

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held January 29, 2013**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mayor Thomas Lauzon. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilors Charles Dindo and Paul Poirier (arrived 7:20 PM); Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Michael Smith; and from Ward III, Councilors Anita Chadderton and Lucas Herring. Also in attendance were City Manager Steven Mackenzie and Clerk/Treasurer Carolyn Dawes.

Visitors and Communications – Jean Gosselin addressed Mayor Lauzon, saying she was following up on last week's comments by the Mayor and Councilor Poirier, when they pledged a donation of \$500 to Project Graduation, should a matching donation be received. Ms. Gosselin said she is taking them up on their pledge, and that she is making that donation. Mayor Lauzon gave Ms. Gosselin his ½ of the pledged donation, and said Councilor Poirier will be notified of his obligation when he arrives.

Approval of Consent Agenda: Council approved the following consent agenda items as presented on motion of Councilor Herring, seconded by Councilor Smith. **Motion carried.**

- Minutes of the following meeting:
 - Special Meeting of January 19, 2013
 - Regular Meeting of January 22, 2013
 - Special Meeting of January 26, 2013
- Approval of the City Warrants as presented.
- 2013 Licenses & Permits issued through the clerk's office:
 - Animal Licenses
 - Michael Boutin, 5 Hillside Avenue, 1 ferret
 - Food Establishment Licenses
 - Bamboo Gardens, 115 S. Main Street
 - Espresso Bueno, 136 N. Main Street
 - T's Pantry, 266 N. Main Street, unit #3
 - Chinatown, 306 N. Main Street
 - Vending Licenses
 - Sani-Sport Service, Jay Milne, skate sharpening, gear cleaning, landscaping, lawn care, 1 vehicle

The City Clerk and Treasurer Report – Clerk Dawes made the following announcements:

- Nominating petitions were due by January 28th. The Clerk distributed and read the list of offices up for election and the candidates who submitted petitions.
- The BCA and BoA are meeting Thursday, January 31st starting at 5:30 PM.
- Third quarter property taxes are due by February 15th.
- Dog licenses are now available in the Clerk's office.

Clerk Dawes said the Council approved a new fee for burn permits. The Clerk has been working with the Fire Department to set up a system for collecting the fees and issuing the permits, and reminded the public that they need prior approval before burning within City limits.

Approval of Building Permits – NONE

Liquor Control Board – Clerk Dawes said past practice has called for the Fire Department to inspect all properties seeking or renewing a liquor license. Because of the new inspection program, the Fire Department is recommending that properties no longer need an annual inspection for liquor licenses, as they are being inspected regularly on a three year cycle, and that the department is being more pro-active about getting violations corrected. Council requested that Capt. Cetin attend next week's meeting to discuss.

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City Manager's Report –

Manager Mackenzie said most of his work over the past week was related to the budget. The Manager reminded everyone of the City Place groundbreaking ceremony scheduled for tomorrow at 11:00 AM.

Old Business –

A) Social Media Policy Discussion.

Council adopted the policy on motion of Councilor Herring, seconded by Councilor Dindo. **Motion carried.**

New Business –

A) Discussion/Approval of TIF Debt Ceiling Ballot Article.

City Planner Michael Miller reviewed his memo and the language for the ballot article. Mayor Lauzon said the Vermont mayors' group is looking to change the statute to revise the statutory language for such ballot articles, and to allow a municipality to phase the debt ceiling votes. The Mayor said he would prefer to not place the ballot article on the March Annual (Town) Meeting ballot so as to allow additional time to hold public meetings. The Mayor said a special election could be held at a later date. Mr. Miller said the City needs to approve the debt ceiling and complete any projects under the TIF agreement by October 23, 2017.

Councilor Poirier requested a 2 minute recess. Mayor Lauzon granted the recess at 7:25 PM, and the Mayor and Councilors Poirier and Smith left the room.

Mayor Lauzon and Councilors Poirier and Smith returned and the Mayor reconvened the meeting at 7:26 PM. He said Councilor Poirier had been concerned about the Mayor participating in the TIF discussions, as the Mayor had recused himself from the discussions during the application process due to his owning several properties located in the then-proposed district. The Mayor said now that the TIF application has been approved, he is free to participate in the discussions.

Mayor Lauzon reviewed some of the projects being considered for the TIF district. Mr. Miller said the Enterprise Aly/Depot Square North project will likely need to be implemented within the next six months, and so a vote on the debt ceiling and project will need to happen before then.

There was discussion about how the \$10.8 million debt ceiling amount was arrived at, opportunities to add other projects and amend the application through VEPC, and whether the consultant who worked with the City on the TIF application would be available to attend some public informational meetings.

Council concurred in holding off on voting the debt ceiling. No formal action was taken.

C) FY 14 City Budget Review/Discussion.

Members of the Citizens Budget Committee introduced themselves: John Hannigan, Aimee Pope, Justin Johnson (chair), Jeffrey Friot and Linda Couture. Mayor Lauzon thanked the committee for its service. Mr. Johnson said it was the consensus of the committee to recommend warning of the budget as will be presented this evening by Manager Mackenzie. He said the committee is concerned that there are so many pressures on the taxpayers, and ultimately came to the conclusion that the City can't add more than what's in the budget.

Manager Mackenzie reviewed his proposed budget, and said there are no new police officers or other initiatives. The Manager said it is a balanced budget and calls for a 3.7% increase in the projected tax rate.

Councilor Poirier thanked the committee for its work, and said this is the Manager's budget. He said he was disappointed that it doesn't include two additional police officers, and so will not vote for it.

Mayor Lauzon said he consulted with Councilor Herring, as chair of the BCEMS school board, and Councilor Herring will be recommending an enhancement to the revenue side of the BCEMS FY14 budget. Councilor Herring said his recommendation will be made at the next BCEMS board meeting on February 11th. Mayor Lauzon said the projected tax rate chart shows the impact of the recommended revenue enhancement.

Mayor Lauzon said he feels somewhat the same way as Councilor Poirier with regards to the police officers, but it would push the proposed tax rate increase to approximately 5%. The Mayor said he had hoped the Manager's budget would have included one new police officer, but he will accept the recommendation of the committee. He said he is working with the VT mayors' organization on legislation that would create a community policing grant program that would help communities like Barre City pay for additional police services.

Councilor Dindo said he agrees with Councilor Poirier, and that he would have been happy with the addition of one police officer. Manager Mackenzie said additional police officers is a political call, and he is recommending the Council warn the baseline budget as presented.

Councilor Smith said he supports the proposed budget and the process. He said the City's police force numbers are right at national average of 1 officer for every 500 people, and if policing needs are a state problem, the City should go after the state and not put it on the taxpayers. He said there are other options he would like the City to explore, and that any new initiatives would be pushing it.

Councilor Herring asked when is the time for new initiatives. He said such initiatives would have a large impact on the City, and he agrees with Councilor Poirier.

Councilor Boutin suggested adding two officers to the budget and taking \$150,000 from the Semprebon annuity fund to keep the projected tax increase under 5%.

Councilor Chadderton said she agrees with Mayor Lauzon and Councilor Smith.

Mayor Lauzon asked Mr. Johnson why the committee rejected the idea of additional officers. Mr. Johnson said the committee looked at all the options, and the additional officers pushed the tax rate too high. He said it costs money to run a municipality, and Council needs to set priorities and then determine if other things will be cut to meet the priorities. A budget is just a financial plan for what the City wants to do.

Councilor Smith made the motion to warn articles 2-23 on the draft warning for the March 5, 2013 Annual (Town) Meeting as presented by the Clerk, seconded by Councilor Herring. Clerk Dawes noted article 23 is associated with the TIF district debt ceiling, and Council had earlier this evening concurred on not placing that article on the ballot. Councilor Smith amended his motion to warn articles 2-22 on the draft warning for the March 5, 2013 Annual (Town) Meeting as presented, with Councilor Herring seconding the amendment.

Motion carried.

Councilor Chadderton made the motion to warn article 1 on the draft warning for the March 5, 2013 Annual (Town) Meeting as follows, seconded by Councilor Smith:

“Shall the Barre City Voters authorize a General Fund Budget of \$ 10,296,521 of which an amount not to exceed \$ 6,912,334 is to be raised by local property taxes for the fiscal year July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014?”

Motion failed with Mayor Lauzon and Councilors Chadderton and Smith voting for, and Councilors Dindo, Boutin, Herring and Poirier voting against.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to send the draft budget back to the City Manager and ask him to put two additional police officers in, seconded by Councilor Poirier. Manager Mackenzie made the adjustments without Council taking action on the motion, and announced the revised totals for general fund expenses and amount to be raised by taxes.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to warn article I on the draft warning for the March 5, 2013 Annual (Town) Meeting using the totals as revised by the Manager, seconded by Councilor Poirier.

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Councilor Smith said Council had an opportunity to add more officers three years ago through a COPS grant, but chose not to. He said the budget increase is too strong and irresponsible. Councilor Herring said adding officers shows the Council believes in the safety of the community. Councilor Boutin said if the voters don't approve the budget, it indicates the voters don't want the additional officers and the officers will be cut. Councilor Poirier said the Council can always look at changing the school resource officers. Mayor Lauzon said he wouldn't support any changes to the SRO's, and he doesn't know if two additional officers will make City streets any safer.

Councilor Boutin said he would like to call the question. Mayor Lauzon said it was not necessary, as the Council will now vote. Mayor Lauzon requested that Councilors Boutin and Poirier withdraw their motion and re-move it with the exact dollar amounts. Councilors Boutin and Poirier withdrew their motion.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to warn article I on the draft warning for the March 5, 2013 Annual (Town) Meeting as follows, seconded by Councilor Poirier:

“Shall the Barre City Voters authorize a General Fund Budget of \$ 10,479,521 of which an amount not to exceed \$ 7,095,534 is to be raised by local property taxes for the fiscal year July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014?”

Motion carried with Councilors Dindo, Boutin, Herring and Poirier voting for, and Mayor Lauzon and Councilors Chadderton and Smith voting against.

B) CDBG 25% Match Sub-Grant Acceptance Authorization – 15 & 21 Hilltop Avenue.

Councilor Chadderton made the motion to accept the grant and authorize the Manager to sign and execute on behalf of the City, seconded by Councilor Smith.

Manager Mackenzie reviewed the history of the FEMA buy-out program, and the properties damaged in the May 2011 flooding. The Manager said the state received additional funding to cover the 25% local match. The City will receive funds to purchase the properties, raze the buildings, and turn the lots forever green.

Motion carried with Councilor Smith voting against. Councilor Smith changed his vote, so all voted in the affirmative.

D) Approve 2013 Annual (Town) Meeting Warning.

This agenda item was addressed during the budget discussion.

Round Table –

Councilor Boutin said he supports the budget, and reminded people to get out and vote.

Mayor Lauzon reminded everyone of the City Place groundbreaking scheduled for tomorrow. The Mayor said he will support the budget.

Council adjourned at 9:08 PM on motion of Councilor Smith, seconded by Councilor Poirier. **Motion carried.**

An audio transcript of the meeting is available through the Clerk's Office.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk