



August 29th, 2019:

Residents and Neighbors,

Barre City's Community Picnic on August 22nd in Currier Park was a huge success! I want to thank Police Chief Tim Bombardier and Dept Fire Chief Aldsworth for volunteering to cook burgers and hot dogs for over 400 people. Councilor Boutin also chipped in by creating over 170 balloon animals. Many children were also able to take advantage of the "touch a truck" with several of the City vehicles on hand.

Council discussed the City's use of social media sites. Recently there have been several water main breaks and drug arrests that have been able to be communicated to the public quickly. For example, a water main break in the morning of August 17th on N. Main Street was released via VT Alerts by 10am and also through the City website and Facebook page by 10:30 am. Updates were given at 5:30pm with the projected timeline for repairs, and a follow up message on August 18th at 10:30 am noting the completion of the repairs. Further discussion on the use of the pages may discontinue the comments section as inappropriate comments have occurred from those following the sites.

It has been several years since the City engaged an appraiser for valuation of the Old Firehouse Weathervane. Council discussed if action should be taking to either correctly insure the historical artifact, to understand it's worth for sale, or to gift it to an organization like the Vermont Historical Society. There was information on who could perform the appraisal, but Council tabled the discussion until more could be learned about the previous process.

Discussion continued with the usage of the Wheelock Building, but with the rear section of the building. The Barre Partnership is moving into the front section and contractors currently occupying the rear until the work on the Keith Avenue Parking Lot is completed, it was decided that there is time to solicit additional ideas for use of the space. Council will wait 30 days and discuss any proposals received.

Council solicited recommendations for the Athena Young Professional Award, which is to recognize a young business woman in the community who has worked for at least 5 years in their profession while also showing a dedication to the community. The result was the nomination of Alexis Dexter of Forget-Me-Not Flowers and Gifts. The winner of the award will be announced in November.

City Council met with Department Heads to discuss City Priorities, items effecting each department, and better ways to communicate. This working session was held prior to the August 27th Council and allowed Council and staff to convey the intent of initiatives and what was needed from each group. One result was delaying conversation on four policies that were on the agenda later that evening as staff noted they would like more time to review and the City Priority List was adjusted accordingly.

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

- Council was updated on Paving and Water System Upgrades by DPW Director Bill Ahearn. Now that the bonds and rate increase to support the bonds are in place, bids will be solicited for projects previously discussed with several to be completed prior to the end of the year.

- Finance Director Dawn Monahan gave an update on the FY2019 Year-end Budget. The deficit number previously discussed was decreased which, when combined with the FY2018 surplus shows Barre City's finances still in the black.
- Joel Schwartz provided an update on behalf of Barre Area Development. There are a few initiatives still underway that Council was aware of with very little new action presented.
- Tracie Lewis provided an overview of activities from the Barre Partnership. She recapped the Barre Heritage Festival, spoke about the move to the Wheelock Building, and projects that she is working on for this Fall.

City Council approved several items including the following:

- Approval of Water and Sewer Rate Changes. Council discussed the Water and Sewer Rate Changes, which resulted in setting the rate increases for the next 4 years.
- Authorization of and Affirmation to Accept USDA Grant for a City Ambulance.
- Approval of a Letter of Support for H.448 to provide funding for owner occupied dwellings.
- Authorization of Steve Mackenzie as the City of Barre Delegate for VLCT Annual Business Meeting in October.

The City of Barre continues to hold Neighborhood Watch Organizational Meetings. The Garfield Street Area and Maple to Brook Street Area met in August, while flyers were distributed to the Batchelder Street Area to meet at 6pm on September 12th in Alumni Hall on the 2nd Floor.

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

- Council will again be skipping the first Tuesday meeting on the month. City Councilors will hold their quarterly Ward meetings to see if there is still interest in this type of venue for residents.
- "Coffee with the Mayor" will be on September 7th with Steve Mackenzie, the City Manager.
- There will be visitors from the Spaulding High School Football Team and a request for Volunteers for Concessions at the September 10th meeting. Prior to the meeting, Council will tour the Civic Center Complex to discuss items related to the buildings and programs within them.
- September 17th will include a Public Hearing for the residents of Merchant Street.
- The City of Barre Public Safety Forum will be on September 19th at Barre Elks #1535. A Housing Forum will also be held at the Elks on October 17th.
- James Gilberti and Kristen Smith of the Imagination Company will present on their marketing material and campaign for the Barre Area on September 24th.
- Council had further discussion on the Buildings and Building Construction Ordinance and Minimum Housing Ordinance, both of which are expected to have the second readings and public hearings in September.
- Council discussed the creation of a Budget Survey to receive feedback from the residents, which Councilor Boutin will finalize and release.

I hope you all have a safe and happy Labor Day!

Lucas J. Herring
Mayor, City of Barre