

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held November 21, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 6:10 PM at, Barre, Vermont. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilor Emel Cambel; 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 Manager Dawn Monahan, Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron, Homelessness Coordinator Tess Taylor, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: From Ward I, Councilor Thom Lauzon.

Others Present: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: The following adjustments were made:

- Added approval of documents and resolution #2023-12 for the water line inventory revolving loan RF3-514-1.0 to the consent agenda.
- Added discussion on free holiday parking under new items.
- Move discussion on Leonine Public Affairs contract from the consent agenda to new items.

Resolution #2023-11 Honoring the BYSA 7th & 8th grade football team for winning the state championship.

Councilor Deering read the resolution honoring the football team, and everyone offered a standing ovation to team members in attendance. Official copies of the resolution were distributed to all players and coaches.

Visitors and Communications: NONE

Steve Restelli said there is a non-complying building at 2 Orchard Street, and he is requesting that outside storage on the property be discontinued. Manager Storrellicastro said he joined Public Works Director Brian Baker and Planning Director Janet Shatney on a tour of the area, and is in contact with the City attorneys to discuss zoning issues. Mr. Restelli said there is no lighting or security at the property, and the building is frequently left open, leaving it subject to illegal entry.

Police Department K-9 demonstration.

Corporal Amos Gaylord and K-9 Mike appeared before the Council. Cpl. Gaylord said Mike came to the department six years ago from the Czech Republic. The team is certified in narcotics, tracking, and evidence collection. They have a total of 90 deployments to date, and work closely with other area police departments, sheriffs' offices, and the VT State Police. They are required to complete 18 hours of ongoing training each month to maintain their certifications. Average retirement age for K-9 officers is 8-10 years, and Cpl. Gaylord said now would be a good time to secure a younger dog to come up behind Mike and take his place when he's ready to retire.

Visitors and Communications – continued:

Barre Up executive director Shawna Trader gave an update on their work, and noted they have been invited to apply for funding from the Vermont Community Foundation and the Vermont Humanities. They are looking to hire a construction manager to work with ReSource and Youth Build on home repairs of flood-damaged properties. There are currently small volunteer teams being deployed throughout the area, and working with the Hope Coalition home rebuilding project. Barre Up is also looking to hire a case manager, and they are working on gathering and synthesizing various pools of data on the number of people and housing units impacted by the flood.

There was discussion on the relationship with ReSource and Youth Build, selecting properties for reconstruction, prioritizing tenants and more vulnerable people, identifying those who need heat and/or electrical service restoration, and accessing state data and funding.

Heather Slayton said Washington County Mental Health is administering a grant from the VT Community Foundation to provide heating and maintain housing in a safe way for those in need.

Pam Wilson said all the people being helped by Barre Up have short-term heating options in place.

Joelen Mulvaney said she and the Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee will reach out to Barre Up to introduce them to the equity assessment tool.

Rep. Peter Anthony said the City's legislative delegation is working on legislation to reimburse the City for abated education taxes, and will advocate for assistance in replacing lost housing and growing the grand list.

Ellen Kaye said the work that needs to be done shouldn't just be the responsibility of non-profit organizations; there needs to be a balanced approach that includes the legislature, administration, and federal government.

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:
 - i. Regular meeting of November 7, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Ratification of the Warrants from week 2023-46, dated November 15, 2023
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$183,713.86
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$146,276.07
 2. Approval of Week 2023-47, dated November 22, 2023:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$251,621.11
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$143,860.61
- C. 2023 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Ratify Council's 10/24/23 approval of an Assurance of Discontinuance settlement
- E. Approve two State Revolving Loan Fund applications for the Wastewater Treatment Plant
- F. Authorize the Manager to execute contract(s)
 - i. Leonine Public Affairs (moved to new business under adjustments)
- G. Approval of documents and resolution #2023-12 for water line inventory revolving loan RF3-514-1.0 (added under adjustments)

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

City Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes reported on the following:

- Second quarter tax payments were due by November 15th. Delinquency rate was 5.7%, which is a bit higher than the usual goal of 5% or less. The increase is likely due to the flood and properties waiting for their abatement hearings.
- The Parking Committee is proposing to create a separate ParkMobile zone for the electric vehicle charging stations behind City Hall. Currently people are parking and charging for free. The Committee is proposing to charge \$2/hour for parking and charging. The new fee will come to the Council for consideration at the December 5th meeting.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storellicastro reported on the following:

- The first stick & puck time at the BOR was over the weekend, and was very successful. There will be additional dates during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons.
- Peoples Health & Wellness Clinic is hosting free COVID vaccination clinics every Saturday through December for those without health insurance.
- The winter parking ban is in effect between now and April 1st.
- Green Mountain Transit is making changes to the city commuter route by adding a 5:30 AM bus, and returning to 30 minute trips starting mid-December.
- The Hilltop Avenue buyouts from the 2011 flood were finally closed out with FEMA last week. The Manager said this is an indication of how long the buyout process can take.
- The Agency of Transportation has granted the City a two-year extension on making the final Big Dig payment to help with post-flood cash flow. The Manager expressed the City's appreciation.

New Business –

A) Volunteer appointment –

i. Kendall Schmidt – Development Review Board, At-Large

Kendall Schmidt shared his interest in serving on the Development Review Board. Council approved the appointment on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

B) North End Recovery and Resiliency Update

i. Discuss Council housing strategies

Manager Storellicastro reviewed his PowerPoint presentation on housing strategies gleaned from the Housing Task Force white paper, Barre City strategic plan, VT Council on Rural Development forums, and City Council input.

There was discussion on building a consensus strategy for housing development, focusing on getting new housing on board, developing short-term plans, inclusionary zoning, use of existing infrastructure, accessing state funding, selling municipally owned lots to developers, relaxing density restrictions, converting commercial/office space into housing, use of tax stabilization agreements to support housing development, how to incorporate the river in development, creating opportunities for home ownership, and defining affordable housing.

Joelen Mulvaney said affordability is key, and noted Burlington has a rent control program. Ms. Mulvaney said single family homes need to be replaced, and wetlands like Canales Woods need to be maintained as they are part of the flood control systems.

Rep. Anthony said education taxes shouldn't be included in tax stabilization agreements.

Amy Galford asked what the City's role is in housing development. Mayor Hemmerick said there are good examples of public/private partnerships around housing in St. Albans and Rutland.

Gus from Washington Street said mixed use high density housing is highly sought after these days. Community land trusts are good options, and development should minimize new infrastructure and reduce the number of vehicles in the City.

Council said the next step is to start with the strategic plan, explore development of a City-owned parking lot, tap into ideas that have been in place for years, and incorporate the VCRD report once it's received.

Manager Storellicastro will distill his PowerPoint and this discussion into a more condensed strategy the Council can adopt at the next meeting.

ii. Review draft engagement plan

Manager Storellicastro presented a PowerPoint outlining goals, communications tools, timeline, and marketing for the gateway area. Central Vermont Recovery Officer Pat Moulton said the goal is to get public input, and develop a multi-phased, prioritized plan to seek funding.

There was discussion on accessing economic development administration funding, direct outreach to those in the designated areas, collaboration between partners, defining the “gateway” area, and at least doubling the number of housing units through redevelopment.

Rep. Anthony said there needs to be an inventory of housing units currently not being used that can be brought on line. There was discussion on what can be done quickly, what are the phases, and how does river science play a part.

iii. Identify points of contact with the State

Pat Moulton said the Council should appoint someone to serve as a liaison between the partners, administration and Council. There was consensus on naming Councilor Stockwell as the point of contact.

C) Authorize the purchase of field turf for the BOR and approve proposed usage fees for FY24

Buildings & Facilities Committee chair and vice chair Charlie Atwood and Sue Higby said Barre Youth Sports approached them about installing turf in the BOR. BYSA will cover most of the purchase expenses, and the City portion is proposed to come from funds raised through banner and dasher board advertising. The addition of turf will allow for year-round use of the building and be a revenue generator.

Councilor Deering made the motion to approve purchase of the turf, and set usage rates with a discount for non-profit organizations. There was discussion on the financial impact of turf usage, and offering reduced rates. Councilor Deering withdrew his motion.

BYSA board member Andie Ball said she hopes there will be open field time on the turf similar to stick & puck on the ice or open gym time in the auditorium.

BYSA girls’ lacrosse coordinator Ben Moulton said funding for the purchase is coming from a bequest, and donations from each program that will use the turf. There is also funding support from Barre Town, as the kids in BYSA come from both communities.

Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron said the turf will be available for other uses such as private parties, bocce and badminton play, and can be driven on for drive-through voting.

Council approved purchase of the turf and the fee schedule as presented on motion of Councilor Deering, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Added) Discussion on engagement of Leonine Public Affairs lobbyists. (moved from consent agenda under adjustments)

This item is deferred to the next meeting.

Added) Request for Free Holiday Parking. (added under adjustments)

Council approved free parking from Thanksgiving through New Year’s Day on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

D) FY25 Budget Kickoff

Manager Storellicastro and Assistant Manager Dawn Monahan reviewed the FY24 budget, spoke of the fixed portions of budget expenses and revenues, and impacts from flooding. They noted the first draft of the FY25 budget is challenging due to baseline budget conditions and projected grand list decreases due to flood damaged properties. Preliminary projections show a budget increase of 4.03%, and a projected property tax rate increase of 19.01%.

There was discussion on retaining current levels of police coverage, increasing public works staff, costs associated with providing mutual aid, strengthening the City’s community and economic development initiatives, and seeking state aid in the amount of \$1.45M to mitigate the negative impacts on the grand list caused by flood damage.

Rep. Anthony said the City should seek additional sources of revenue, and noted there was a proposed charter change to implement local PILOT agreements for properties owned by tax exempt organizations when he was mayor. The change was approved by the voters, but overturned upon re-vote.

Representative Jonathan Williams suggested approaching the administration in addition to approaching the legislature for funding support.

E) Discuss and rank priorities for the CVRPC Regional Project Priority List

Mayor Hemmerick said the Prospect Heights project is on the priority list. The Mayor said with additional time, other projects could be named, but the deadline is today, so this item will be deferred until the next opportunity.

Upcoming Business –

The following items will be on the 12/5 agenda:

- Discussion on engaging Leonine Public Affairs for lobbying assistance.
- Review and adopt housing strategy.
- Detailed review of draft FY25 budget.
- Presentation from Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee.

Round Table – NONE

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk