest of the summer.

Round Table –

Councilors voiced their gratitude for City staff's efforts, local volunteers, and those who have traveled here from out of state to assist in clean up and recovery efforts.

Councilor Lauzon said he is grateful for the mitigation companies working in the area, and said people should treat the mitigation workers with respect.

Councilor Waszazak said the Aldrich Library executive director position has been accepted by the candidate. The new director will begin in October. The Councilor said Hunger Free Vermont is working to provide food resources in Washington County, and Barre is being held up as an example of flood recovery resiliency throughout the region.

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Councilor Boutin said the Heritage Festival originally scheduled for this weekend has been rescheduled for September 20-23. He reminded people that the deadline to submit your FEMA application is September 12th.

Councilor Stockwell thanked Rainbow Bridge Community Center for its efforts offering meals, volunteers and support following the flood recovery.

Councilor Deering acknowledged Manager Storellicastro's one-year anniversary since his arrival last July.

Executive Session – Councilor Waszazak made the motion to find that premature general public knowledge of real estate and personnel discussions would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussions be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Council went into executive session at 6:35 PM to discuss real estate and personnel under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Cambel. Manager Storellicastro was invited into the executive session. Clerk Dawes was invited in for a portion of the personnel discussion, Michelle Hebert was invited in for the real estate discussion, and Scott Cameron and Fire Chief Keith Cushman were invited in for the second part of the personnel discussion. **Motion carried.**

Council came out of executive session at 7:44 PM on motion of Councilor Deering, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to grant the 65-day grievance for the reasons set forth in the written decision, and authorize the Mayor to sign on behalf of the City. The motion was seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to deny the promotional grievance for the reason set forth in the written decision, and authorize the Mayor to sign on behalf of the City. The motion was seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk