

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council  
Held April 2, 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, Assistant City Manager Dawn Monahan, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Homelessness and Housing Coordinator Tess Taylor, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

**Absent:** NONE

**Adjustments to the Agenda:**

- Moved discussions on prospective congressionally directed spending projects and Planning Commission updates to follow the housing discussions.
- Moved the FY25 budget update to follow the ARPA community innovation fund agenda item.
- Defer the discussion on intermunicipal wastewater and water agreements.

**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 26, 2024.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
  1. Approval of Week 2024-14, dated April 3, 2024:
    - i. Accounts Payable: \$483,468.05
    - ii. Payroll (gross): \$149,670.24
- C. Clerk's Office Licenses and Permits
  1. Entertainment Licenses:
    - i. Jonathan Williams political event in Currier Park, May 11, 12PM – 1PM
- D. Authorize the Manager to execute contract(s)
  1. Beede Roofing Contractor, LLC
- E. Ratification of Council approval to accept RBCC petition signatures with March 5 date

**City Clerk & Treasurer Report –**

City Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Free eclipse glasses are available in the Clerk's office while the supply lasts.
- Information on offices up for election, nominating petitions, and consent forms for Barre City's annual meeting on May 14<sup>th</sup> are posted on the elections page of the City website.
- Rainbow Bridge Community Center turned in their funding request petition by yesterday's deadline, with a sufficient number of confirmed voter signatures. Their \$3,000 request will be included on the annual meeting ballot.

The Clerk noted the Board of Abatement has held nearly 70 hearings to date, most related to flood damage. There are still seven requests pending, and the Clerk asked to schedule at least some of them before one of next week's currently scheduled Council meetings. Mayor Hemmerick said it will be taken up as part of the meeting schedule discussion on tonight's agenda.

**Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE**

### **City Manager's Report –**

Manager Storlicastro reported on the following:

- Seventeen FEMA buyout applications are in process. Starting the process does not guarantee approval, but will shorten the timelines if and when the buyouts are approved by Council. The buyouts are in the areas designated by Council at a recent meeting.
- City staff members have been participating in planning for next Monday's solar eclipse, which includes closing Merchant's Row from noon-5PM to accommodate a block party being organized by the Barre Partnership.
- Looking for City residents to volunteer to work at the Barre Town stump dump in support of the City having access to the location during all open dates this year. Contact the Manager's office to volunteer.
- BOR turf was installed today, and the ribbon cutting is this Saturday.
- The City is working with Green Mountain Power to remove a large tree branch hanging over Nelson Street.
- The steps at the auditorium are scheduled to be painted.
- The traffic signal at the S. Main/Hill/Ayers Streets intersection is scheduled to be repaired.

Former Manager Steve Mackenzie noted the rear entrance stairs at the auditorium need repair.

There was discussion on when the excavated section of Washington Street will be paved, and what the schedule is for street sweeping. Mayor Hemmerick asked if the water rate study document is public, and the Manager said it was included in the Council's packet last week, which is posted on the City website.

Councilor Waszazak said there are dangling wires on Church Street near Hedding Methodist Church. The Manager said he will report them to the proper authority.

### **New Business –**

#### **B) Housing actions**

##### **i. Housing development incentive proposals**

Councilor Lauzon said he previously suggested four proposed legislative requests to benefit housing development in Barre City and the north end:

1. Request a 2 year extension for the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) district;
2. Request holding education taxes harmless in tax stabilization agreements;
3. Request creation of a new TIF district in the north end;
4. Create an upfront property tax anticipation note loan program to support housing development.

Council approved requesting legislative approval of a 2-year extension for the current TIF district's final incurrence of debt deadline on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

Council discussed the proposal to request legislative authorization to hold the City harmless for the education portion of any tax stabilization agreements associated with housing development. Councilor Boutin made the motion to approve making the request of the legislature, seconded by Councilor Lauzon.

There was discussion on offering incentives to housing developers and impacts from future flooding.

Bernadette Rose asked when tax stabilization agreements (TSA) are decided, and for a description of TIF districts. It was noted TSAs require Council approval, and TIF district projects require voter approval. There was discussion on who carries the burden of the different agreements, encouraging development to support homeownership and the middle class, what differences there are between TIF districts and Neighborhood Development Areas (NDA).

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Councilor Stockwell said she would like to offer a friendly amendment to the motion to postpone action until the state incentive proposals are presented under the next agenda item. Her motion to postpone was seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin and Waszazak voting against.**

ii. **Discussion of state incentive proposals to benefit North End redevelopment**

Tax Commissioner Craig Bolio reviewed the 5-year freeze program that he said is part of the tri-partisan housing legislation. Mr. Bolio said the program would freeze education taxes at pre-development levels for 5 years as a tool to encourage housing development, and he asked the Council to share its support of the proposal with the legislature. He noted the proposal does not include freezing municipal taxes, and the Council could make that decision through tax stabilization agreements. Mr. Bolio noted there are two housing bills working their way through the legislature: H.719 and S.311, with the senate bill currently being considered in the Senate Finance and Senate Natural Resources committees. Central Vermont Flood Recovery Officer Pat Moulton said they will be approaching the Montpelier City Council to request similar support in the near future. There was discussion on the program restriction that it was only applicable to specifically designated areas. It was noted the north end doesn't currently qualify, but the draft bill can be amended to create a TIF district in the north end or reference flood-impacted areas.

Amy Galford asked for a definition of the term "blighted", which was provided by Mr. Bolio. There was discussion on rehabilitating vacant properties, and defining the boundaries of the north end.

Joelen Mulvaney said the community is ripe for gentrification, and the City should put policies in place to ensure equity.

Commissioner Bolio said the program as currently drafted would accept applications until 2027.

Bernadette Rose asked if the program would be applicable to other flood-impacted areas of the City, including those areas where there were landslides. She also asked if those who are trying to make repairs to their homes would qualify. There was discussion on including language to cover these situations, opportunity costs associated with deferring revenues through stabilization or freezing, adding tools to the development toolbox, and meshing boundaries with those established for new market tax credits.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to instruct the City Manager and Ms. Moulton to draft a letter to the legislature in support of the proposed 5-year freeze program, to include flood-impacted communities. The motion was seconded by Councilor Lauzon.

Amy Galford asked how this would interact with the city-wide reassessment. Commissioner Bolio said there would be a mechanism to adjust post-assessment values.

Council voted on the motion as presented. **Motion carried with Councilor Waszazak voting against and Mayor Hemmerick recusing himself.**

Discussion returned to Councilor Lauzon's proposal to request legislative approval of a TIF district for the north end. There was discussion on the benefits of TIF districts and Neighborhood Development Areas, and the risks and administrative requirements associated with TIF districts.

Council approved requesting legislative approval of a TIF district for the north end on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

Council returned to the postponed item considering making a legislative request to allow tax stabilization agreements in TIF districts, and hold the City harmless for stabilized education taxes. Council voted on the original motion to make the request of the legislature. **Motion carried with Councilors Boutin, Deering, Lauzon and Waszazak voting in favor, and Mayor Hemmerick and Councilors Cambel and Stockwell voting against.**

**G) Discuss prospective congressionally directed spending projects**

Mayor Hemmerick said there is an opportunity to submit an application of proposed projects, and the deadline is next week. There was discussion on possible projects including river mitigation, housing, the public works garage; and sources for matching funds.

Amy Galford asked if the City has requested waivers for required matching funds. Manager Storellicastro said the City has requested and been granted a few such waivers in the past.

Council approved having the Manager submit a list of proposed projects to include housing, the public works garage, and flood mitigation on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Boutin.

**Motion carried.**

**I) Planning Commission updated and discussion**

There was discussion on the potential of having the Planning Commission meet twice a month, and the impacts on staff of such a schedule; activities currently on the PC's plate; and setting a realistic budget to fill the junior planner position.

PC chair David Sichel said they are working on flood mitigation language, strategies to move items forward for Council approval more quickly, and incorporation of statutory changes into the zoning bylaws.

Planning Director Janet Shatney said the City received a bylaw modernization grant and a planning grant to work on updating the North Main Street to Summer Street plan, however, there were no responses to the RFP for bylaw modernization, and only one response to the RFP for the NMS to Summer Street plan. Ms. Shatney is requesting an extension on the grants to allow additional time to find consultants to do the work. She also noted the Planning Commission is exploring Neighborhood Development Areas. There was discussion on seeking assistance from the regional planning commission, filling the junior planner position, the need for additional staff in the office, and spreading joy about the City of Barre.

