



February 25th, 2019:

Residents and Neighbors,

Town Meeting Day is right around the Corner. Please remember to come out and vote! If you are not able to vote on March 5th, you can still contact the City Clerk's office and request an absentee ballot and/or to vote ahead of time.

On January 29th, Council adopted the proposed FY20 General Fund Budget and approved the Warning for Town Meeting Day. The proposal is a 2.38% increase, which is below the rate of inflation (2.4%) and social security increase (2.8%). The budget received a unanimous vote from Council in support. Included in the warned articles is a \$2.5M Bond to help improve infrastructure throughout the City.

The City received notice that a 15-year lease has been signed allowing space for over 300 Agency of Transportation (AOT) employees at Barre City Place (BCP). The layout will conform to the state standard for space used by Buildings and General Services (BGS). AOT will be phasing the movement of staff over the coming year. The City of Barre will be working with AOT, BGS and the owner of the Metro Way for additional parking capacity and provide improved lighting. Green Mountain Transit will also be providing a new transit service called Barre LINK Express between Burlington and Barre, as well as other related system improvements to Barre from Randolph and St. Johnsbury.

Deputy Chief Aldsworth and Joan Marie Misek from the Department of Health presented on the Sharps Pilot Program. Calls to the Barre City Police Department have dropped 93% over the past year regarding needles. Through the 17 sharps collection units, needles are properly being collected and disposed of through the Central Vermont Medical Center.

Last year, I developed an Onboarding Process for new councilors. Council discussed the document to ensure its completeness. I have shared this information with those running for office on Town Meeting Day so that they can "hit the ground running" if elected. This includes an overview of basic councilor duties, what to expect throughout the year, where they can find information, and what is available for training.

Bill H.73 related to the City Charter changes was sent back to Council for review. They asked for a minor change to the duties of the Housing Review Board, which Council approved. The Housing Review Board is the only current body of the City that has not been active due to vacancies, which hopefully the changes are accepted by the Legislature and we can start recruiting members.

Council formed a second Policy Group, consisting of Councilor Morey and myself. We brought forward the Rules of Procedure and Conflict of Interest Policies. Revisions were made to remove pronouns and to clearly define for Council and the public the different bodies of the City. Also, there had been concerns with meetings by Councilors being perceived as being actions of the City, which needed to be addressed. Discussion on the Tax Stabilization Policy was deferred until after Town Meeting Day.

Council reviewed the current priority list and made some adjustments. A couple of new items were added for events to occur this Spring, while some other items were moved or deferred. Council will review the items again in May prior to setting the FY2020 priorities.

In working with CVTV, the City will now be able to notice additional items through their station and website. Press releases related to warming shelters or recent arrests, or public information like the presentation of the FY20 budget can now be shared for greater communication from the City.

There was a proposal for the lease and/or sale of the Ayer Street Parking Lot to the owners of the Reynolds House. Council discussed accommodating the short-term needs of the Bed and Breakfast while also developing a process for the possible sale of the property. Review of the documentation is currently with City Attorney Oliver Twombly and will be discussed again later.

On February 2nd, Fire Chief Douglas Brent and I held a “Coffee with the Mayor and Fire Chief” event as Espresso Bueno. Residents stopped by and discussed issues, as did Rep. Anthony and Rep. Walz. I am currently setting up another meeting like this, but with the Director of Public Works Bill Ahearn. More information will be out about this shortly.

Council made a couple more appointments. Fire Chief Doug Brent is now our new Emergency Management Director and as our Chief Inspector for Minimum Housing. Continuing our partnerships with neighboring communities, Council appointed John LePage and Steve Micheli to the Solid Waste Management Committee. The charge of this committee is to see what can be done jointly regarding trash, recycling and composting.

There have been several great events and meetings in and around the City in February. Along with Joel Schwartz from Barre Area Development and Jamie Steward from Central Vermont Economic Development Council, we had a presentation and tour of the Generator maker space in Burlington. I attended the Central Vermont Career Center public informational session and the GMT Transportation public forum related to upcoming bus route changes for the City of Barre. I was able to participate with the City Manager Steve Mackenzie at Local Government Day through VLCT at the Statehouse. I attended Community Kitchen Academy Graduation at the Old Labor Hall and the Grand Opening of the Milne Room at the Aldrich Library. And I found some time to attend Winterfest at the Vermont Granite Museum and the Gun Show at the Barre Auditorium.

The City continues to hold Neighborhood Watch Organizational Meetings. During the month of February, due to the cold and the weather, we only held one meeting, but look to hold more as the weather becomes warmer:

- Nelson - Hill and Washington to Waterman area (2/21/2019)

Council continued to receive presentations from organizations in the City and our neighbors:

- Our new Director of Finance, Dawn Monahan, provided a 7-month Budget State Report on the current FY19 Budget
- City Manager gave a presentation of the FY20 Budget. This will be provided a couple of times so that residents are aware of what is included in the proposed budget for next year.

City Council approved several items including the following:

- Authorization to Submit USDA Rural Development VT Community Facility Grant Application for a New Ambulance
- Authorization to submit a VT Clean Water Priority List Funding Application
- Authorization to Execute a Preliminary Engineering Agreement with Dubois and King, Inc. for the Barre City Biosolids Project
- Approval of Resolution #2019-01: \$2.5M Bond Resolution and Declaration
- Approval of Resolution #2019-02: \$560,000 Bond Resolution and Declaration
- Approval to close the FY18 Grand List
- Approval of the Certification of 2018 Annual Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Report

And lastly, there are several new and returning initiatives being discussed:

- A vote was held on February 19th regarding the Barre Unified Union School District, which both Articles pass in Barre City and Barre Town.
- Council is now in charge of the Unified Zoning Ordinance Draft. A statutory 15-day warning notice must be given prior to a first reading, which will be done after Town Meeting Day.
- The Vacant Building, Miscellaneous, and several other Ordinances are being reviewed; the Council agenda is being reviewed to support presentation and adoption.
- In addition to the Ayer Street Lot, the City Manager will be presenting several other properties around the City that may have potential for sale.
- As Mayor, I receive several requests from outside the City, which include items like support of gas tax for municipal infrastructure, participation in Earth Hour on March 30th, and the National Mayor's Challenge for Water Conservation. I will be bringing these to the attention of Council to see if any of these initiatives are something they want to support.
- We will review our Email Policy. There have been questions on the proper use of email, which will need to be discussed by Council as a whole.
- Councilor Morey and I will discuss a Housing Forum, which more details will be available shortly.

Lucas J. Herring
Mayor, City of Barre