

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held February 6, 2024**

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 City Hall, Barre, Vermont. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilor Thom Lauzon; from Ward II, Councilor Michael Boutin; and from Ward III, Councilors Michael Deering and Samn Stockwell. City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storrellicastro, Public Works Director Brian Baker, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: From Ward I, Councilor Emel Cambel; and from Ward II, Councilor Teddy Waszazak.

Adjustments to the Agenda:

- Move new agenda item on ordinance changes from FOP negotiations to the consent agenda.
- Add update on geotechnical report on Pike Street landslide under new agenda.

Visitors and Communications: NONE

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Special meeting of January 23, 2024
 - ii. Regular meeting of January 23, 2024.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Ratification of Week 2024-05, dated January 31, 2024:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$251,703.75
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$158,659.90
 2. Approval of Week 2024-06, dated February 7, 2024:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$257,325.81
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$145,684.44
- C. 2024 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits:
 - i. Waste Disposal Collector licenses:
 - i. Casella Waste Systems Inc., 25 pick-up vehicles
- D. Authorize the Manager to execute a lease with Nelson's Ace Hardware
- E. Approve resolution #2024-03A: Headworks loan RFA-356-1.0
- F. Approve resolution #2024-03B: Headworks loan RFA-357-1.0
- G. Discuss changes to ordinance from FOP contract negotiations – Council acknowledges awareness of changes being drafted for first reading (moved to here under adjustments)

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 election section of the City's website.
- Third quarter property taxes are due by February 15th.
- There are free COVID tests available in City Hall and the Public Safety Building. First come, first served while supplies last.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board –

Council approved entity changes to 2nd class liquor license for Omsanidev Vermont LLC, dba Grab N Go, at 377 N. Main Street on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin abstaining.**

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storrellicastro reported on the following:

- The North End public engagement meetings have been completed, and the next step is to synthesize results from the surveys. The results will be presented to Council on 2/27 for discussion on north end redevelopment. There was requests for seeking technical expertise and developing visual aids for the north end redevelopment plans; noting a concept should be completed by March 31st. Councilors asked to have a map of the area identifying potential buyout properties.
- Lobbying efforts continue at the statehouse, with a focus on flood recovery.
- There will be a hazard mitigation plan public meeting at Alumni Hall on March 7th.
- Received first FEMA reimbursement payments totaling \$130,000 for the emergency actions taken on Portland and Oswald Streets.
- Working on the application for the USDA Emergency Waterway Protection Program funding for 52 W. Patterson Street. The City will serve as the fiscal agent and the property owner is responsible for the local match.
- Last week's meeting with those who received tentative substantial damage letters went well, and there is ongoing follow-up in the permitting office. There will be another meeting in 2-3 months.
- There were two structural fires in the City in the past few days, with 70 people-hours of mutual aid provided by surrounding area departments. There was no damage to abutting properties. The owners of both apartment buildings are helping displaced tenants relocate.

There was discussion on technical assistance from VT Emergency Management with regards to establishing updated appraisals for properties under consideration for substantial damage.

New Business –

A) Volunteer Coordinator report.

Flood recovery volunteer coordinator Adam Jacobs gave a PowerPoint presentation on flood-related volunteer activities over the past several months. Mr. Jacobs reviewed maps of the impacted areas and various volunteer projects, and noted a number of groups from out of the area and out of state provided assistance. A crisis cleanup web platform allowed for collaboration of cleanup efforts around the state, and Barre City has an above-average project completion rate. He spoke of what was done well, and what was learned that will make future efforts more successful, including extending service-focused volunteer efforts over a longer period of time.

There was discussion on sources of information for where the needs were greatest, how the City could support volunteer work better, and future coordination efforts.

C) Certify 2023 TIF annual report.

Clerk Dawes reviewed the 2023 annual TIF report and noted it allows the City to reflect on business growth and changes over the past year. There was discussion on the work the TIF Action Team is doing reviewing the decade-old TIF plan with an eye to changes in needs and potential new projects, and the need for additional extensions in light of the impact from the flooding.

Clerk Dawes said statute calls for TIF report to be presented to the Council. Council accepted the 2023 TIF annual report, and named Clerk Dawes as TIF queen on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.** Clerk/TIF Queen Dawes accepted the title with grace and humility.

D) Approve changes to the Grants Management Policy.

Manager Storrellicastro reviewed the proposed revisions, noting the amendments would allow administrative acceptance of funding programs that come through as grants, such as support from FEMA.

The proposed language also streamlines the process by having Council approve applying and accepting grants at the same time, with Council being notified when a grant is accepted.

Council approved the grant policy revisions on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

B) Approve mediation/facilitation contract.

Mediator Emily Gould introduced herself and reviewed her cv, noting she has experience as a government attorney, and mediation work in alternative dispute resolution. Ms. Gould said mediation provides legal protections for all parties, and functions on three principals of confidentiality, voluntariness, and empowerment. She said the approach would be to help determine what factors are taken into consideration when making decisions, balancing tasks with relationships in leadership.

There was discussion on process and purpose, whether the work is appropriate to be done in executive session, and possible revisions to the proposal.

Jolen Mulvaney, chair of the Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee, said the City is just starting the VLCT cohort program to make the community more welcoming. VLCT is the funder for the mediation, and any changes to the agreement might need review.

Council asked that VLCT be given updated information on the premise of the meeting, and ask for their opinion on whether the work qualifies for executive session. Further review will be held at the February 27th Council meeting.

E) Discuss changes to ordinance from FOP contract negotiations.

Moved to consent agenda under adjustments

Added) Sanborn Head geotechnical report on Pike Street landslides. (added under adjustments)

Manager Storrellicastro said the report shows that 36 and 44 Pike Streets are endangered by the City-owned slope behind the houses, and the factor for safety is not met. Substantial reinforcement of the bank would be required to allow the houses to stay, and that is deemed impractical. The report says the homes across the street at the ends of George and Howard Streets are safe without the need for any intervention. The Manager said his recommendation for buyouts of 36 and 44 Pike Street will come before Council at the next meeting. Public Works Director Brian Baker agreed with the Manager's assessment of the report.

There was discussion on maintaining the street as a snow plow turnaround, ongoing monitoring of the area in question, checking with the City's insurers on potential liability and requirements for allowing or disallowing public access to the area, and other landslide areas being reviewed. Manager Storrellicastro said there will be an inspection of 106 Currier Street on Friday.

Upcoming Business –

The February 27th meeting will include additional discussion on mediation, survey results on the north end redevelopment, the first proposed buyouts, and a proposed public contact notification system.

Amy Galford said bill H.526 would call for the reconstruction or reengineering of the Berlin Street Bridge to mitigate its impact during high water events.

Bernadette Rose said the Willey Street Bridge acted as a dam during the July flooding, and should be looked at. Ms. Rose said there is pending legislation to remove the railroad trestle from the Stevens Branch, and she wondered what action is being taken on these issues.

Round Table –

Councilor Lauzon said Nelson’s Hardware should decorate their new wood pellet silo with the World Cow. He said the Barre Community Relief Fund is evaluating the last round of 100 applications, and they are hoping to approve \$1,500 in funding for each one. He noted people can apply for casualty losses on their income taxes, and he is partnering with the state to do some webinars on the subject.

Councilor Deering said he had a wonderful time at the Aldrich Library with his 4-year-old son.

Councilor Stockwell said she attended all the public engagement meetings held in the different wards, and last week’s substantial damage meeting. She noted there are 121 homeless children in the Barre City schools, and housing makes for a better world.

Executive Session – Councilor Boutin made the motion to find that premature general public knowledge of personnel 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 8:10 PM to discuss personnel under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. Manager Storrellicastro was invited into the executive session. **Motion carried.**

Council came out of executive session at 8:35 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

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

The open portion of the meeting was recorded on the video platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk