

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council  
Held March 19, 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, 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, Homelessness and Housing Coordinator Tess Taylor (arrived 6:13 PM), and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

**Absent:** NONE

**Adjustments to the Agenda:** NONE

**Visitors and Communications:** NONE

**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 March 12, 2024.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
  - 1. Approval of Week 2024-12, dated March 20, 2024:
    - i. Accounts Payable: \$317,357.29
    - ii. Payroll (gross): \$143,235.29

**New Business –**

**A) Housing Discussion**

Mayor Hemmerick gave a PowerPoint presentation on housing actions in the City including shifting trends, existing priorities and policies, active projects, potential opportunities and constraints, new projects, and priorities for future Council agendas.

Councilor Lauzon handed out copies of his proposal to create a housing incentive program to provide assistance in buying down construction costs as a way to encourage development. He said he shared his proposal with local legislators and the administration to seek state support and funding. Councilor Lauzon said his plan is similar to the 5-year property assessment freeze plan that is included in Governor Scott's housing package. Councilor Lauzon said he also proposed an additional 2 year extension for Barre City's TIF district due to the flooding and related damage, and requested the creation of a second TIF district in the North End.

There was discussion on Vermont Housing Improvement Program funding opportunities, use of ARPA funds to create a revolving loan fund, and offering loans and loan forgiveness rather than tax stabilization.

Bernadette Rose said it will be helpful to have the time between Council housing discussions to talk about and chew on what's being discussed.

David Sichel, chair of the Planning Commission, said subsidies for housing can come from three different sources: 1) grants; 2) tax anticipation notes; and 3) tax abatements. Mr. Sichel said money is needed to start any development.

Amy Galford said the City should be careful about creating a revolving loan fund, as it takes expertise to administer such a program. Ms. Galford said she is wary about putting ARPA money into housing instead of needed infrastructure improvements. She said the City should look into redevelopment of

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vacant houses, review the criteria for repairing flood-damaged properties, and review the required permits and fees. She said housing development needs to include accessible and affordable housing where people can age in place.

Downstreet Housing & Community Development executive director Angie Harbin said they have experience administering revolving loan funds. Ms. Harbin said the Granite City Apartments being built in the former Ward 5 school building have started construction, and are slated to begin leasing in October.

There was discussion on shared equity housing financing available through Downstreet, rehabilitating empty houses, joining the cohort of small developers, enforcing minimum housing codes, and loss of buildings in the downtown over the years.

Rep. Peter Anthony talked about incorporating childcare into housing development. Ms. Harbin said Downstreet has had difficulty including childcare in recent developments in the area.

Steven Restelli said the building next to the Wheelock House has been vacant for years, and wondered if the City could establish a vacant building tax. Mr. Restelli said the building at 2 Orchard Street should be valued as a residential parcel rather than commercial, and he noted the building next to the post office was destroyed by fire and the lot is now vacant.

Sonya Spaulding asked that the presentations from the Mayor and Councilor Lauzon be shared with the public. Manager Storlicastro will include them in next week's packet of materials.

Michelle Hebert said in addition to high construction costs, there is also a shortage of available tradespeople, which is adding to the costs and delays in development.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Lauzon.  
**Motion carried.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk