

**Special Meeting of the Barre City Council  
Held December 21, 2019**

The Special Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Lucas Herring at 1:03 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, Human Resources Director Rikk Taft, Finance Director Dawn Monahan, Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Buildings and Community Services Assistant Director Stephanie Quaranta, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Acting Police Chief Larry Eastman, Public Works Director Bill Ahearn, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Mayor Herring thanked Councilor Boutin, Police Officer Jason Fleury, and former Councilor Rich Morey for participating in this morning's Dollar Drop to benefit Christmas for Kids. Former Mayor Thom Lauzon said he has solicited donations for the program from local businesses.

**Adjustments to the Agenda:** NONE

**Visitors & Communications:**

Former Mayor Lauzon reviewed Council's action a few weeks ago, when the decision was made to donate the parking meter money collected over the holidays to the Good Samaritan Haven and Mayor Lauzon and his wife would donate an equal amount to the Granite Center Garden Club. Following that meeting it came to light the amount generally raised through the meters was incorrectly stated, and is closer to \$1,800 than \$5,000. Mayor Lauzon said through discussions with the Garden Club, his recommendation is that his promised \$5,000 donation go to the Good Samaritan Haven, and the meter funds go to the Garden Club. Councilors offered their informal support of this arrangement.

**New Business –**

**A) Budget Workshop**

Manager Mackenzie reviewed his draft agenda, and said the first item of business is for Council to set a goal; either a percent increase in the tax rate or a percent increase in the budget. There was discussion on the rate of inflation and annual Social Security increase, household income increase, growth in the grand list, and past budget surveys. Councilors suggested tax rate increase goals ranging from under 3% to not more than 4%.

Council approved setting a tax rate increase goal of not more than 4% on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Reil. **Motion carried with Mayor Herring and Councilors Reil, Waszazak, and Cambel voting in favor, and Councilors Hemmerick, Boutin, and Stockwell voting against.**

Manager Mackenzie said the current proposed FY23 budget shows a projected tax rate increase of 4.26%. There was discussion on the pros and cons of using some of the FY21 surplus to reduce the tax rate increase. There was discussion on the new positions included in the proposed FY23 budget, including an IT systems manager, junior planner, assistant public works director, and additional facilities staff member. There was discussion on tapping into American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds to replace lost revenues from FY21, and Finance Director Dawn Monahan noted Barre City doesn't meet the qualifications for such reimbursement.

Councilor Boutin made the motion to approve rolling money from the FY21 surplus into the FY23

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budget, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. There was continued discussion until Councilor Stockwell made the motion to table Councilor Boutin's motion, seconded by Councilor Hemmerick. **Motion to table carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

Manager Mackenzie reviewed his list of possible budget reductions. There was discussion on the following:

- Eliminating the custodial position at City Hall.
- Reduction in summer cemetery staff.
- Reduction in traffic signal maintenance.
- Moving community development functions in-house.
- Management of ARPA projects – perhaps billing out a portion of time from the proposed new positions.

Councilor Cambel made the motion to include all four new positions in the FY23 budget, seconded by Councilor Stockwell.

There was continued discussion on using ARPA funds to cover some of the costs associated with the new positions to be phased out over a three year period of time, and obligating future Councils.

Councilors Cambel and Stockwell withdrew their motion to include the four proposed new positions.

Councilors gave unofficial approval to keep the four new positions in the FY23 budget.

Councilors continued to review the Manager's list of proposed reductions, and agreed to remove or reduce the following:

- Remove website upgrades.
- Remove bike patrol.
- Reduce committee allotments.
- Remove allocation for VT Youth Conservation Corp, or move to another funding source such as the Semprebon Fund.
- Reduce increases to annual stipends to Barre Area Development Corporation, Barre Partnership, and Aldrich Library.
- Reduce advertising expenses.

Other items discussed included reductions to the school resource officer, reviewing cost/revenue comparisons for the Civic Center complex for the last 5 years, and possible increases needed to maintain staffing levels in the Police Department following loss of grant funds. Council will receive updated information on the Civic Center and Police Department at the next budget workshop.

Finance Director Monahan said the updated proposed budget tax rate increase is 3.4%.

Public Works Director Bill Ahearn gave an overview of the capital plans for streets and sidewalks, water, and wastewater. Mr. Ahearn reviewed the difference sources of capital funds available for projects, and the amount to be spent each year over the next five years. The information is being shared with the Paths, Routes, and Trails Committee, the Transportation Advisory Committee, and the ADA Committee for their input and participation in planning. There was discussion on local share for the state's Quarry Street intersection project, current and future bonding, updated costs accrued to date for the Quarry Street project, retaining walls on River Street, and possibly changing River Street to one-way.

There was discussion on speeding and sidewalks on Berlin Street, possibly changing the lower portion of

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the street to one-way, and adding a bike path lane, speed table, and signage to control speed.

Council voted to take up the FY21 surplus question that was tabled earlier in the meeting on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Hemmerick. **Motion carried.**

There was discussion on using \$50,000 of the surplus to reduce the projected tax rate increase to under 3%. Councilors Boutin and Waszazak withdrew their original motion regarding use of surplus funds made earlier in the meeting. No action was taken on this topic.

Manager Mackenzie reviewed the bond tracking report, showing all the current active bonds, what items or projects are being funded, and what progress has been made per bond. There was discussion on the plans for rearrangements in City Hall.

The next budget workshop is set for Saturday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at noon.

The Council meeting adjourned at 4:25 PM on motion of Councilor Hemmerick, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video meeting platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk