

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held October 10, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 6:00 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, Planning Director Janet Shatney, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Others Present: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda:

- Move flood recovery update and Opera House lighting project update from new agenda items to Visitors and Communications.
- Move amendment to Municipal Bodies & Appointments Policy from new agenda items to consent agenda.
- Move removal of Planning Commissioner Meunier from new agenda items to old business.
- Move current expense note line of credit from consent agenda to new agenda items.

Visitors and Communications

The following administrative representatives addressed the Council on flood recovery efforts:

- Doug Farnham, Chief Recovery Officer
- Sec. Lindsay Kurrle, Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Sec. Julie Moore, Agency of Natural Resources
- Alex Farrell, interim Commissioner of Housing and Community Development

Mr. Farnham said Barre City experienced 2½ times the amount of damage compared to Montpelier and other communities during the mid-July flooding, with significant residential and community impact. Debris collection in the City was nearly 4,000 tons, compared to Montpelier's 1,600 tons. FEMA individual assistance in Barre City represents more than 17% of the assistance provided statewide, and a recent survey found 50 homes in Barre City are lacking functioning heating systems.

Sec. Moore said there are opportunities around resilience, and the team is looking to access federal funds to support fast and effective recovery. The Secretary referenced similar projects around the country, and federal funding available for buy-out and buy-in programs.

Interim Commissioner Farrell said there's a significant shortage in housing stock statewide, and a particularly urgent need to provide housing for those experiencing homelessness. He said the last two decennial censuses showed decreases in the number of available housing units, and a shortage in senior housing. Addressing the issues will need bold action on a large scale including local, state, and federal partnerships. There needs to be an increase in net housing with opportunities for home ownership maintained.

Sec. Kurrle said Black River Design has been engaged to come up with concepts for redevelopment and improvements in the North End. The work needs to be collaborative between local, state and federal resources, with a community-driven vision moving at a quick pace.

There was discussion on maximizing federal funds and respecting local visions for growth, timelines for development of a concept and access to funding, addressing homes without heat before the cooler weather starts, what can the City do to support Black River Design's work, defining what constitutes the North End, addressing landslides and the potential collapse of the old railroad bed, meshing with Vermont Council on Rural Development's community meetings on flood recovery, and use of the state's equity impact assessment tool throughout the project. Planning Director Janet Shatney said Black River Design has reached out to her to gather information as they work on the conceptual designs.

Former Councilor John LePage said the City has a history of being good at reacting, but how good are we at being proactive?

Councilors thanked the team for attending this evening's meeting, and for prioritizing Barre City's recovery.

Barre Opera House executive director Kurt Thoma and board member David Sanguinetti reviewed the exterior lighting plans for the Opera House/City Hall building, and noted the plans include uplighting of the façade, downlighting for the sidewalks, lighting the Opera House flag and the stained glass window. The estimate for equipment costs is \$120K-\$140K, and the estimate for installation is \$100K-\$150K. Mr. Sanguinetti asked for a City representative to help finalize plans. Planning Commissioner Caitlin Corkins was suggested to serve as the City rep, as she has strong historic preservation experience.

Ron Tallman from the Barre Area Veterans Council requested waiver of any fees associated with the November 11th Veterans Day Parade, and use of the auditorium in case of inclement weather. Council approved the requests on motion of Councilor Deering, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.** It was noted this action will be ratified at the next Council meeting, as it wasn't warned.

Randy Belville, resident at North Barre Manor, said there are drugs in the Barre Housing Authority facilities. Mr. Belville said he has reached out to client services to discuss changes in the application process, and has been told that's not possible. He said Barre City taxpayers are paying for police and fire department responses to the properties, and this needs to be addressed.

Bert Saldi said there was a water line break at the Knoll Motel, and he asked if the City will be charging the motel for the water that poured out of the system until the break was repaired late last week. Manager Storrellicastro said calculations are being tallied. Mr. Saldi requested copies of all paperwork and calculations associated with the loss of water.

Monica Myles of the US Small Business Administration (SBA) said those who experienced flood and storm damage can apply for low interest loans, including homeowners and businesses. The deadline to apply is October 12th.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes as corrected:
 - i. Regular meeting of October 3, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2023-41, dated October 11, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$284,876.93
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$146,375.29
- C. 2023 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Approval of Community Bank Current Expense Note Line of Credit documents and Resolution

#2023-10 (moved to new business)

- E. Authorize the Manager to execute contract(s):
 - i. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update – Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- F. Approval of 2023 Extra Mile day honorees
- G. Approve a 4 percent increase to the Manager's base salary
- H. Amend the Municipal Bodies & Appointments Policy to require recordings of certain public meetings. (moved from new business)

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

City Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes reported on the following:

- Second quarter tax payment due by November 15th.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board –

John DiGiuseppe, representing Apple Soup LLC, addressed the Council on their Manufacturers Tier 2 cannabis license application. Clerk Dawes noted the address of the facility has been redacted from the information provided by the VT Cannabis Control Board, is that information is not public. Council, in its capacity as the local cannabis control board, approved the license application on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin abstaining.**

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storellicastro reported on the following:

- Delays continue in assessing the landslides on Pike Street, due to lack of available drillers.
- Geotechnical firm Sanborn Head issued a report on the landslide on Kinney Place behind the public works garage. The three-unit apartment building located on Kinney Place is endangered by the slide, and has been evacuated. The engineers are looking at detaching the barn at the rear of the property to remove the threat to the apartment building.
- The deadline for FEMA and SBA applications in October 12th.
- The second Vermont Council on Rural Development community forum is Wednesday, October 18th at 5:30 PM.
- Open gym season is starting at the auditorium. See the website or Facebook for the schedule.
- Yard waste drop off at the Barre Town stump dump is ongoing through the month of October.

Following last week's discussion on housing, Councilors are asked to send their proposed strategies to the Manager for compiling. Proposed strategies will come back for additional discussion in two weeks.

Old Business – (moved from new business)

Motion to remove Planning Commissioner Meunier, who was appointed for a three-year term on June 20, 2023, from the Planning Commission pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4323, with said removal to be effective immediately.

Councilor Stockwell made the motion to remove Commissioner Meunier, seconded by Councilor Cambel. There was discussion on acceptable behavior of a City official in or out of a committee meeting. It was noted removal of a planning commissioner requires a unanimous vote, as per statute.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to call the question, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

Councilors voted on the original motion as made. **Motion did not carry with Mayor Hemmerick, and Councilors Cambel and Stockwell voting in favor, Councilors Lauzon and Boutin voting against, and Councilors Waszazak and Deering abstaining.**

New Business –

E) Volunteer appointments:

i. Sonya Spaulding – Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Committee

Sonya Spaulding expressed her interest in serving on the committee. Council approved the appointment on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

ii. Haley Pero – Parks and Recreation Committee

Haley Pero expressed her interest in serving on the committee. Council approved the appointment on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

Manager Storlicastro reviewed the current makeup of the Parks & Recreation Committee and the Transportation & Public Works Committee, and noted there are several vacancies on each. The Manager suggested Council consider reducing the number of committee seats so as to accommodate quorums and the ability of committees to conduct business. There was discussion on having Councilors serve as non-voting ex officio members of committees to facilitate quorums. It was noted committee member lists need to be updated on the City website.

Ellen Kaye asked if ex officio committee members would count towards a quorum. Manager Hemmerick said Council could adopt different standards for quorums on most committees.

Joelen Mulvaney said there are opportunities to participate in committee work without being an appointed member.

A) Authorize the Mayor and Manager to execute a contract amendment and closing documents for the sale of the Wheelock Building for a revised purchase price of \$110,000 and an amendment to section 24 of the contract providing that the City retain insurance proceeds received up to \$25,000. Manager Storlicastro reviewed the revisions to the purchase & sales agreement for the Wheelock Building at 135 N. Main Street.

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to authorize the execution of the contract amendment and closing documents, seconded by Councilor Stockwell.

