

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting  
August 14, 2013  
Montpelier City Hall Council Chambers**

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

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Mayor Hollar called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

- 13-192. Jed Guertin approached the Council, with a request that the body consider different approaches to zoning in the lower portion of Sabin's Pasture than those that have been proposed. He urged the council to open up a public dialogue on the matter.
- 13-193. In discussing the content of the consent agenda, Councilor Watson encouraged consideration of moving contracts reflecting pre-approved expenditures in the budget process, out of ongoing council deliberations, suggesting that doing so was needlessly redundant. Councilor Golonka expressed discomfort at changing the process, noting that it was part of the post-Scott Construction incident procedures. The Mayor suggested the subject be added as an agenda item in a future meeting.
- Councilor Jessica Edgerly Walsh made a motion to approve the consent agenda without items e, f, j, and k, as per Councilor Weiss's request. The motion was seconded by Councilor Anne Watson, and approved unanimously at 6:36 PM.
- 13-194. Councilor Thierry Guerlain moved the council reappoint Beth Boutin to a 3-year term to Montpelier's Community Fund Board. Seconded by Councilor Watson, and approved unanimously at 6:37.
- 13-195. Chief Gowans explained the proposed ambulance rate changes to the Council.
- Councilor Weiss asked the Chief about the related revenue figures. Chief Gowans explained the new billing system, and he and the City Manager detailed the impact of Medicare and Medicaid and how they impact the projections. Councilor Golonka asked about comparable rates in other towns. Councilor Guerlain also asked for details on some of the rate increases.
- 13-196. In response to the council's request from the prior meeting, City Clerk John Odum provided the current license rates and what ordinance amendments would be required to empower the council to approve changes to those rates directly. Councilor Golonka indicated he wanted a detailed breakdown of licenses issued, revenue captured, and staff time attached. Councilor Guerlain questioned the validity of the underlying reasoning behind municipal business licenses. The City Clerk defended the issuance of licenses as a legitimate responsibility of municipal government.
- 13-197. Councilor Weiss introduced Charter Revision Committee representatives Liz Dodge, Paige Guertin, Jonathan Williams and Nancy Sherman. Ms. Sherman narrated a power point presentation that explained the work of the committee.

Councilor Golonka had follow up questions about proposed changes from the school board. The general sense was that the bodies should coordinate.

There was a brief discussion of the process in the legislature of approving charter changes.

The mayor suggested taking time to consider the process of moving forward.

The advantages and disadvantages of calling for a special city meeting in November to approve the charter changes (as opposed to putting it on the regular March annual city meeting ballot) were discussed. The sense of the council was that March was preferable.

13-193. The Council returned to the items Councilor Weiss requested be pulled from the consent agenda. He first voiced concerns about item e, questioning whether or not it was a worthy expenditure.

Phayvanh Luekhamhan of Montpelier Alive explained the project and its revenue sources in response to Councilor Weiss. In response to Councilor Guerlain's inquiry, Councilor Edgerly Walsh explained that the funding would come from the Downtown Improvement District monies.

Kevin Casey further characterized the committee process as in its early stages, and that marketing decisions had yet to be made.

Councilor Golonka had broader questions about the DID expenditures. A discussion of the committee's priorities in its first two meetings followed.

The time sensitivity of the item f funding request was discussed.

Councilor Weiss moved to table item f until such time as the DID committee presents a full work plan and budget. Councilor Guerlain seconded.

The mayor felt that the use of a tabling motion to pre-empt or cut off discussion was inappropriate. There was a discussion on protocols for tabling motions.

At 8:05 PM, the council voted 3-3 on the motion to table (Councilors Golonka, Weiss and Guerlain in favor, and Hooper, Edgerly Walsh and Watson opposed). The mayor voted nay and the measure was defeated.

Councilors Edgerly Walsh and Guerlain engaged in a back-and-forth about the merits of authorizing an expenditure of the approved DID money for holiday lights immediately.

Luekhamhan spoke to the relationship between the purchase of new lights and the repair of the current "peace dove" decoration, and explained (in response to concerns expressed by Councilors Weiss and Golonka which echoed Councilor Guerlain's comments) that Montpelier Alive and city staff are ultimately beholden to the committee, which has the power to entertain any proposals. Casey noted that the committee sees the fund as distinct/separate from Montpelier Alive.

After some discussion of the specific amounts, as well as a timeline for a report from the DID committee, Councilor Hooper moved the council allocate \$3000 for item e, as well as approve \$5000 for holiday decorations, with the requirement that the DID committee present a full budget plan to the council no later than September 25th. Councilor Watson seconded. The motion carried 5-1 at 8:18PM, with Councilor Golonka opposed.

Councilor Weiss indicated he did not mean to pull j, and rather wanted to pull i.

Regarding item i, Councilor Weiss questioned the point of the proclamation. Councilor Golonka wondered how the item ended up on the consent agenda. The mayor also felt, without disagreement from the council, that item j was passed in the previous approval of the consent agenda, despite the uncertainty.

Councilor Weiss asked for an explanation of item k. Assistant City Manager Jessie Baker explained what the item would do.

A motion to approve item k was presented by Councilor Golonka, and seconded by Councilor Guerlain. The motion carried 5-1 (with Councilor Weiss voting nay) at 8:23 PM.

A motion to approve item l was made Councilor Hooper and seconded by Councilor Watson. The motion was defeated in a 3-3 vote at 8:28 PM (Councilor Hooper, Guerlain and Golonka voting nay and Councilors Edgerly Walsh, Weiss and Watson voting yes), with the mayor voting no.

The meeting went into recess at 8:29 PM. The meeting resumed at 8:31 PM.

13-198. City Manager Fraser framed the discussion on the City Council's Goal to "Balance and control municipal budgeting, taxes and services relative to current population and grand list tax base." Councilor Hooper spoke positively of the budget process the previous year. Finance Director Gallup made herself available for questions.

13-199. City Staff members Gwen Hallsmith, Kevin Casey and Jessie Baker updated the Council on the goals to "Create a hospitable environment for residential growth" and "Maintain an environment that is hospitable for businesses to thrive throughout Montpelier."

Casey discussed upper floor development downtown. At the mayor's questioning, Casey explained the value of having a committee to support the process. He further reviewed other items being worked on, such as the housing trust fund.

Councilor Weiss asked about coordination of development efforts in the region. Councilor Edgerly Walsh asked for more details on a proposed economic development committee.

Hallsmith reviewed work towards improving the permit process, TIF financing, proposals such as infill housing, and other items. Councilor Weiss referenced Jed Guertin's comments at the outset of the meeting, and was hopeful for follow-up discussions.

Hallsmith suggested that a councilor agree to be a liaison to the planning commission, given the unique complexities.

Councilor Golonka voiced the opinion that controversial aspects of the zoning discussion be brought before the council prior to a final proposal.

Councilor Guerlain urged the body to simplify the process as much as possible.

Councilor Edgerly Walsh suggested that the entire zoning process is "policy," and if the council is concerned about policy discussions emerging from the planning committee meetings, there should be a way for it to engage more.

Hallsmith characterized the zoning document as an implementation document, rather than a policy document.

Jed Guertin joined the discussion.

- 13-200. Councilor Hooper relayed concerns about the construction downtown, and Councilor Guerlain added some specific questions from constituents. Assistant City Manager Baker responded and gave background.

Councilor Weiss praised the police department for its efforts when the motorcycles came into town last weekend. He noted Chief Facos was himself directing traffic.

Weiss also noted that on the 30th of September, there would be a key meeting on the regionalization process.

Councilor Golonka reported that people were concerned about the recent rash of break-ins. Golonka also expressed concerns about the idea of a solar tax.

Councilor Watson gave an update on the bike path, and suggested making a Barre Street working group to deal with potential problems that could be on the horizon. She further noted that she had followed up with city staff on the Stonecutter's Way sculpture, and looked forward to it being moved

Councilor Edgerly Walsh indicated she would not be at the next meeting, but will try to come in remotely. She noted that she had asked the City Manager to invite representatives from GMTA to discuss funding for the circulator bus. She also indicated that she had received a post card about the removal of some trees for park construction and the status of a retaining wall, and encouraged the City Manager to include the topic in his next city update for The Bridge.

- 13-201. The mayor reported that he had a meeting regarding closing State Street on some Saturdays, acknowledging Kevin Casey's help. He also reported that he will be meeting with officials from the Department of Liquor Control to discuss parklets. Finally, last week he had a meeting with the EU ambassador. He indicated they had a nice chat.

- 13-202. The City Clerk noted that taxes were due the next day.

- 13-203. The council discussed moving the September 25th meeting.

The City Manager informed the council that the majority of break-ins had been into unlocked homes or vehicles, and he encouraged everyone to lock their cars and homes.

He also noted that neither he nor the Assistant Manager will be available on the September 25th meeting.

Councilor Guerlain moved that the council adjourn the meeting and was, seconded by Councilor Hooper. The motion carried unanimously at 9:31PM.