

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held January 4, 2022**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Lucas Herring at 7:02 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, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, Interim Police Chief Larry Eastman, Public Works Director Bill Ahearn, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: NONE

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. Special meeting of December 4, 2021 (previously missed)
 - ii. Regular meeting of December 21, 2021
- B. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Ratification of Week 2021-52, dated December 29, 2021:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$202,132.02
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$148,443.90
 2. Approval of Week 2022-01, dated January 5, 2022:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$136,211.41
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$130,608.19
- C. 2022 Licenses & Permits:
 1. Food Establishments:
 - i. Basil's Pizzeria, 20 S. Main Street
 - ii. Jerry's Sports Tavern, 30 Summer Street
 - iii. Morse Block Deli, 260 N. Main Street
 - iv. Cornerstone Pub & Kitchen, 47 N. Main Street
 - v. Two Loco Guys, 136 N. Main Street
 - vi. AR Market, 159 N. Main Street
 2. Food Vendor Licenses:
 - i. Morse Block Deli, 260 N. Main Street
 - ii. Cornerstone/Two Loco Guys, 136 N. Main Street
 3. Entertainment Licenses:
 - i. Barre Partnership, annual license
 4. Vehicle for Hire Service Operator and Vehicle Licenses:
 - i. Payless Taxi, two vehicles
 5. Vehicle for Hire Driver's Licenses:
 - i. Dale Kew, Payless Taxi

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Town Meeting election information is posted on the City website, including a list of officers to be elected, nominating petitions, and consent of candidate forms.
- Rep. Anthony worked with the legislature to draft a bill (S.169) to reimburse the City for

education taxes overpaid through the TIF district, as was identified during the TIF audit.

- Clerk is working with legislature on emergency election legislation to allow municipalities to put emergency measures in place for town meeting to protect the health and safety of voters and election workers. The draft bill is S.172, and is expected to be passed very quickly.
- Files have been uploaded to the ShareDrive containing the organization requests for placement of a funding article on the Town Meeting ballot. The files and requests will be reviewed by Council at next week's special meeting.

There was discussion on voting by absentee ballot at Town Meeting. Clerk Dawes said she will be mailing postcards to all active voters, encouraging them to request absentee ballots for all 2022 elections.

Liquor Control Board - NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Mackenzie said he has nothing to add to his written report.

Visitors and Communications –

Resident Ellen Sivret said there's been an uptick in drug activity in her Elm Street neighborhood. Ms. Sivret thanked the Police Department for their responsiveness, and asked the Council to keep updated on the situation and support the Police's actions. Mayor Herring said he will reach out to the neighborhood watch in that area to make sure they're aware.

Councilor Riel said the Aldrich Library Milne Room is now open mornings as a warming shelter. The shelter offers coffee, facilities, access to electricity for charging phones, and information on services. The Homelessness Task Force is working on creating a resources list.

Old Business – NONE

New Business -

A) Briefing on OSHA Emergency Standard and Policy re: Employee Vaccination Mandate.

Human Resources Director Rikk Taft gave an overview of the policy, noting this is federal law. The effective date is January 9, 2022, and employers with more than 100 employees are required to comply. Employees are required to provide proof or certification of vaccination, or proof of testing on a weekly basis. The City isn't required to provide testing for employees, but has made arrangements to have 30 rapid tests available each week. Resident William Toborg said mandating vaccinations is a violation of federal law, and he asked how privacy is being protected during testing. Manager Mackenzie said the policy doesn't mandate vaccinations; employees can choose to be vaccinated or tested weekly. Mr. Taft said testing will be done at the public safety building and every effort will be made to ensure privacy. Employees who have concerns can make separate appointments for testing.

B) Update on Vacant Building List.

Fire Chief Doug Brent, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, and Planning Director Janet Shatney said the list is updated and reported out twice each year. They have migrated the list into the inspection software to allow for more efficient tracking and reporting. There are currently 26 buildings on the list. There was discussion on options for mitigating health and safety hazards through enforcement and health orders, the impact of vacant buildings on neighborhoods and the grand list, and ways to lean on property owners or mortgage holders to encourage turnover and redevelopment.

C) Discussion on Proposed Charter Changes for 2022 Town Meeting.

Council reviewed the proposed charter changes section by section. There was discussion on capital planning, use of local option tax revenues, and who oversees plumbing installations and improvements.

Resident Bernadette Rose said they had to comply with state plumbing regulations while doing home improvements recently. There was some confusion as to whether the state has jurisdiction over single family property plumbing projects. Public Works Director Bill Ahearn will look into it. Resident Rich Morey recommended the local option tax for sales should be set at ½ percent instead of 1 percent, and that revenues should be used to create a revolving loan fund for local businesses, hiring a grant writer/coordinator, and covering the cost of the Barre Partnership general fund allocation.

Council approved the changes as proposed to sections 104, 307, 407, and 501. They made additional amendments to sections 409 and 605. The Clerk will update the draft language and re-send to City Attorney Oliver Twombly for a legal opinion. The Clerk has put continuing charter change discussions on the upcoming agendas for the January 18th and January 25th meetings.

D) Discussion on Council Priorities.

Manager Mackenzie reviewed his memo on the staff-related items on the Council priorities list, and the projected dates of completion, or when the different items will come to Council for discussion. There was discussion on paring down the list to reduce stress and workload on staff, prioritizing changing the course of the City's population loss, and how the citizens share complaints and comments with the City through the website and See.Click.Fix. Manager Mackenzie said he will work with staff to identify the top 5 priorities, and will report back to Council in a couple weeks.

Clerk Dawes left the meeting at 9:40 PM.

The strategic planning consultant decision will be made by this Council before Town Meeting Day, and the planning itself will be held when the new Council is seated after Town Meeting. Mayor Herring said he's working with Interim Police Chief Larry Eastman to make adjustments to the way crime statistics are reported to more closely match federal reporting.

Round Table –

Councilor Hemmerick said the City Manager search committee is meeting Thursday.

Councilor Reil said the Homelessness Task Force is meeting tomorrow evening.

Councilor Waszazak noted with sadness the passing of actress legend Betty White. Human Resources Director Rikk Taft said there's a national push for people to make donations to humane societies in Ms. White's name, as it was a cause that was near and dear to her heart.

Councilor Stockwell said the anniversary of the January 6th insurrection at the U.S. Capital is on her mind. She said she's grateful for the warming shelter at the library.

Mayor Herring announced the following:

- Condolences on the recent deaths of professional football coaches John Madden and Dan Reeves.
- There was a ribbon cutting today for Pearl Street Pizza.
- Council will take up a discussion on the past practice of including a penny on the tax rate as an allowance for grand list changes due to property tax assessment appeals and errors & omissions. Recent information from the VLCT notes it's not allowed under state law. Manager Mackenzie said the FY23 budget will come back for one more discussion at the January 18th meeting, before it needs to be approved as part of the Town Meeting warning at the January 25th meeting.
- Council will discuss use of Semprebon funds to support work done by the VT Youth Conservation Corps, and to support the three interest groups that came out of the Community Visit.

To be approved at 01/11/2022 Barre City Council Meeting

Mayor Herring announced he isn't running for re-election this year. He is available to talk with anyone interest in running for the office.

Executive Session – NONE

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 PM on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Cambel.
Motion carried.

The meeting was recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk

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