

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held November 9, 2021**

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 City Manager Steve Mackenzie, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, Finance Director Dawn Monahan, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Adjustments to the Agenda: Mayor Herring said Council will enter into executive session to discuss the Barre Area Development board liaison before considering any appointments.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Minutes of the Regular meeting of October 26, 2021 [N.B. these minutes were approved 11/2/21]
- B. Minutes of the Special meeting of November 2, 2021
- C. City Warrants as presented:
 1. Approval of Week 2021-45, dated November 10, 2021:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$221,595.18
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$138,805.55
- D. 2021 Licenses & Permits: NONE
- E. Approve Removal of Temporary 24 Hour Parking Permit Policy
- F. Accept Resignation of Jake Hemmerick as Liaison to BADC
- G. Accept Resignation of Nicko Rubin & Nate Ebert from the Tree Stewardship Committee
- H. Accept Resignation of Jim McWilliam from the Planning Commission
- I. Accept Resignation of Rosemary Averill from the Homelessness Task Force

Rosemary Averill asked that the following statement be included in the minutes:

I want there to be an 'on the record' response when the City Council accepts my resignation from the Homelessness Task Force. Kindly include this in the minutes of the Council meeting of November 9, 2021.

I had sincere intentions when I decided to request appointment to the homelessness task force. I was truly interested in bringing value to the group. I didn't have any social connection with members of the task force and it's likely we were from different sides of the political spectrum, yet I was hopeful we would work effectively on this important topic of homelessness. During the first two meetings I realized there is a large dedicated group of people who works with our homeless community and we are fortunate to have them in Barre, and they were helpful in answering my many questions. But in the long run, it was Councilor Waszazak's intent to push me out, and one doesn't have to be a political operative to realize this was his intent. He considered it an 'oversight' that I wasn't invited to participate in a sub-committee project, for which he appointed me as a member, and I call it intentional oversight. It's terrible judgement for a City representative to treat a volunteer with such disregard, one of his constituents no less, when 'inclusion' is the constant drumbeat from this Council. This is no way to run a task force and he should be relieved of his co-chair position for such poor judgement. I am sorry this didn't work out and that I can't accept the 'oversight' excuse.

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reminded people that second quarter property taxes are due by next Monday, November 15th.

Liquor Control Board - NONE

City Manager's Report –

Manager Mackenzie reported on the following:

- Police report there have been a rash of cat burglaries with people breaking into unlocked vehicles. The Police Department reminds people to keep their vehicles locked.
- The yard waste drop-off has been extended through this Saturday, November 13th. Public Works is doing curbside pick-up through this week.
- City Hall will be closed Thursday for Veterans Day.
- The winter parking ban goes into effect at 1AM on November 15th, and runs to April 1st. Overnight parking permits are available from the Clerk's office. The Police Department is handing out warning notices to remind people of the upcoming ban.

There was discussion about the high heat in the Council chambers, and whether meetings could be held in Alumni Hall. Manager Mackenzie said there's a fault in the thermostat wiring, and they hope to have it fixed before the next meeting.

Visitors and Communications –

Merchant Street resident Jess Rosado reviewed the history of the neighborhood's requests to the City to help curb speeding along the street. Mr. Rosado said the City had committed to four actions including installing a speed table, removing traffic diverting signage, installing bulbouts and a new crosswalk. To date the speed table and signage removal have been done, and Mr. Rosado wanted to know when the other items on the list will be completed. Manager Mackenzie said he will give an update at the next meeting. There was discussion on the Transportation Advisory Committee, and possible governance changes to allow the committee to have more authority to make changes.

College Street resident Steve England said he wanted to commend the Public Works and Police departments for helping with last weekend's 5K road race to benefit the Veteran's Place in Northfield. Mr. England said he noticed the American flag at the public works garage is in poor condition, and he donated a new flag. Council accepted the donation with gratitude on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Reil. **Motion carried.**

Mayor Herring offered apologies to the Barre Partnership, Barre Rotary Club, resident Brian Judd and Manager Steve Mackenzie for comments made at last week's Council meeting. The Mayor noted the Council meeting ground rules call for Councilors to debate issues and not personalities.

Old Business – NONE

New Business –

A) Council Christmas for Kids Coin Drop: December 4, 2021.

Councilor Boutin said the coin drop is scheduled for December 4th and will begin around 8:00 AM. Funds have traditionally been raised for the Barre Juvenile Officers Association to purchase gifts for children in need in the community. There was discussion on the best ways to support local children. Residents Renita Marshall and Martin Prevost offered to help with the program. Council approved designating the Juvenile Officers Association to receive funds raised on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried.**

B) Discussion/Approval of Flag Display for Veterans Day.

Chuck Barney, chair of the Barre Area Veterans Council said they coordinate the Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies, and raise money for and install the flags along N. Main Street. Mr. Barney said he's here today on behalf of the BAV Council to voice support for displaying the large American flag over N. Main Street in honor of Veterans Day.

Area residents Errol Briggs, Martin Prevost, Sarah Pregent, Jeffrey Tuper-Giles, Jesse Rosado, Cheryl Anderson, Sheila Quero, Barbara Druge, Thom Lauzon, and Bernadette Rose made comments in support of displaying the flag.

Former Mayor Thom Lauzon said Councilor Waszazak's comments last week about applicant Brian Judd crossed a line, and he should recuse himself from the vote.

Mayor Herring asked about potential conflicts of interest for the Council. The Mayor said he is a member of three of the four organizations that make up the Veterans Council, but doesn't feel that creates a conflict. Councilor Waszazak said he will not recuse himself from the vote, and will be voting to support displaying the flag. He said the impact of the flag and the intent of the applicant are two different things; that accusations of him not being patriotic are untrue, and that the flag is a symbol of the First Amendment which guarantees free speech on both sides.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to approve the application to display the large American flag above N. Main Street for Veterans Day, seconded by Councilor Stockwell.

Councilor Reil said she is voting in favor of the motion because she wants to see the City move on from this issue to address homelessness.

Councilor Cambel said she is torn by the issue. She said she wants to honor those who fought for our freedoms, but is worried about the message of intent.

Councilor Hemmerick said he has no issues with the applicant personally but disagrees with partisan politics, and does not want to celebrate the theft of laptops and calling a Vice President treasonous for carrying out his constitutional duties.

Council voted on the motion as presented. **Motion carried.**

Mayor Herring said he sent out an updated list of Council priorities that includes when the priorities will be taken up on future Council meeting agenda.

It was noted people were holding side conversations in the zoom chat. Mayor Herring said any further postings could cause people to be ejected from the meeting.

Flag request applicant Brian Judd wished to address the Council, but was experiencing technical difficulties. Mr. Judd posted a thank you in the chat.

C) Locker Searches & Inspection Policy.

Human Resources Director Rikk Taft said changes have been made to make the policy gender neutral and it's been vetted by Labor Attorney Scott Cameron. Council approved the revised policy on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Hemmerick. **Motion carried.**

D) FY22 Quarter 1 Overview.

Finance Director Dawn Monahan reviewed her memo with information about the first quarter review, saying revenues are running above and expenses are running under budget at this point. Ms. Monahan reviewed some of the outlying categories and said most are due to timing. Enterprise Funds are on target with expenses running under. There was discussion on charges for sludge disposal, and whether a surplus is anticipated for this fiscal year. Ms. Monahan said she will include a report on anticipated year end numbers when she reports after the second quarter.

There was discussion on what caused the FY21 fund surplus. Ms. Monahan said she will review the surplus for Council when the audit is complete. Mayor Herring asked for a report on the enterprise fund balances, which will be sent to Councilors.

E) FY23 General Fund Proposal Presentation.

Manager Mackenzie said this presentation satisfies the requirement as laid out in Charter. The Manager talked about possible adjustments including the new staff positions, and using a portion of the FY21 fund balance to buy down the tax rate increase. He asked that questions from Councilors be submitted in advance of any budget workshops to allow staff time to have responses ready. There was discussion on health insurance buyouts, providing benefits to staff for living in the City, sign-on bonuses, difficulty in hiring new employees due to national labor shortages, establishing a target for the tax rate increase, looking at budget drivers and trends, debt retirement schedules, creating a grant writing position and an ARPA management position, and building the budget around goals.

Council scheduled budget workshops on Saturday, December 4th from 1-4PM, and Saturday December 18th from 8-11 AM.

F) Council Direction on Housing Programs.

- i. 2-Lot Subdivision, Infill Housing Initiative.**
- ii. Private Housing/Assistance Program.**
- iii. Special Assessments for New Road Construction.**

Mayor Herring said the intent is to have Councilors gathering information on these programs to be ready when they come up for discussion. There was discussion on not jumping ahead of the new Housing Task Force and the ARPA discussions, what staff work has already been done around new road construction and how the new federal infrastructure funds will play into that work, opportunities to improve unified development regulations to support infill development, and conducting a housing needs assessment. Barre Area Development Corporation executive director Cody Morrison spoke of the housing components included in neighboring Berlin's town center development plans.

G) Appointment of Council Liaison to BADC.

Mayor Herring said as per his announcement under agenda adjustments, the Council will discuss appointment in executive session before taking any action.

Executive Session –

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to find that premature general knowledge of personnel appointment to be discussed would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussion be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stockwell. Mayor Herring said the appointee is traditionally a member of the Council, and the discussion will be around which member of Council would be the best appointee. **Motion carried, with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

It was noted round table hadn't been held yet. Mayor Herring said they would go through Round Table before voting to go into executive session.

Round Table –

Councilor Waszazak thanked all those who participated in this evening’s discussions.

Mayor Herring noted the following:

- Attended a VLCT meeting at which hiring difficulties were discussed. It’s a state-wide issue, not just Barre City.
- Mayors Coalition will meet next week to set its legislative priorities for the upcoming session.
- The federal infrastructure bill has been passed, and the Council will discuss local impacts as more information becomes available.
- Next year’s Veterans Day parade will once again include the Boy Scouts.
- Friends of the Winooski have set the date for next year’s river clean-up in late September.

Executive Session, continued -

Council went into executive session at 9:46 PM to discuss personnel under the provisions of 1 VSA §313 on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Cambel. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

BADC board president Bob Lord and Executive Director Cody Morrison were invited into the executive session.

Mr. Lord and Mr. Morrison left the executive session at 10:02 PM.

Council came out of executive session at 10:12 PM on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

There was no action.

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 PM on motion of Councilor Cambel, seconded by Councilor Reil. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk