



May 29th, 2020:

Residents and Neighbors,

Vermont has seen some major changes and some incremental changes over the month of May. Within two weeks, we went from a snowstorm to 80-degree weather. The doubling rate of COVID-19 has slowed to 46 weeks and the Governor is taking actions to allow more business and social interactions to occur. In Barre City, committees are starting to meet using videoconferencing tools and street markings are beginning to be painted. Council is also taking requests for outside consumption permits with restaurants allowed to have seated customers.

City staff prepared cemeteries for Memorial Day, which plastic flowers and wreaths in the cemeteries were to be removed by May 15th. Many people honored their fallen loved ones on the 25th, but the Barre Area Veterans Council ceremony will be held on the traditional May 30th date.

Green Up Day is not on its traditional day this year, as it will also be celebrated on May 30th. Many people, including myself, have already been out removing trash from our streets and making our neighborhoods look better. This Saturday will cap off the yard waste program that has been running each Saturday throughout May.

The Manager is continuing to monitor the FY20 budget due to revenue losses from COVID-19. Council will be reviewing the voter approved FY21 budget for necessary adjustments in the near future. Due to budget constraints, the staff furloughs are expected to continue into the Summer and the pandemic will likely have an impact on development of the FY22 budget. The Construction contract is signed for the municipal pool refurbishment project and negotiations on the police collective bargaining agreement will soon begin.

Council co-warned the May 5th meeting with the Board of Abatement to ratify late penalties and interest charges on delinquent taxes and water/sewer bills. The State Legislature passed a law allowing for City Council to perform this action at the May 19th meeting, which will continue through June 30th. Chief Brent asked Council to waive the late penalties and interest charges associated with the annual rental registry invoices, but it was noted that the potential financial impact would be minimal, and Council would address abatement requests on a case-by-case basis.

Council reviewed the memo from Clerk Dawes, outlining the coin drop schedule changes due to COVID-19. Since the rescheduled dates do not conform to Council's policy, dictating coin drops shall not be less than three weeks apart, Council approved the revised schedule. Many of the Council policies to be reviewed in FY21 haven't been. These were noted at the May 5th meeting to have placed on upcoming agendas, but to also carried forward into the FY22 priorities as necessary.

Keith Paxman provided a request for the VT Hospitality Coalition Emergency Funding to support Vermont restaurants. The item was moved to May 19th so that Keith Paxman of Cornerstone restaurant could attend.

Council discussed this year's process to fill Committee Vacancies and Annual Appointments. With the limited amount of time that committees have been meeting, and the "Stay at Home" orders, it is unknown how many new members will be recruited. Council did take action on two resignations, which were for Jake Hemmerick from the Planning Commission and Mark Martin from the Cow Pasture Committee. Council also appointed Greg Kelly as Representative and Jonathan Williams as the alternate to the CV Fiber board.

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

- Quarterly updates from the Barre Partnership, Barre Area Development and the Aldrich Library. Each presentation gave an opportunity for Councilors to ask questions about how COVID-19 was effecting each business
- Conor Teal and Brad Long presented for the Barre City Energy Committee & Efficiency VT. It was noted how home audits are continuing to be conducted virtually.

City Council approved several items including the following:

- First Reading - Vehicle for Hire Ordinance
- Ratification of Submission of Police Grant Applications for Occupant Safety, Distracted Driving, and Bulletproof Vests.
- Award of DPW Capital Equipment Bids for a Roller, Backhoe, and Hydraulic Hammer
- Approval of Annual Supplies Bids
- Authorize 3 Year Municipal Audit Contract with Sullivan & Powers, LLC
- Letter of Support for CV Fiber Northern Border Regional Commission Application for an Economic and Infrastructure Development Investment Program Grant
- Authorize Legislator Request for COVID-19 Related Assistance for Municipalities

Upcoming items in June include the following:

- Discussion/Action on Language Strongly Encouraging the Use of Face Coverings
- First Reading Salvage Yards Ordinance and Vehicles Permitted on Private Property Ordinances
- Joint Resolution honoring Arthur Ristau
- Legislative Update by Barre City Representatives and Washington County Senators
- Green Up Day Tree and Plaque Placements
- Award of Cemetery Mower and Pool Municipal Pool Amenities Bids
- Discussion on continued Parking Meter/Ticket/Enforcement Moratorium
- Approval of Updated Grants Management and Procurement Policy
- Discussion of City Hall Phased Re-Opening Plan Concepts
- Review Council Priorities for FY22 Priorities
- Second Reading and Public Hearing Vehicle for Hire Ordinance
- CVSWMD Update by Cathleen Gent
- Overview of FY20 Budget Status and discussion on FY21 Budget Cost savings
- Discussion on the Annual Council and Mayoral Appointments

Looking forward to June!

Lucas J. Herring
Mayor, City of Barre