

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held February 15, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Lucas Herring at 7:00 PM at Barre City Hall. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilors Emel Cambel and Jake Hemmerick; from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Ericka Reil and Samn Stockwell. City staff members present were Manager Steve Mackenzie, Fire Chief Doug Brent, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: An update from the Central Vermont Public Safety Authority deferred from last week will be added to the agenda later in the evening.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of February 8, 2022
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2022-07, dated February 16, 2022:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$587,799.59
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$132,195.59
- C. 2022 Licenses & Permits: NONE
- D. Approve acceptance of State DWSRF Loan from VT Municipal Bond Bank.
- E. Approve VTrans Rights/Easements Agreement for So. Main St. Railroad Crossing.

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Town meeting information is on the election page of the City website, including sample ballots.
- Six hundred forty-five absentee ballots have been mailed to date.
- Third quarter property taxes were due February 15th. Current unpaid delinquency rate is 12.28%. Additional timely payments will be received by mail over the next several days.
- Dog licenses are available. All dogs must be licensed by April 1st.
- Testified today with Senate Government Operations Committee on H.444 – the bill that includes Barre City charter changes approved by the voters last year. There was discussion on the flag language that had been removed from the bill when the House passed it at the end of last year's session. Senate GovOps is considering adding the language back in. They will take up the bill again for further discussion next week.

Liquor Control Board - NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Mackenzie reported on the following, in addition to his written report:

- The weather for the rest of the week will include high winds, high temperatures, and possible rain. Please notify the Public Works Department if you notice blocked storm drains.
- Committee vacancies are posted on the City website. The next closing date for accepting applications is March 1st.
- Working with the Fraternal Order of Police to bring the new collective bargaining agreement to

Council for approval.

- The FY21 annual report will be available on the City website by the end of the week, and hard copies will be available at the polls on Town Meeting Day.
- Met with Fio Partners to begin negotiations on the contract for the strategic planning process. The contract will come to Council for approval at the March 15th meeting.
- City Hall will be closed Monday, February 21st, for Presidents Day.
- The Manager will be on vacation next week, and Fire Chief Doug Brent has been named acting manager for the week. Manager Mackenzie will attend next week's Council meeting via Zoom.
- WPTZ News will broadcast their Olympic Zone from the BOR tomorrow evening.

There was discussion on the number of City-owned vehicles provided for take-home by staff. Manager Mackenzie said he didn't know the exact number, but it's likely 3-5.

Visitors and Communications –

Resident Bernadette Rose thanked Mayor Herring for encouraging her to get involved with City committees, including the ADA Committee.

New Business –

A) BUUSD Budget Presentation.

Barre Unified Union School District board chair Sonya Spaulding and superintendent Chris Hennessey reviewed the annual report, which has been mailed to all Barre City and Barre Town households, and is posted on the school district website. Ms. Spaulding reviewed the district budget article on the town meeting ballot, and said while the budget has increased, the tax rates will decrease and property taxes will go down.

B) Rural Development Grant Update.

Turning Point executive director Robert Purvis and board member Chip Castle gave an update on the project on S. Main Street to create a regional recovery center. They've received funding from various grant sources, and Mr. Purvis talked about the collaborations of regional organizations working on the project. There was discussion on partnerships with local police departments, and removing the social stigma associated with substance abuse disorder.

C) Barre Area Development Quarterly Update.

BADC executive director Cody Morrison said BADC is the development arm for Barre City and Barre Town; they work to recruit businesses, promote the area, and research and write grants. Other items reported include:

- Business news and activities – welcoming new businesses.
- Sharp increase in inquiries from businesses exploring options for setting up shop in Barre area.
- Active role in addressing housing issues, working with Housing Task Force, fielding phone calls about tax stabilization.
- Assisting with local partnerships involving VT Granite Museum, Norwich University, and Central Vermont Career Center; and workbased learning through Spaulding High School.
- Social media and local promotions, updates to the website, and marketing program.

Mayor Herring noted BADC receives funding through the City budget.

D) Barre Partnership Quarterly Update.

Partnership executive director Tracie Lewis gave an update on activities over the past three months:

- Held annual meeting.
- Holiday events including Veterans' Day 5K fundraiser, house decorating contest, holiday parade,

and Ugly Sweater Friday.

- The Heritage Festival is scheduled to return this coming summer from July 27-30, 2022.

Mayor Herring noted the Partnership receives funding through the City budget.

E) Aldrich Public Library Quarterly Update.

Library executive director Loren Polk shared statistics on use of the library, collections, and circulation. She reported on the following:

- Light Up the Library holiday decorating.
- Modified programs to accommodate COVID safety protocols.
- Hosting the warming and welcome center in the Milne Room weekdays from 8AM – 11AM for those needing a warm place and access to services.
- Teen activities and AARP tax prep assistance.

Mayor Herring noted the library receives funding through the City budget.

Other) Central Vermont Public Safety Authority Update.

CVPSA board member Jim Ward said CVPSA is at a precarious juncture, and the funding request included on the annual town meeting ballot is to gauge the member communities' level of support. There was discussion on creation of CVPSA in 2014, work done to date, mutual aid, antiquated radio equipment throughout the region, and creation of an RFP to solicit proposals to design a replacement system and seek funding to complete the work.

There was additional discussion on including Berlin and other towns, discussions being had on the state level about dispatching, creating something that will bring value to surrounding towns, and involving first responders in the planning process.

Fire Chief Doug Brent reviewed the current mutual aid system coordinated through Capital Fire Mutual Aid, and said firefighting capacity in central Vermont is strong.

H) Approval of City Manager Search Task Force Documents.

Task Force chair Rich Morey said the task force is meeting later this week, and is seeking Council's approval of the job description and City profile, so the search can begin in earnest. There was discussion on requiring candidates to hold membership in the International City Managers Association, and the language was amended to read "preferred, not required".

Council approved the City profile and job description as amended on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

Old Business –

A) Discussion/Direction re. Policy Updates.

- 1. Food Vendor Policy**
- 2. Accepted Gifts Policy**

Old business agenda items were deferred to a future meeting.

New Business, continued -

F) FY23 Barre City General Fund Budget Presentation.

Manager Mackenzie gave a Powerpoint presentation on the proposed FY23 budget being voted on at the March 1st annual town meeting, highlighting continuing programs and services, and new staff positions. The projected property tax rate increase is 1.61%.

G) Review of Town Meeting Day Article VIII re: Local Options Sales Tax.

Manager Mackenzie gave a Powerpoint presentation on the proposed charter change to include sales tax in the Local Options Tax, highlighting the various capital equipment, streets & sidewalks reconstruction, and capital infrastructure & improvements to be covered by the projected revenues. The Manager said the revenues raised through the sales tax LOT would not affect property taxes.

Round Table –

Councilor Waszazak said the Spanish Influenza memorial in Hope Cemetery is being featured on CBS This Morning in the near future.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 10:33 PM on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk