

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held April 11, 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 (arrived approximately 6:45 PM). City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storrellicastro, Assistant City Manager Dawn Monahan, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda:

- Add consent agenda approval of lease purchase finance agreement with Municipal Leasing Consultants LLC for purchase of plow truck and excavator, resolution #2024-05.
- Remove discussion on water and wastewater municipal agreements from new items.
- Add executive session on real estate.

Visitors and Communications:

Joelen Mulvaney thanked Mayor Hemmerick for his service guiding the City through difficult times and changing the tone of leadership.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of April 2, 2024.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Ratification of Week 2024-15, dated April 10, 2024:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$114,474.16
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$152,800.51
- C. Clerk's Office Licenses and Permits: NONE
- D. Authorize the Manager to execute contract(s)
 1. Bobcat
- E. Ratify Council assignment of ADA charge to the JEDIB Committee
- F. Accept resignation of Linda Couture from the Parks & Red Committee
- G. Approve resolution #2024-05: lease purchase agreement with Municipal Leasing Consultants LLC (added under adjustments)

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

City Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- The Board of Abatement held hearings before tonight's Council meeting. This will be the last batch eligible for state reimbursement of the education portion of abated taxes. Application for reimbursements must be submitted to the state by April 26th.
- Monday was the deadline for submission of nominating petitions, and there is now a full slate of candidates for all offices up for election except clerk/treasurer. Ballots will be ordered tomorrow and should be delivered by the end of next week.

There was discussion on cross-referencing lists of flood-impacted properties, and outreach to property owners.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board – NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storellicastro reported on the following:

- Met with Vermont Emergency Management to discuss buyouts through the Swift Current Program. Five properties have been identified to date.
- The Barre Town yard waste drop site will open for the year on April 20th.
- There was a ribbon cutting last Saturday for the new turf laid in the BOR. There are opportunities to schedule time on the turf.
- Barre Area Development Corporation has received word the joint application on the Prospect Heights housing project has been invited to apply for the next phase of possible financing.
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission will present the infill development study report to Council at the June 4th meeting.
- Several projects were submitted in the congressional spending application.

Pat Moulton, Central Vermont Flood Recovery Officer, said the state submitted a \$51M request through the congressional spending application process to support housing development in the north end to include a child care center, grocery store and walkable neighborhoods.

There was discussion on the vacancies in the Buildings and Community Services Department with the retirements of Jeff Bergeron and Stephanie Quaranta. Manager Storellicastro said the priority has been continuation of services, including planning for the summer meals programs traditionally offered at the municipal pool.

New Business –

A) Approve FY25 Budget.

Manager Storellicastro reviewed his PowerPoint presentation on the proposed budget, and noted the projected property tax rate increase stands at 4.93%. The Manager said two portable toilets have been added as a pilot program at the behest of the Homelessness Task Force, starting in July.

Homelessness Task Force member Steve Finner said they are gathering information from other communities that have public portable toilets with regards to their experiences on how placement and operations work.

There was discussion on moving away from a Microsoft-based system to a Google-based system as a possible cost saving measure. Bernadette Rose said she doesn't like Google. Ms. Rose asked when the new equipment is being installed at the Garfield Playground. The Manager said it's going in next week.

Connie Godin said April 15th is tax day, and Barre should remember how much federal FEMA money and state funds have benefited the City since the July 2023 flooding.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to approve the FY25 budget numbers as presented, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

- \$14,873,780 general fund budget
- \$10,187,152 amount to be raised by taxes

B) Discuss water and wastewater intermunicipal agreements.

This item was deferred under adjustments.

Councilor Cambel had left the meeting by this point.

C) 1st hearing warned 7:00 PM: Charter changes.

Mayor Hemmerick opened the public hearing at 7:00 PM and invited comments from the public and Council. There are four categories of charter changes being proposed:

1. Moving the annual meeting from March to May;
2. Separating the positions of clerk and treasurer, and making the treasurer position appointed;
3. Removing references to the City school district, which has been replaced by the Barre Unified Union School District;
4. Allow youth voter participation in local elections, except school elections.

John LePage said he soundly endorses the youth voting proposal that would allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in local elections except school votes. Mr. LePage said the proposal to move the annual meeting elections from March to May is a bad idea, and would lower participation and double the costs associated with holding elections.

Bernadette Rose said she agrees with Mr. LePage. Ms. Rose said youth voting would involve parents, and youth voters would encourage tenant residents to participate.

Steve Mackenzie said the youth voter language should be dropped, as 16 and 17 year olds are outside the age of majority, and they don't have a stake in the game when it comes to voting on City budgets.

Councilor Boutin said he supports moving the annual meeting to May, and does not support youth voting.

Tina Routhier said she doesn't support youth voting, as she wouldn't give a blank check to her grandchildren on the municipal budget.

Barbara Druge said she is opposed to the youth voter language and they should not be making decisions for property owners. Ms. Druge said 16 and 17 year olds' minds are not developed enough to make decisions on things like drinking, smoking and voting.

Hearing no additional comments, Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to remove school-related language from the charter on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to move the annual meeting from the first Tuesday in March to the second Tuesday in May on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried with Mayor Hemmerick and Councilor Stockwell voting against.**

Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to allow youth voters on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

There was discussion on the proposed charter change to separate the clerk and treasurer positions. Bernadette Rose said no future clerk/treasurer will be anything like Clerk/Treasurer Dawes. Sonya Spaulding asked about the lack of candidates running for the clerk/treasurer position. Clerk Dawes said Council will appoint someone to the position following the annual meeting elections, if nobody is elected through write-in. Council approved including on the annual meeting ballot the proposal to separate the clerk and treasurer positions and making the treasurer appointed on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

D) Approve May 14, 2024 annual town meeting warning.

Council reviewed the draft warning as presented by the Clerk. Councilor Lauzon asked to revise Article II to increase the requested amount for the street reconstruction, sidewalk improvements, and capital improvement funds to \$450,000. Council approved the warning as revised on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

Upcoming Business –

- Second charter public hearing will be held at the April 23rd meeting.
- Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission's infill development report will come to Council at the June 4th meeting.
- Councilor Lauzon asked for a vote to designate the ARPA funds as spent so as to remove date restrictions. It will be added to the April 23rd agenda.

Round Table –

Councilor Boutin said he attended the ribbon cutting for the BOR turf, and recommended people walk on the turf barefoot.

Councilor Lauzon said the turf is a great example of community collaborations between Barre City, Barre Town, and Barre Youth Sports Association.

Mayor Hemmerick said the Vermont Bond Bank held their annual capital forum in Barre City today.

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 Lauzon. **Motion carried.**

Council went into executive session at 7:44 PM to discuss real estate under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. Manager Storellicastro and Clerk Dawes were invited into the executive session. **Motion carried.**

Council came out of executive session at 7:48 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk