

**Regular Meeting of the Barre City Council
Held March 26, 2024**

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 Storrellicastro, Assistant Manager Dawn Monahan, Deputy Fire Chief Joe Aldsworth, Planning Director Janet Shatney, Assessor Larry Martin (arrived 7:02 PM), Homelessness and Housing Coordinator Tess Taylor (arrived 7:05 PM), and Clerk/Treasurer Carol Dawes.

Absent: NONE

Executive Session – Councilor Cambel made the motion to find that premature general public knowledge of real estate issues to be discussed would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussions be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried.**

Council went into executive session at 6:03 PM to discuss real estate under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. Manager Storrellicastro, Clerk Dawes, and White + Burke consultant Stephanie Clarke were invited into the executive session. **Motion carried.**

Council came out of executive session at 6:35 PM on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

Adjustments to the Agenda: The substantial improvement ordinance change discussion under new agenda items is removed, as these proposed ordinance changes must go through the Planning Commission before coming to Council for consideration.

Visitors and Communications:

Erica Reil, Homelessness Task Force chair, said she submitted a request to have a discussion on portable toilets placed on the agenda. The Manager said the discussion is included in the scheduled FY25 budget review. Ms. Reil said the task force is asking that portable toilets be placed now, so they would financially impact the current fiscal year. Mayor Hemmerick said the discussion will be taken up during the FY25 budget discussion.

Adam Jacobs said Rainbow Bridge Community Center has been collecting signatures on a funding request petition since last year. Mr. Jacobs said they collected approximately 150 signatures before the annual town meeting date was changed from March 5th to May 14th, which invalidated the original petitions. They have continued collecting signatures on petitions with the new date, and are requesting the Council accept the signatures on the petitions with the March date. Clerk Dawes said there is precedence from previous situations when the Council accepted petitions in the spirit in which the signatures were collected. Council approved accepting the petitions on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

It was noted this item was not warned, and will therefore need to be ratified at next week's meeting.

Approval of Consent Agenda:

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

- A. Approval of Minutes:
 - i. Regular meeting of March 19, 2024.
- B. City Warrants as presented:

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1. Approval of Week 2024-13, dated March 27, 2024:
 - i. Accounts Payable: \$505,963.66
 - ii. Payroll (gross): \$147,411.57
- C. Clerk's Office Licenses and Permits
 1. Entertainment Licenses:
 - i. The Rehab Gym, outdoor physical fitness celebration in City Place parking lot, May 18th from 8AM – 12:30 PM.
 - ii. Barre Pride, annual celebration in City Hall Park, June 8th from 9AM – 4PM.
- D. Approve 2024 coin drop schedule
- E. Authorize the Manager to execute contract(s)
 1. Wright Pierce
 2. Alliance Group Services

City Clerk & Treasurer Report –

City Clerk/Treasurer Dawes reported on the following:

- Water/sewer bills went in the mail March 1st, and are due by April 1st.
- Dog licenses are available. All dogs must be licensed by April 1st.
- Free eclipse glasses are available in the Clerk's office while the supply lasts.
- Information on offices up for election, nominating petitions, and procedures for Barre City's annual meeting on May 14th are posted on the elections page of the City website.

Liquor Control Board/Cannabis Control Board –

Council approved an indoor cultivator tier 1 license for Terrapin Gardens LLC on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Council Boutin abstaining.**

City Manager's Report –

Manager Storrellicastro reported on the following:

- Approaching the deadline for reassessments of flood-impacted properties. Letters were sent to all such properties, encouraging people to call the assessor's office to schedule a review.
- There will be a ribbon cutting for the new BOR turf on April 6th.
- The winter parking ban expires at 12:01 AM on April 1st.
- The City is contracting for a notification system that will allow the City to reach residents via text, email or phone.
- The lobbyists are advocating for state funding to assist with costs associated with elevating properties in the flood zones.
- The Easter Egg Hunt will be held this Saturday, March 30th, at Rotary Park.

The Manager noted this will be Buildings and Community Services Assistant Director Stephanie Quaranta's last egg hunt, as she is retiring. He noted her career with Barre City started 37 years ago with the first egg hunt. The Manager said Buildings and Community Services Director Jeff Bergeron is also retiring the end of this month, and noted Mr. Bergeron served in this position for 17 years, in addition to several years on the City Council, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Adjustment. There will be a special recognition of both retirements at a future Council meeting.

Mayor Hemmerick asked for information about how water system customers can get their water tested. The Manager will ask the Public Works department for information on testing options.

New Business –

A) Supplemental Environmental Project proposal.

Michelle Brown from Friends of the Winooski and Cathy Jamieson from Barre City River Access Task Force reviewed the Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) plans, which includes:

1. Update stormwater maps

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2. Complete illicit discharge tracking & assess/reassess storm drains
3. Confirm the extent and levels of e coli in Barre waterways
4. Contract with VT Rural Water Association for wastewater staff training

The SEP was part of the Assurance of Discontinuance (AOD) agreement with the VT Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The cost of the project is \$65,320. There is \$47,812.50 funding available from the sewer enterprise fund, and the Friends of the Winooski will raise the difference.

Council authorized submitting the proposed SEP to VT DEC for approval on motion of Councilor Stockwell, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

B) FY25 Budget update.

Manager Storrellicastro gave a Powerpoint presentation on the proposed FY25 budget, highlighting changes made since the last presentation in January. The projected tax rate increase is 4.85%.

The Manager said the Homelessness Task Force has requested placing 6 ADA-accessible portable toilets throughout the City. The projected cost for FY25 is \$18,000. There was discussion on the lack of publicly accessible restrooms, the growing need due to the increased unhoused population, identifying the number of portable toilets needed and possible locations, seeking funding from other sources, making public restrooms available, and creating a business assessment district to cover costs for portable toilets in the downtown.

Homelessness Task Force vice chair Steve Finner said they can include further discussion at next week's task force meeting. There was discussion on the portable toilets being provided by the Barre Partnership for the solar eclipse block party on April 8th, and whether the City could make arrangements to keep the toilets beyond that date. Manager Storrellicastro will discuss options with the HTF.

There was additional discussion on the proposed FY25 budget including how to plug the \$1M hole in the FY26 budget created by the state's \$1M allocation for flood relief, filling the junior planner position or converting it to a project manager position, and when the FY26 budget building process will begin.

Clerk Dawes said Council will approve the annual meeting warning, including the proposed FY25 budget, on April 11th.

C) Housing meeting follow-u actions:

i. Create \$250,000 ARPA-funded trust fund

There was discussion on the amount of money to be allocated to the proposed fund; using trust funds for accessory dwelling units, infill, and workforce housing development; creating the infrastructure for managing the fund; investing in home ownership; and working with Downstreet Housing on administering the fund.

Amy Galford said discussions about administering the fund should include clarification on fees for administration, and whether the program would provide up-front funding or reimbursement for invoices. Ms. Galford said the capital plan calls for completion of the North Main Street stormwater project, and completing that project would be a way to support the North End through ARPA funds.

There was additional discussion on identifying future funding sources for a revolving loan fund, the differences between a loan fund and a trust fund, and finding ways of encouraging both large and small developers.

Councilor Waszazak made the motion to create a housing trust fund; to request the Housing Task Force recommend a governance structure for a steering committee, uses, and revenue sources to sustain the fund while working with Downstreet Housing towards those goals; and allocate \$250,000 of ARPA funding to

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the housing trust fund. Motion seconded by Councilor Stockwell. **Motion carried with Councilor Deering voting against.**

ii. Direct City Attorney to draft short-rental ordinance with fee structure

Mayor Hemmerick said short-term rentals are competing with commercial hotels and motels, and there are potential safety issues with uncertified properties. The Mayor said other municipalities' ordinances create licensure programs, and he reviewed a list of possible ordinance sections.

There was discussion on partnering this proposal with the rental registry program, what other communities are doing, public safety value to have short-term rental properties identified, impact on long-term rental availability, tying into the rental housing ordinances or minimum housing, and enforcement impact on staff.

Bernadette Rose said websites such as Airbnb and Vrbo can help identify short-term rental properties.

Raylene Meunier said according to Furnished Finder, there are currently 36 furnished rooms for rent in the area.

Council authorized City Attorney David Rugh to draft short-rental ordinance language for consideration on motion of Councilor Lauzon, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

iii. Authorize the Manager to issue an LOI for redevelopment of the Campbell parking lot

Manager Storrellicastro reviewed the Campbell parking lot location, and recommended Council also issue requests for letters of interest for the Plain Street parking lot and five contiguous City-owned lots between Merchant Street and Cleary Street. Council approved issuing the LOI requests on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

iv. 1st Reading Warned 7:45 PM: Ord. #2024-02: Amend the definition of substantial improvement

This item has been reassigned to the Planning Commission.

D) Discuss proposed Charter changes.

Manager Storrellicastro reviewed the proposed charter changes, which include:

- Separating the clerk and treasurer positions, and making the treasurer position appointed;
- Moving the annual meeting from Town Meeting Day in March to the second Tuesday in May;
- Authorizing 16- and 17-year olds to vote in local elections and serve on the City Council;
- Remove school district language that was superseded by the BUUSD articles of agreement.

Jaquan Johnson said he is 17 years old, and many students his age are shadowed by their parents, and may be too young to make their own decisions when voting.

There was discussion on 16- and 17-year olds being influenced by their parents, and the impact on voter turnout by holding the annual meeting on an off-cycle date rather than town meeting day.

Clerk Dawes said the charter language needs to be finalized by the April 11th meeting, when the annual meeting warning will be approved.

E) 2nd Reading Warned 8:00 PM: Ord. #2024-01: Police ordinance modernization.

The public hearing opened at 8:43 PM. Council approved the ordinance revisions on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. **Motion carried.**

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Upcoming Business –

- FY25 budget
- Housing
- Continuing discussion on economic development tools including North End TIF district and tax stabilization agreements in the TIF district
- Update from Planning Commission on flood hazard regulations
- Use of ARPA for water/wastewater projects – possible loan to enterprise funds
- Charge to Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee regarding ADA issues
- Establishing a Neighborhood Development Area

Round Table –

Councilor Deering said he was named staff of the week last week by BCEMS.

Councilor Waszazak said he had a great time at last week's Shamrocks and Headlocks at the Elks Club.

Councilor Stockwell said she attended Sunday's healthcare united rally in City Hall Park, which was a great event.

Councilor Lauzon asked that the Hill Street/South Main Street/Ayers Street traffic signal be looked into for possible adjustment. Currently the timing for lights and crosswalk signals creates significant backup at that intersection.

Councilor Lauzon left the meeting at 8:51 PM, as he had a conflict of interest with regards to the executive session.

Executive Session – Councilor Stockwell made the motion to find that premature general public knowledge of negotiations issues to be discussed would clearly place the City of Barre at a substantial disadvantage should the discussions be public. The motion was seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

Council went into executive session at 8:52 PM to discuss negotiations under the provisions of 1 VSA § 313 on motion of Councilor Boutin, seconded by Councilor Waszazak. Manager Storrellicastro, Clerk Dawes, and Assessor Larry Martin were invited into the executive session. **Motion carried.**

Council came out of executive session at 9:05 PM on motion of Councilor Cambel, seconded by Councilor Boutin. **Motion carried.**

Council accepted the property tax assessment settlement as presented on motion of Councilor Waszazak, seconded by Councilor Deering. **Motion carried.**

Mayor Hemmerick adjourned the meeting at 9:06 PM.

The open portions of the meeting were recorded on the video platform.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn S. Dawes, City Clerk