There was discussion on losing control of an historic building, dropping the sale price from the original agreement, details on negotiations, and likely insurance receipts from flood damage.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to end debate and call the question, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. Passage requires two-thirds approval. **Motion did not carry with Councilors Cambel, Waszazak, Stockwell, and Lauzon voting in favor, and Mayor Hemmerick and Councilors Boutin and Deering voting against.**

Rosemary Averill asked why the City is losing \$45,000 off the originally negotiated sale price of \$155,000. Manager Storlicastro said it's because of damage to the building caused by flooding.

William Toborg said citizens had 30 days to petition a public vote on the sale of the property, as was publicly noticed earlier this year. Mr. Toborg said the change in price should trigger a new public notice and opportunity to petition.

Joelen Mulvaney said she is suspicious of the motives behind those arguing against the sale of the building, and the arguments are inconsistent with the City's past divesting of property.

Cat Allen said she is excited about moving forward with Fox Market's purchase of the building.

Barbara Druge asked if flood damage impacted the sale of other properties, and said sale of the Wheelock House should be put to a public vote. It was noted there have been no other recent sales of City-owned properties, and therefore no additional impacts.

Bert Saldi asked if any member of the Council has a connection to the purchasers, Fox Market. Councilors stated they have no such connections.

Councilor Lauzon offered a friendly amendment to remove reference to the Manager from the motion with regards to execution of the contract, as the City's charter seats that authority with the Mayor and Council. The friendly amendment was accepted by the original mover and seconder. Council voted on the original motion as amended. **Motion carried with Mayor Hemmerick, and Councilors Deering, Cambel, Stockwell, and Waszazak voting in favor, and Councilors Boutin and Lauzon voting against.**

B) Update on the Barre Opera House exterior lighting project.

Moved to Visitors & Communications

C) Flood recovery update: North End mitigation and rebuilding.

Moved to Visitors & Communications

D) Amend the Municipal Bodies & Appointments Policy to require recordings of certain public meetings.

Moved to the Consent Agenda.

F) Motion to remove Planning Commissioner Meunier, who was appointed for a three-year term on June 20, 2023, from the Planning Commission pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §4323, with said removal to be effective immediately.

Moved to old business.

Other) Approval of Community Bank Current Expense Note Line of Credit documents and Resolution #2023-10 (moved from consent agenda)

Clerk Dawes reviewed the CEN LOC, and noted the loan will be used to manage cash flow as the City pays for repairs associated with flood damage, and then awaits reimbursements from FEMA and other funding sources. There will likely be a balance of debt carried at the end of the flood recovery process, which can then be converted into longer term debt, depending on the circumstances and funding opportunities at that time.

Rep. Peter Anthony said the legislature will be considering funding support options for the current fiscal year, but the negative financial impact will extend for several years. Rep. Anthony said the City delegation will advocate for continuing financial support in the out years. Mayor Hemmerick asked for details on current bonding status and debt capacity during the FY25 budget deliberations.

Council approved the current expense note line of credit and resolution #2023-10 on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

Upcoming Business –

The following will be on future agendas:

- Ratification of Veterans Day parade
- Discussion on housing and presentation from Black River Design
- Discussion on downsizing committee seats

To be approved as 10/17/23 Barre City Council Meeting

- Final presentation of Extra Mile Day mayoral proclamation
- Appointment to the Development Review Board
- Discussion on recent cuts to substance abuse services in central Vermont

Randy Belville asked who is working on drug issues. Councilors said Turning Point Center is one resource in the area.

Round Table –

Councilors shared their enthusiasm for the housing and recovery initiatives being shepherded by state administration and agencies. They look forward to collaborating on innovative housing designs, and bold opportunities.

Councilor Waszazak said the new Aldrich Library executive director, Kristin Baumann, started this week.

Councilor Stockwell thanked the public works department for their work in her neighborhood.

Councilor Deering thanked those who cleaned up the Vine Street playground. He said the BYSA youth football team's last home game is this Saturday at the Bond Field.

Councilor Boutin thanked Enough Ministries for their work in the community doing home repairs, fixing heating systems, providing food, hygiene and cleaning supplies. He said he will be attending next week's Green Mountain Transit meeting on October 17th.

Mayor Hemmerick reminded people to attend the October 18th Vermont Council on Rural Development public meeting at the Opera House.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Stockwell.
Motion carried.

The meeting was recorded on the video platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk