

To be approved at 02/09/24 Barre City Council Meeting

**Special Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held January 23, 2024**

The Special Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 6:05 PM at Barre City Hall, Barre, Vermont. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilor Thom Lauzon; from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Michael Deering and Samn Stockwell. City staff member present was Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: From Ward 1, Councilor Emel Cambel.

Adjustments to the Agenda: NONE

Executive Session – Councilor Stockwell made the motion to find that premature general public knowledge of union grievance issues to be discussed would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussions be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

Council went into executive session at 6:08 PM to discuss the IAFF union grievance under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. Clerk/Treasurer Dawes was invited into the executive session. **Motion carried.**

Council came out of executive session at 6:35 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

New Business –

A) Announce decision on IAFF OT Grievance.

Council voted to deny the IAFF grievance, and will relay the findings and decision in writing by Friday, January 26, 2024, as required by the IAFF collective bargaining agreement, on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried with Mayor Hemmerick voting against.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:36 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

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

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held January 23, 2024**

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 City Hall, Barre, Vermont. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilor Thom Lauzon; from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Michael Deering (arrived 7:38 PM) and Samn Stockwell. City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storellicastro, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Fire Chief Keith Cushman, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: From Ward 1, Councilor Emel Cambel

Adjustments to the Agenda: The volunteer activities report under new business is deferred to the February 6th meeting.

Visitors and Communications: Lawton Rutter, VT EMS District 6 chair, and Jen Miner from the Cabot Ambulance Department, presented the 2023 Virginia Caffin Award for EMS Service to Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth. Those in attendance gave Deputy Chief Aldsworth a well-deserved standing ovation.

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Approval of Consent Agenda:

Council approved the following consent agenda items on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried, with Mayor Hemmerick recused.**

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of January 16, 2024.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 - 1. Approval of Week 2024-04, dated January 24, 2024:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$59,612.99
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$148,981.18
- C. 2024 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits:
 - i. Entertainment licenses:
 - i. Gusto's, 28 Prospect Street, annual license
 - ii. Vending licenses:
 - i. Morse Block Deli, 260 N. Main Street
 - ii. Cornerstone, 47 N. Main Street
 - iii. Vehicle for Hire Service/Vehicle licenses:
 - i. Payless Taxi, 2 vehicles
 - iv. Vehicle for Hire Driver licenses:
 - i. Dale Kew, Payless Taxi
 - v. Waste Disposal Collector licenses:
 - i. Myers Container Corp., 19 pick-up vehicles
- D. Accept Edward Byrne Memorial JAG Grant award
- E. Approve resolution #2024-2 concerning VMERS D for eligibility
- F. Authorize the Manger to execute contract(s):
 - i. Peak Mechanical – Public Safety Building HVAC

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

City Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Accepting absentee ballot requests for all 2024 elections. Information on requesting ballots, running for elected office, and registering to vote is on the City's website.
- Second quarter property taxes are due by February 15th.
- The 2023 TIF annual report was submitted to VEPC earlier this month. It has been accepted by them, and will come to Council for certification at next week's meeting.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board –

Liquor Control: Emslie the Florist owner Chesnee Barney introduced herself to the Council, and said they are looking to include specialty wine and beer with floral bouquets and gift baskets. Council approved a new 2nd class liquor license for Wild Childs Flower Co. LLC dba Emslie the Florist at 260 N. Main Street on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin abstaining.**

Cannabis Control: Council approve the following cannabis license renewals on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin abstaining.**

Cultivator license	Forbins Finest LLC
Manufacturer license	Green Mountain Hash dba Low-Key Alchemy
Retail license	Forbins Reserve Inc.

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storrellicastro reported on the following:

- The first North End Public Engagement meeting was held last week at the Labor Hall. There are upcoming meetings in each of the three wards over the next week.
- Advocacy continues at the statehouse, with flood relief funding currently identified in the budget adjustment bill. There are also bills addressing abatement of education taxes for flood-damaged properties, and changes to tax sales statutes.

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- The DRB hearing scheduled for February 2nd has been canceled.
- Hosting a meeting next Tuesday at 5PM for those who received substantial damage letters in December, to advise through the process.
- Engaging with 48-52 W. Patterson Street on the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) to make repairs and improvements to the riverbank behind the apartment building.
- Beginning negotiations with the Fraternal Order of Police.
- Last week was the first monthly full-page informational notice in the Times Argus. They will run the third Friday of every month. Looking for feedback and ideas for future content.
- Public works mechanic Norwood Southworth retired recently after nearly 10 years with the City. The new mechanic is James Hood.

Nick Roos asked for clarification on next week's meeting on substantial damage. Manager Storellicastro said it's not limited to those who received the letters that were mailed out in December. Anyone can attend.

There was discussion on the Pike Street geotechnical engineering report. The Manager said the company recently asked for additional information, which has delayed release of the report.

The deadline for submissions in response to the Seminary Street parking lot development RFP is February 16th, and there have been several inquiries to date.

Planning Director Janet Shatney is drafting a response in regards to the Orchard Street concerns that have been shared with Council over the last few months. The response will be submitted for a legal opinion before presentation to Council.

New Business –

A) Consideration of placing Good Beginnings funding request on annual meeting ballot.

Good Beginnings executive director Nicole DiDomenico said she joined the organization last fall, and missed the emails and deadline to submit the application and support materials for their traditional \$1,000 funding request placement on the town meeting ballot. Ms. DiDomenico asked Council to place the request on the ballot without requiring the application or petition, as was done last year for Washington County Mental Health and People's Health and Wellness Clinic. Councilor Lauzon made the motion to place the funding request on the ballot, seconded by Councilor Waszazak.

There was discussion on the policy and timelines, and changes associated with the new annual meeting date of May 14th. It was noted the dates in the policy are based on the date of the annual meeting, and therefore, the deadline for submitting the application and support materials is later due to the later annual meeting date. The motion was withdrawn, and Clerk Dawes send the application and new deadline to Ms. DiDomenico tomorrow.

B) Presentation by Vermont Emergency Management.

State Hazard Mitigation Officer Stephanie Smith said there are funding programs available to reduce further flooding risk including the Hazard Mitigation Program, which provides over \$75M for projects related to the July flooding. Letters of intent from the City are due by June for projects to be completed through the end of the year. Projects can include property buyouts, infrastructure, design work, and flood resilience.

Another program is the FEMA Swift Current program, which is for reducing risk to the national flood insurance pool. Vermont is eligible for up to \$40M for buyouts, elevations, and relocations. The deadline is May 15th.

Vermont Emergency Management can help prioritize, and provide for scoping assessments, including creating an elevation list for the Swift Current program. VEM can serve as the sub-applicant for the HMP buyouts, which would allow them to manage the program and funding.

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Nick Roos said he submitted an application for a buyout, and asked if the surrounding properties must also be on the buyout list. Ms. Smith said individual properties can apply and be approved. She said groups of contiguous properties that apply might qualify for a flood plain mitigation project.

Sam Hiscock asked if those seeking buyouts should get broker appraisals. Ms. Smith said appraisals are based on current market value as of the day before the flood, and property owners will have an opportunity to appeal the assessment if they think it's too low.

Andrea Young said her home at 106 Currier Street isn't habitable due to landslide activity behind the house. Ms. Young asked the City to establish a proactive communication plan to let people know what's happening. Manager Storrellicastro said there's not a lot of information to share to date, but a communications plan will be developed.

There was continuing discussion on buyouts and the timeline, when and how the City will make determinations as to which properties will be offered a buyout, using buyouts as an opportunity for flood plain restoration, reviewing homes that can and can't be elevated, possible stabilization of landslide properties, and sources of funding for properties that don't get offered a buyout.

Linda Macris said she applied early for a buyout and needs communication from the Manager.

Pam Wilson said Barre Up is available to serve as a communications connector for residents, and they have a weekly newsletter.

Jerry Hatch said the City has been uncommunicative and unresponsive, and is not serving the community. Mr. Hatch said the City should seek to improve, and there should be a centralized source for communications.

There was discussion on distributing the list of properties that have signed up for a buyout, sharing the Barre Up newsletter, being strategic on how the City spends communications resources, and reflecting City priorities in the budget including economic development and housing.

C) Volunteer activities report.

This item is deferred to February 6th.

D) Discuss mediation proposal.

Councilor Stockwell said she is proposing Council participate in a three-part mediation program offered by the Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Committee (JEDIB). She said the proposed mediation would discuss housing and working well together.

There was discussion on whether there is a need for mediation, who selects the mediator, and what the expected outcome is.

JEDIB committee chair Joelen Mulvaney said disrespectful behavior is no way to process disagreements, and mediation would help Councilors work together.

Andrea Young said the need may be more for a facilitator than a mediator.

There was discussion on recent Council agreement on housing initiatives, embracing differences, creating a more productive Council, finding new tactics to get to middle ground faster, and better ways to disagree.

Councilor Stockwell made the motion to approve engaging in mediation. The motion died for lack of a second.

Councilors asked for additional supporting information, and to meet with the potential mediator. This item will be placed on the February 6th agenda for additional discussion.

Upcoming Business –

There is no meeting next week. The February 6th meeting will feature the deferred volunteer activities report, and presentation of the 2023 TIF annual report for Council certification.

Round Table –

Due to zoom bombing, video streaming and recording of the meeting were terminated during round table. Councilor Deering, who was participating remotely, rejoined the meeting via speakerphone.

Councilor Boutin said last night's holiday party, deferred from mid-December, was wonderful. He recommended all Councilors do a ride-along with the Police Department.

Councilor Waszazak said he is frustrated with this meeting, and that so many government systems are not designed to help people.

Councilor Stockwell said she has been talking with Ward 3 people who are stuck following the flooding, and we need buckets of money.

Councilor Deering said there is work to do, and the community is relying on the Council.

Executive Session – Councilor Boutin made the motion to find that premature general public knowledge of real estate issues to be discussed would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussions be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried with Mayor Hemmerick voting against.**

Council went into executive session at 9:20 PM to discuss real estate under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. Manager Storrellicastro was invited into the executive session. **Motion carried.**

Council came out of executive session at 9:45 PM on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

The open portions of the meeting were recorded on the video platform until the recording was stopped during round table due to zoom bombing.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk