

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council  
Held December 19, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council was called to order in person and via video platform by Mayor Jake Hemmerick at 6:00 PM at City Hall, Barre, Vermont. In attendance were: From Ward I, Councilors Emel Cambel and Thom Lauzon; from Ward II, Councilors Michael Boutin and Teddy Waszazak; and from Ward III, Councilors Michael Deering and Samn Stockwell. City staff members present were City Manager Nicolas Storellicastro, Assistant Manager Dawn Monahan, Fire Chief Keith Cushman, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron, Homelessness Coordinator Tess Taylor, IT Support Specialist Kris Kirby, and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

**Absent:** NONE

**Adjustments to the Agenda:** NONE

**Visitors and Communications:**

Steve Restelli said Manager Storellicastro and other City staff members visited 2 Orchard Street on October 31<sup>st</sup> in response to the neighbors' concerns about use of the storage building at that location. He spoke of dust being created while the lot was being cleaned, crates piled on the site, delivery trucks damaging the road and manhole covers, and driving on lawns, and nails in the roadway. Mr. Restelli gave copies of surveillance videos to the Council for their review. Mayor Hemmerick said this will be on Council's agenda when staff is prepared for further discussion.

Homelessness Task Force chair Ericka Reil said they sent a letter to Council requesting placement of porta-potties around the City in support of sanitation and human dignity.

**Approval of Consent Agenda:**

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
  - i. Regular meeting of December 12, 2023.
- B. City Warrants as presented:
  1. Approval of Week 2023-51, dated December 20, 2023:
    - i. Accounts Payable: \$467,883.05
    - ii. Payroll (gross): \$143,302.45
- C. 2024 Clerk's Office Licenses & Permits:
  - i. Vehicle for Hire business/vehicle licenses:
    - i. KC Taxi, 1 vehicle
  - ii. Vehicle for Hire driver's licenses:
    - i. Scott Weston, KC Taxi
  - iii. Entertainment licenses:
    - i. Elks' Club, 10 Jefferson Street
  - iv. Food Vending licenses:
    - i. Rise Up Bakery, 48 Granite Street
- D. Ratify Council's 12/12/23 approval of lease with Barre Up
- E. Appoint Tess Taylor to the steering committee of Barre Up to replace the Manager

**City Clerk & Treasurer Report –**

City Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes reported on the following:

- Water/sewer bills are due by January 2, 2024.
- Clerk Dawes will be out of the office from December 23, 2023 – January 1, 2024.

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**Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board** – Council approved renewal of a 2<sup>nd</sup> class liquor license and tobacco license for QM Store, Inc., at 155 Washington Street, on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin abstaining.**

**City Manager’s Report –**

Manager Storellicastro reviewed flood response activities from yesterday’s heavy rains and warm weather. Fire Chief Cushman, Deputy Fire Chief Aldsworth, and Buildings and Community Services Director Bergeron talked about performing frequent checks of focal points, trash racks, river gauges, and areas of concern such as the Berlin Street Bridge, West Second Street, Depot Square and North Main Street in the vicinity of Second Street. Some buildings had water in their basements, and there was minimal pavement damage on Berlin Street where the water line was replaced earlier this year. Once the water had receded, the Department of Public Works cleaned accumulated mud off the downtown streets in advance of the weather turning colder. Communications were maintained with the community throughout the day through VTAAlerts, Facebook, the City website, and partner organizations. BCS Director Bergeron said 18 people stayed in the Red Cross shelter at the auditorium last night. All have been returned home or rehoused, and the shelter closed as of today. Additional debris accumulated under the Berlin Street Bridge, and the City is looking to contract for special equipment needed to remove the debris.

Homelessness Coordinator Tess Taylor and Central Vermont Recovery Officer Pat Moulton spoke of the public engagement plans around the North End Gateway redevelopment. The first event will be January 17<sup>th</sup> at the Old Labor Hall, followed by gatherings the next week in each of the wards. Pat Moulton said the main focus will be on asking people what they want to see for development and resiliency. In addition to the community meetings, Agency of Natural Resources experts will attend an upcoming Council meeting to talk about river science, which will play an integral part in any projects.

Ericka Reil suggested the venues and events be fully accessible with ASL interpreters.

Amy Galford said any development plans should include a civic space in the north end, and there should be transportation assistance for the events.

Joelen Mulvaney asked how word will be spread about the events. There was discussion on canvassing, posters, mailings, and flyers.

There was discussion on whether the Labor Hall will be big enough for the initial meeting, or if it should be held at the auditorium or opera house instead; offering transportation to and from events; setting up a dedicated web page to share information and ideas in advance of the meetings; and setting up an online RSVP system to get estimates of the number of attendees.

Bernadette Rose said volunteer drivers can help provide transportation and engage with their neighbors.

Ellen Kaye said people need to commit to attending.

There was discussion on next steps following the meetings; the objectives for the process, getting to a next round of conceptual drawings for the Council to endorse and use to request funding support; and keeping a river science perspective in mind during the process.

Manager Storellicastro recognized the following City employees who are celebrating milestone years of service:

Name	Department	Years of Service
Rikk Taft	Admin – HR	10
Lance Abare	DPW – Street	10
Everett Hoyt	DPW – Sewer	10
Carol Dawes	Clerk/Treasurer	15
Jonathan Houle	Police	15

Joshua Kosakowski	DPW – Street	15
Randall Tucker	Police	15
Joe Kelly	DPW – Water	25
Clint Smith	DPW	35

**New Business –**

**A) Warn 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearings on proposed charter changes for January 23, 2024 and February 6, 2024.**

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to warn the first and second public hearings for proposed charter changes to be included on the annual meeting ballot, seconded by Councilor Waszazak.

Former City Manager Steve Mackenzie said he urges the Council to remove the proposed changes that would allow 16 & 17 year olds to vote in local elections, and limit committee membership to City residents. Mr. Mackenzie said the electorate should not include people who don't have a financial stake in the City, and restricting committee membership would substantially limit the pool of people who support the City.

Joelen Mulvaney said she is concerned about committees being dominated by non-City residents, and maybe there could be ratios of members with certain percentages of seats reserved for City residents.

Barbara Druge said the schools are unified, and committees should also be unified. Ms. Druge said 16 & 17 year olds aren't old enough to drink or smoke, or make other decisions.

Sonya Spaulding said those committees that make decisions specific to Barre City should be restricted to City residents, such as the Planning Commission and Development Review Board. Other committees with more regional impact could have some outside representation.

Councilor Lauzon made the motion to stop debate and call the question, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. It was noted a 2/3 majority is needed to pass such a motion. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

Council voted on the original motion to warn the charter change public hearings for January 23, 2024 and February 6, 2024. **Motion carried with Councilor Boutin voting against.**

**B) FY25 budget presentations by BADC, Aldrich Library and The Barre Partnership.**

Barre Area Development Corporation executive director Aimee Green, and board members David Sichel and Al Flory gave a Powerpoint presentation on benefits to the community, focus for FY25, accomplishments for FY24 year to date, the Barre Community Relief Fund, increased tourism, key performance indicators (KPI), strategies, initiatives, and objectives. Ms. Green said BADC is asking for level funding for FY25 to include funds contained in the FY24 City budget, and the additional funding approved by voters on the 2023 annual meeting ballot for a total of \$81,335.

There was discussion on collaborations with the Barre Partnership, marketing and fundraising, and requiring a petition for the voter-approved additional funding.

Sonya Spaulding asked for KPIs and metrics for FY24, and more information on other objectives in addition to social media. Ms. Spaulding said it would be helpful for the community to know what it is paying for.

There was additional discussion on measures of quantifiable engagements, kudos for the Barre Community Relief Fund, finding outside funding, and seeking the same amount of funding from Barre Town. Al Flory said they hope to increase Barre Town funding to be the same level as Barre City.

Joelen Mulvaney asked how many Barre City people are on the board, and said there would be a higher level of confidence if board membership was balanced between the City and the Town. Ms. Green said there are 6 City

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residents on the board. Councilor Deering said he and Manager Storellicastro attend board meetings as City advocates.

Ellen Kaye asked for clarification on what the FY25 funding request is. Ms. Green said they are seeking \$81,335, which is level funded from the total FY24 allocations. Ms. Green said the intention in the FY25 budget is to use all funding for general operating support.

Aldrich Public Library executive director Kristin Baumann and board members Nancy Pope and David Sichel gave a Powerpoint presentation on rising costs since 2021, increased maintenance initiatives, and their request for level funding. Ms. Baumann said the per-resident amount paid by Barre City is less than the statewide average.

There was discussion on making materials available at the library for the aforementioned North End Gateway community engagement meetings, and managing the budget to avoid cutting services.

Rachel van Vliet said libraries are a critical part of communities and the City needs to invest in the Aldrich.

Ellen Kaye said as a librarian, shee deeply believes in the mission of libraries to fill social service roles, provide access, and fill a unique and vital role in the community.

Mayor Hemmerick said he would be open to providing a funding increase to the library, and taking it from the BADC budget, since that funding will be going before the voters separately anyway.

There was discussion on costs related to maintaining the historic building, and looking for ways to increase funding for the library.

Barre Partnership executive director Tracie Lewis gave a Powerpoint presentation highlighting events since the 2022 holiday season through the 2023 holiday season. Ms. Lewis said they are asking for level funding for the FY25 budget. They secured a grant through the Downtown Vibrancy Fund, which will allow hiring a social media and marketing manager.

Sonya Spaulding asked if there are metrics, measurements or statistics on how City funding is coming back to the community, and what money is raised through memberships. Ms. Lewis said memberships start at \$250.

Joelen Mulvaney asked how big events translate into increased business. Ms. Mulvaney asked if the businesses are polled after events to gather information on increases. She said events have hidden costs to the City.

There was discussion on memberships, tracking unique visitors and impacts, and marketing efforts.

Bernadette Rose said the Farmers Market was more accessible this year by accepting payments through Snap and 3 Squares.

### **C) Discuss legislative priorities.**

Nick Sherman and Maggie Lenz from Leonine Public Affairs reviewed the timeline of the Vermont legislative session. They will organize meetings with the City's legislative delegations, the administration, and other communities impacted by flooding. Flood relief operational support is the priority.

There was discussion on focusing on flood relief operational support, and naming other legislative priorities to support other community needs.

Barre City Representative Jonathan Williams said he and other area representatives are working on a flood recovery omnibus bill, and he looks forward to working closely with Leonine.

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Bernadette Rose asked for materials to assist residents in contacting legislators to advocate for funding support. Ms. Lenz said they will issue action alerts.

Barre City Representative Peter Anthony said this isn't a one-shot deal, and growing the grand list will take at least 5 years.

There was additional discussion on looking for ways to support funding for infrastructure, and developing a list of other priorities.

Barre Town Representative Gina Galfetti said she is 100% committed to bringing home operational support.

Manager Storrellicastro will share a list of possible legislative priorities for the Council to rank in advance of further discussion at the next meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Upcoming Business –**

The January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting will be an FY25 budget conference held at Alumni Hall. It will also include adoption of legislative priorities, and a technical correction to the grants policy to exempt FEMA grants.

Councilor Cambel asked to have a future discussion on condemnation of downtown buildings.

**Round Table –**

Councilors voiced their gratitude for work of the City departments during yesterday's flooding.

Councilor Lauzon said downtown tax credits are rolling out in January, and local businesses may be able to take advantage of the program. He said he wants to see focus on riverbed maintenance instead of dredging, and noted yesterday's flooding was mostly a storm water event instead of a flooding event. Rep. Anthony said the storm water problem includes right-sizing piping for volume, and there is statutory authority to create storm water utility districts.

**Executive Session – NONE**

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

The meeting was recorded on the video platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk