



August 31st, 2021:

Residents and Neighbors,

Many City Councilors and residents attended the Community Visit on August 25th. The event, sponsored through the Vermont Council on Rural Development, gathered community needs and can be used as a tool for developing the City's Strategic Plan. Step 2 of this process will be on September 29th at 6:30pm in the Barre Auditorium with the intent of establishing common goals and priorities.

The City received a Northern Borders Regional Grant in support of the replacement of the ejector station on the north end of the City. The grant will cover about 1/3 of the project cost and thanks go to Barre Area Development Corporation executive director Cody Morrison for shepherding the grant through the process.

Unfortunately due to the resurgence of the coronavirus and the Delta variant, including restrictions regarding hand washing stations, the Community Picnic has been canceled. City Manager Steve Mackenzie has reinstated a mask mandate inside City buildings.

Manager Mackenzie reviewed the documents for the Phase II TIF Consultancy Contract with White & Burke. After discussion on the various provisions of the contract, Council approved the proposed agreement contingent upon final terms and conditions as negotiated by the City Manager. This agreement will determine the uses for the remainder of the funds within the Barre City TIF district to support economic growth.

DCF Commissioner Sean Brown spoke about the emergency housing program during COVID. The program escalated from 200 families pre-pandemic to a number more than 2,000. A working group is now developing plans to transition to a system that is more sustainable, but housing availability is limited. Through Federal funding, there is a substantial increase in available funding Council discussed the possibility of using FEMA trailers, lack of services actually being provided to those housed in motels, demographics of those experiencing homelessness, how can the municipalities find out what the needs are, investing in infrastructure and more housing, and addressing the root causes of homelessness.

Clerk Dawes reviewed the process for the State Auditor's Office TIF audit and noted this is the first of three such audits that will be conducted over the life of the TIF district. The Clerk said the recommendations included in the audit will improve recordkeeping and accounting but were overall a "clean audit".

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

- The Barre Planet Path signs have been installed along the bike path, with the assistance of the Public Works Department, according to Kiwanis Club member Rick McMahon said. The signs indicate the distance of the Sun to the planets along the Barre City Bike Path and Q-R codes for each provide more information on each of these heavenly bodies.

- Montpelier City Manager Bill Frasier reviewed the strategic planning process from Montpelier including focusing prioritizing, providing clarity on vision, empowering department heads to perform work, and suggested using an outside facilitator to begin the process.
- Barre Area Development executive director Cody Morrison provided an update including securing grant funding for City infrastructure projects, assisting with review of the TIF district, business recruitment and retention, marketing initiatives, and promotions through VT Tourism and Marketing.
- Executive Director Loren Polk of the Aldrich Library updated Council on library activities including increased circulation now that people can come into the library, collections guides on the website curated by staff, offering outdoor and virtual programs, offering in-person senior days again, summer meal site, and monthly book sales.
- Executive Director Tracie Lewis of the Barre Partnership update Council on the farmers market, Food Truck Thursdays, concerts in Currier Park, Barre Blooms flowerpots throughout the downtown, ribbon cuttings and business anniversaries, Barre Art Splash, and the Fall Festival scheduled for September 30th through October 2nd.
- Task Force member John LePage and Health Officer Robert Howarth reviewed the draft revisions to the Animal and Fowl Ordinance.
- Capstone Community Action Executive Director Sue Minter said they received federal funding to expand the Head Start program at their Brook Street location, which the expansion will allow them to serve more children. The funding requires an increase in available parking, which calls for the purchase and demolition of the three-unit apartment building next door, which no suitable location could be identified to move this building to.
- Manager Mackenzie reviewed his memos on the Police Chief recruitment process. This process would allow for a new chief to be on board by early January using a community committee for the review of applicants.
- The SeeClickFix Mobile App was presented by Engineering Technician Elijah Morgan, which is in the testing phase as they work through workflow management, notification, success measurement, and reporting.

Other items approved by Council include the following:

- Approval of a letter of support for Downstreet Housing & Community Development's Building Communities Grant Application
- Appointments to the Animal Control Committee
- Appointment of Joshua Akers to the Transportation Advisory Committee
- Approve Allocation of Semprebon Bequest Funds for Community Visit
- Approval to Apply for a Step II CWSRF North End Pump Station Final Design Funding App.
- Approval of Declaration of Official Intent in support of Tax Increment Finance District (TIF)
- Approval to Purchase Civic Center Scheduling Software
- Approval of Proposed Fee Changes for Fire Department
- Approval of Resolution 2021-12: City of Barre Water & Sewage Rates
- Approve Assignment of East Montpelier Parcel Sale Proceeds to the Capital Improvement Fund
- Approval to Apply for an ERSA Trail Grant for the Cow Pasture

Upcoming items include the following:

- Continue applicant interviews from appointment to the Manager's Search Committee and Homelessness Task Force
- Request to Fly American Flag Over Main Street
- Grand List Workshop provided to City Councilors
- Authorize Consultant Selection for 20 Year Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade Evaluation
- Authorize Execution of Berlin St. Railroad Crossing Safety Improvements F&M Agreement
- Appoint City Manager as Voting Delegate to VLCT Town Fair
- Turning Point Center VCDP Application for 18 S. Main Street
- Presentation of FY22 Capital Equipment Plan
- Friends of Winooski River Clean Up on September 19th, 2021
- Bulk Waste Removal Program
- Discussion of Organizing /Implementing a Strategic Planning Process
- Department Head Updates from DPW (Bill Ahearn), Police (Chief Bombardier) and Fire (Chief Brent)
- Barre Community Justice Center Update

Be well,

Lucas J. Herring
Mayor, City of Barre