**A) FY25 budget update.**

Manager Storellicastro reviewed his PowerPoint presentation, and noted the only change from last week's presentation is the slide related to the Homelessness Task Force's request for portable toilets. The Manager said the original request was for \$18,000, but a less expensive option has been identified that would bring the cost down to \$12,600. He is meeting with the task force tomorrow to discuss the proposal, and he asked the Council if it should be included in the budget; if offsets should be identified, or the amount be added to the bottom line. There was discussion on whether six portable toilets is the right number, other sources of funding, and whether downtown organizations and businesses would be interested in receiving a stipend to make their restrooms available to the public.

There was discussion about increasing the budgeted compensation for the junior planner position to increase the chances of filling the position, and whether the budgeted increase should come from offsets or new money. It was suggested the City start recruiting at colleges to fill the position, or look for people with the necessary soft skills who could be trained to fill the role. Councilors agreed the projected tax rate increase needs to stay at or below 5%, and left it to the Manager and Assistant Manager to identify the best mix of offsets and new money to include both the portable toilets and the junior planner position.

**D) Assign ADA charge to the JEDIB committee**

Councilor Deering read the proposed ADA charge for the Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee (JEDIB):

The primary charge of the Justice Equity Diversity Inclusion and Belonging (JEDIB) Committee regarding ADA Accessibility is to review and address the accessibility needs and issues that arise in the City of Barre. The Committee assists in assuring compliance

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with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973(HHS), and all other pertinent Federal, State, and local laws and regulations pertaining to individuals with disabilities. To accomplish this charge the Committee will:

- Assist the ADA Compliance Officer in the evaluation of current Barre City programs, policies, and procedures relating to access and services for individuals with disabilities.
- Make recommendations to the City Manager and/or City Council regarding the best methods of dissolving/addressing barriers that inhibit access to any Barre City services, programs, products, or accommodations.
- Assist the City in identifying the priority of issues related to the ADA and assist in prioritizing improvements related to ADA transition planning.

Joelen Mulvaney, chair of the JEDIB committee, said Rikk Taft has been identified as the compliance officer, and needs to become certified before he can start leading the committee through its ADA charges.

Council approved the charge on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

Mayor Hemmerick said the charge language wasn't included in the Council packet, and therefore the decision will need to be ratified at the next meeting.

#### **E) Discuss charter changes**

Clerk Dawes reviewed the most recent draft, which incorporated a couple changes recommended by the City Attorney. The Clerk asked Councilors to share their thoughts on the different sections so as to facilitate next week's approval of the annual meeting warning. No such sharing was forthcoming. The language will be discussed during the first public hearing next week before approval of the warning.

Joelen Mulvaney asked about the previously proposed language that would limit committee membership to City residents. Clerk Dawes said that language has been removed.

#### **F) Council meeting schedule**

Manager Storlicastro presented a draft meeting schedule for the rest of the calendar year, noting the regular meetings and the special housing discussion meetings to be held on off weeks as Council approved at a recent meeting. Councilor approved no meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup> on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

Mayor Hemmerick said he will cancel all off-schedule meetings unless there is a memo brought forward to request and support such a meeting.

Clerk Dawes renewed her request to hold Board of Abatement hearings next week. The hearings are scheduled for Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, at 5:15 PM before the Council meeting. The Clerk noted at least a quorum of the Councilors need to be present to assure a quorum of the Board of Abatement.

#### **C) Disposition of ARPA community innovation fund projects**

Council approved closing the ARPA Community Innovation Fund and directed the Manager to notify applicants that no projects will be funded under this program on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

#### **H) Discuss intermunicipal wastewater and water agreements**

This item is deferred.

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**Upcoming Business –**

April 11<sup>th</sup>:

- Board of Abatement hearings before the Council meeting
- Approval of 5/14 annual meeting warning

Others at future meetings:

- Buyout information as received
- Invite Sultana Kahn to share her research on substance abuse prevention
- Update from Turning Point
- Statistics on police calls

**Round Table –**

Councilor Boutin thanked Stephanie Quaranta and Jeff Bergeron – long-time Barre City employees for their years of service following their retirements last week. Manager Storrellicastro said an important part of Mr. Bergeron’s retirement package is lifetime use of the batting cages so he can work on improving his pitiful baseball swing.

Councilor Stockwell thanked the public works staff for their ongoing efforts to maintain City streets during the challenging late winter/early spring season.

Councilor Lauzon said he appreciates Council’s support on the housing-related legislative issues.

Councilor Deering said he has been talking with constituents, and the main point of discussion has been what’s being done to bring people to the community.

Mayor Hemmerick said he finished his annual report submission.

**Executive Session – NONE**

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, 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