

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting  
April 10, 2013  
Montpelier City Hall Council Chambers**

In attendance: Mayor John Hollar (presiding), City Manager Bill Fraser, City Councilors Jessica Egerly Walsh, Thierry Guerlain, Alan Weiss, Andy Hooper and Tom Golonka (Anne Watson arrived later). City Clerk John Odum acted as Secretary of the Meeting.

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The meeting was called to order by Mayor Hollar at 6:30PM.

13-100. Councilor Egerly Walsh asked that the River Street repair item (d) be pulled from the Consent agenda for consideration. Councilor Guerlain similarly asked that item c be pulled, and Councilor Weiss asked that items e and f(2) be pulled.

Councilor Golonka moved that the Council approve the remaining items from the consent agenda. Councilor Hooper seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:32PM.

13-101. John Bloch addressed the council in regards to his candidacy for re-appointment to the Planning Commission. Bloch explained his interest in the planning commission and lamented what he characterized as the glacial pace of progress to come up with proposals to city housing challenges. He indicated that, despite his frustrations, he was committed to the work tasked to the commission regarding affordable housing.

Councilor Guerlain asked Bloch why he believed the progress was slow. Bloch replied that he believed that the professional staff allowed themselves to be mired in technical details, and were focused on inadequate solutions, such as infill housing.

Councilor Golonka spoke bluntly about his frustration at press reports that major policy discussions were being brought before the public without first being discussed with the council. Bloch spoke equally directly in agreeing and empathizing with Golonka, repeating his view that the committee was solid, but that city staff was problematic (noting that he had strong respect for City Manager Fraser).

Councilor Golonka moved the John Bloch be reappointed to the Planning Commission. Councilor Weiss seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:45.

13-102. The Mayor noted there were seven applicants for seven spots on the Pedestrian Committee. Councilor Guerlain moved that John Snell, Michael Philbrick, Anne Ferguson, James McQueston, Harris Webster, Christian Andresen and Eve Jacobs-Carnahan be appointed to the Pedestrian Committee. Councilor Hooper seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:46.

13-103. In regards to the new Parking Committee, the Mayor noted, in this case, that there were more candidates than available spots. He reviewed the designated appointment slots, and indicated there were 4 applicants for the two citizen-at-large positions.

Richard Sheir addressed the Council, explaining his interest, and noting that he provided the impetus to creating the committee. Sheir focused on residential parking issues and indicated he would participate enthusiastically and completely.

Councilor Guerlain moved that the Council enter executive session to discuss the Parking Committee appointment. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded the motion, which passed unanimously at 6:49PM.

Councilor Watson arrived at 6:53 and joined the Council in executive session.

At 6:58PM Councilor Guerlain moved that the Council return to open session. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Councilor Guerlain moved that Brian Cain, Richard Sheir, Thom Wood, Nolan Langwell, Diane Decoteau, Michael Clasen, and Andrew Brewer be appointed to the Parking Committee. Councilor Hooper seconded the motion, which carried unanimously without further discussion at 6:59.

Mayor Hollar noted that the GMTA had offered to provide staff support to the Parking Committee.

13-104. Councilor Weiss moved that John Snell be appointed to the tree board, with a direction to staff to readvertise for the remaining position. Councilor Hooper seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 7:00 PM.

13-105. The Mayor opened the second public hearing for a proposed amendment to the City's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 10, Motor Vehicles and Traffic, Article VII. Parking and Parking Meter Zones, Sec. 10-716. PARKING PROHIBITED adding the following:

(o) Hubbard Street. Parking is hereby prohibited on the east side of Hubbard Street from East State Street to Marvin Street, and on the west side of Hubbard Street from the Park Avenue curb line southerly for a distance of 50 feet; and also on the westerly side for a distance of one hundred seventy-eight (178) feet northerly from the curb line intersection with East State Street, said point being sixty-six (66) feet northerly of the driveway to number 58 East State Street. Parking is also prohibited on the easterly side of Hubbard Street from its curb line intersection with Barre Street northerly for a distance of fifty (50) feet; and beginning at a point located two hundred twenty (220) feet from the curb line intersection of Barre Street and extending in a northeasterly direction for a distance of two hundred eighty (280) feet;

and parking is prohibited on the westerly side of Hubbard Street from its curb line intersection with Barre Street northerly for a distance of ninety (90) feet; and on the westerly side from the curb line intersection of East State Street southerly for a distance of thirty-three feet (33').

When there was no public comment, the City Manager followed up on Councilor Guerlain's question from the previous meeting as to whether or not additional spaces could be added on lower East State Street (at the previous meeting, Chief Facos had suggested that there may be width issues prohibiting new spaces). Guerlain indicated he had paced out the width himself, and it was consistent with the rest of the street.

Councilor Guerlain moved approval of the ordinance change, and was seconded by Councilor Edgerly Walsh. The motion passed unanimously at 7:02.

- 13-106. Councilor Golonka explained why he and Councilor Weiss preferred to postpone the second public hearing (for a proposed amendment to the City's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 4, Building Regulations, Article 11, Codes - §201-4. AMENDMENTS relating to fire prevention) to a later date so there could be a more comprehensive discussion on the ordinance.

Councilor Golonka moved to table the second public hearing until May 8. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 7:04.

- 13-107. Gwen Hallsmith and Kevin Casey of the city Planning and Development Department were joined at the table before the Council by Sam Anderson (Executive Director of the Central Vermont Community Development Center) and Darren Winham, who has consulted on creating local development corporations (LDCs) in Barre and Waterbury. Anderson and Winham were present to promote and explain the potential benefits to the city of a similar LDC model for economic development, and its associated strategic plan and relationship to the Central Vermont Community Development Center.

Councilor Edgerly Walsh asked for details about the Waterbury association, noting that she works in Waterbury.

Councilor Hooper asked about the LDC's budgets under the model. Winham explained that there was a salary for a professional employee, that there could be money for marketing, and expenses (he noted that in Barre they had consistently come in under budget).

Councilor Weiss asked about the professional working definition of "economic development." Winham replied that, to him, it meant increasing the grand list, creating jobs, and improving the business community. He shared an anecdote illustrating his point.

Anderson added that economic development touches on a myriad of other community issues, and cited her good working relationship with Winham.

Responding to questioning from Hollar and Ederly Walsh, Winham explained that the advantages to outsourcing economic development to such an association (noting that if economic development is undertaken by city staff, a specialist in the field should be hired to run it) are that it can sidestep inherent business/government tensions and cited examples of conflicts during his work with Barre.

Councilor Watson asked to hear from Hallsmith and Casey regarding potential overlaps and synergies (including with Montpelier Alive). Winham explained that Montpelier Alive was a designated-downtown supporting entity which limits its role, but that he would make it a partner in the process.

Hallsmith cited her memo distinguishing community and economic development, noting the department's role as primary community development agent. She noted that, narrowly speaking, the economic development point person in Montpelier had been the Assistant Manager. She did feel, from looking at Randolph's LDC, that there could be duplication of effort and that much of the economic development work such an association would perform could be done in-house, referencing Mr. Casey's experience in the field.

Casey recounted some of his current community development work, noting what is done well in house. He indicated that he would be more than happy to focus on business retention and recruitment, agreeing with Hallsmith that there had been a push for such a focus from staff last fall.

Councilor Weiss suggested that the good economic development that had been done in recent years was not adequately trumpeted and credited, citing a long list of accomplishments.

Councilor Guerlain suggested that Weiss's list of economic development successes were slanted towards public-driven development that doesn't grow the grand list, which he felt should be a priority.

Councilor Guerlain and City Manager Fraser disagreed on the value of the Stone Cutter's Way development in the overall development paradigm, with Fraser casting it as a good example of public-driven development that created private sector opportunities. Guerlain clarified his view to state the opinion that the city hasn't done a strong job in this regard recently. Fraser indicated that the more recent priorities of the Council had been in a different direction.

Councilor Golonka wondered why Montpelier was often overlooked by commercial developers. Winham responded that he was in no way critical of Montpelier's efforts, noting that Montpelier, Barre and Waterbury were too distinctive to be in true competition for development. Anderson agreed that the discussion was about what additional could be done, rather than what is being done wrong.

Hallsmith explained what made Montpelier unique from the surrounding communities, and why housing has been focused on as a priority rather than job creation.

At Councilor Edgerly Walsh's questioning, Anderson noted there were funds that an external body could leverage that the city couldn't, and that an LDC would be a connective partner between her organization and the local economic development process. Winham highlighted the advantages of bringing in a diverse board with different expertise into the process formally.

Councilor Guerlain felt that Hallsmith's comments about a city job surplus (as measured against the housing supply) and the associated need for additional housing, supported an argument to externalize the economic development process through an LDC, as he believed her perspective was suggestive of a public-bound bias in city hall.

Councilor Weiss dismissed much of the rhetoric of development, expressing the opinion that many of the visitors to the city being drawn in by colleges, the Mountaineers, and the like were not being reached out to.

Winham said he believed that Montpelier Alive was doing a good job promoting the city. Councilor Weiss disagreed.

At Councilor Weiss's questioning, Winham suggested that a \$45-65,000 salary commitment would support an LDC director. He noted that, in his experience, the relationship between LDCs and city departments were not adversarial.

City Manager Fraser asked about the processes for choosing the boards in LDCs in other towns. Winham explained that there were different approaches, and that he had vetted applicants as an outside entity.

Fraser also asked about funding sources in Barre, and whether or not the LDCs take the leads in development projects or simply support them. He also asked about metrics of success. Winham explained the reporting process he had used, as well as noting the close confidential working relationship required with City Managers. Anderson noted the board's strict conflict of interest and confidentiality agreements.

Hallsmith asked how organizations that serve multiple municipalities work, so that one municipality doesn't inadvertently harm another one. Anderson touched on the CVDCs process, while Hallsmith was specifically interested in the process in Cabot.

13-108. The Council decided to hold off on the goals discussion. A five minute break was called for by the mayor. The Council resumed at 8:17 PM.

13-100. Consent agenda item 3c was taken from the table. Councilor Guerlain wondered why potential customers needed help or incentives to connect. Fraser explained

this was paperwork for a decision the Council made last year, explaining that it was simply a way to make it easier for some customers to make the transition.

Councilor Weiss asked about the \$50k the city had to put up for the reserve. City Manager Fraser explained it was part of a standard loss reserve process. Guerlain asked about options in the event of a loss.

Golonka asked about reconciling the money and whether it could be charged to the project. Fraser indicated he had already designated it to the project.

On item d, Councilor Edgerly Walsh wanted clarification as to whether it was an emergency expenditure that was distinct from the normal construction budget. Fraser indicated it was.

On item 3e – Weiss asked about Montpelier Alive’s July 4<sup>th</sup> contingencies if district heat construction caused problems. Fraser indicated there wasn’t a specific plan, but that there shouldn’t be a conflict.

On item f2 – Weiss asked for clarification on the Skinny Pancake request. Councilor Edgerly Walsh noted that it was a broad time request that exceeded their normal business hours. Weiss was concerned that it set a bad example and urged the Council not to grant the freedom to serve alcoholic beverages over such a timeframe.

Councilor Guerlain moved approval of all outstanding consent agenda items. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded. The motion passed 5-0 at 8:26, with Councilor Weiss abstaining.

13-109. Guerlain asked that the park committee minutes designate participants by more than just first names. He also asked whether Carr Lot funds were threatened by the federal “sequester.” Hollar indicated that a contract had to be in place by September or the money would be forfeit.

Guerlain noted that a constituent reported to him that the recent sewage spill was characterized very differently on WCAX than in the Bridge. He asked for absolute numbers. Fraser indicated he could supply the numbers, and noted that the WCAX reported numbers came from an advocacy group, and that the city disputed their estimates. He detailed the process of discovering and responding to the spill.

Councilor Guerlain asked that more detailed reporting on incidents like this arrive to councilors more quickly. Councilor Golonka asked whether the city could face enforcement action from the state over the spill (Fraser indicated he expected none).

Councilor Watson asked how much the city typically spends on environmental fines. Fraser replied that it was very little, only citing one failure to report over a flow issue that amounted to a \$17,000 fine.

Councilor Edgerly Walsh asked for more information on the frequency of reportable incidents. She also noted the “weathered” bike art near the Co-op and wondered it should be addressed.

- 13-110. Mayor Hollar recounted the AmeriCorps/Vista event he attended recently and spoke positively of the organization. He also spoke about plans for district heat groundbreaking. Assistant City Manager Jessie Baker suggested next Thursday.

The Council settled on the following time and date for its goals session: May 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm (to be followed by the business meeting at 7:00). Councilor Weiss wondered why the discussion needed to be undertaken at all. The Mayor responded that it was needed to bring the two new Councilors into the process.

- 13-112. City Manager Fraser recognized the good work of the city dispatchers

Assistant City Manager Jessie Baker briefed the Council on the upcoming kickoff of district heat construction, including the media tools which will be deployed to keep the public informed as the project progresses, as well as to capture public feedback.

Councilor Edgerly Walsh asked if Montpelier Alive would be providing a related report on downtown vibrancy during the project. Fraser replied that they could, and detailed the expected impacts on pedestrian travel.

Fraser indicated that he didn’t want to open a whole conversation, but that he didn’t agree with the negative review of city staff that the council received from John Bloch at the outset of the meeting. He offered to provide details. Mayor Hollar indicated that Councilor Golonka’s concern expressed to Bloch had also been communicated by him to the committee chair.

The Assistant City Manager also gave a brief update on the bike path process.

At 8:50 PM, Councilor Weiss moved that the Council go into executive session, consistent with state law (and include the City Manager and Assistant Manager) for the purpose of discussing the Carr Lot acquisition. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

At 9:41 PM, Councilor Weiss moved that the council return to open session and adjourn. Councilor Hooper seconded. The motion passed unanimously.