

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting  
February 13, 2013  
Library, Montpelier High School**

In attendance: City Manager Bill Fraser, City Councilors Andy Hooper, Angela Timpone, Thierry Guerlain, Alan Weiss, Tom Golonka and Anne Watson. City Clerk John Odum acted as Secretary of the Meeting. Mayor John Hollar arrived shortly after the meeting was called to order.

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Councilor Golonka called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

13-042. Mary Harbaugh, candidate for appointment to the Conservation Commission, took a few moments to introduce herself to the Council.

13-043. Councilor Hooper moved approval of the consent agenda. Councilor Weiss seconded. At the request of Councilor Golonka, the motion was amended to remove Item d. The motion passed as amended unanimously at 6:37.

At 6:37 PM, Mayor Hollar joined the meeting as presiding officer.

Kevin Casey briefly explained Item d of the consent agenda. Councilor Golonka moved that it be approved. Councilor Watson seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:41.

13-044. After hearing once again from Mary Harbaugh, Councilor Watson moved that Ms. Harbaugh be appointed to the Conservation Commission. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:42.

13-045. Charter Revision Committee members Nancy Sherman (Chair), Liz Dodge and Page Guertin addressed the Council on the progress of their work. They indicated they expected to have a draft prepared before summer. Sherman referred to the obsolete language in the charter as well as redundancies that the committee is addressing – as well as trying to make the language more colloquial.

Councilor Weiss noted that a bill has been introduced that would allow Montpelier to approve housekeeping changes to its charter without legislative approval. The City Manager offered detail.

13-046. Julie Hendrickson, Bernie Lambek, Eliza Dodd, and Warren Vail of the Montpelier Community Fund Board of Directors updated the Council on the progress of the Board and the new paradigm for “outside agencies” funding from the city, as directed by the Council.

Out of approximately \$133,000 of grant requests, the Board’s report recommended approximately \$108,000 be approved. In response to a question from Councilor Timpone, Lambek reviewed some of the decisions against granting funding requests.

Councilor Watson asked why the group came in \$10,000 under budget. Lambek indicated it was incidental.

Councilor Guerlain asked about the financial arrangements with Lost Nation Theater. The City Manager gave an overview.

Councilor Timpone returned to the question of why the Council chose to give \$10,000 under their budget.

Councilor Hooper asked about the grant to the Capital City Band, which Lambek indicated was not traditionally granted from the arts fund.

In response to a question from Councilor Guerlain, Mr. Lambek noted additional monies beyond the purview of the Board being given to Lost Nation. City Manager Fraser enumerated other general fees and costs that go to outside organizations (such as dues to the VLCT) also not under the board's purview.

Councilor Weiss commended the Board.

Councilor Golonka moved approval of the Board's recommendations. Councilor Hooper seconded. The Mayor commended the Board for its work. Councilor Weiss asked if the motion is approved, if it constituted entering into a contract with the grantees. Councilor Golonka noted they were part of the budget contingent on the Annual Meeting vote.

Councilor Watson asked about the relationship with Montpelier Alive. Fraser indicated they do get separate funding (\$20,000). Weiss noted the room and facilities they get in City Hall as well.

The motion passed unanimously at 7:07 PM.

- 13-047. Councilor Timpone noted that representatives from Vermont State Employees Association (VSEA) were on hand to address the Council, highlighting a 600 signature request from rank and file regarding parking. Kristin Warner and Sheila Manchester Conniff spoke about the struggles of state employees to park – especially in light of the additional burdens arising from state employees previously based in Waterbury prior to Tropical Storm Irene. Warner cited a report indicating a net deficiency of 290 spaces for state employees, and reviewed the recent history of the union's efforts towards a parking garage. A Town Hall meeting on Tuesday March 12 from 12-1 (location undetermined) to discuss the problem was announced, and the Council was invited. Warner indicated that VSEA would also like to stay involved as the Council deliberates on the issue.

Councilor Guerlain asked for (and received) clarification in the use of the word "equitable" in the presenters' language.

Councilor Golonka asked about the union's thoughts on locating a parking garage. Warner indicated the discussions were not to that point yet.

Police Chief Facos asked for the impact and implications of parking growth at National Life. Warner indicated that the changes – as well as the influx of additional ANR employees sited there – were accounted for in the union's requests.

Councilor Guerlain questioned to what extent a state employees parking garage would and could be shared.

Councilor Watson related that she has heard quite a bit about parking problems for renters. She also recommended the union bear in mind the circulator bus route when considering solutions.

Chief Facos gave a brief presentation on administrative changes to parking fees and enforcement. He also paid particular attention to parking challenges at Union Elementary. Councilors Timpone and Weiss disagreed somewhat on that nature of the challenges at Union.

Councilor Guerlain spoke positively about the potential of a parking garage next to the pavilion, as well as putting a garage on the Union elementary playground and relocating the playground to the top of the parking structure.

Mayor Hollar noted that the problem with building such a parking structure is the cost, which he felt would be prohibitive.

Councilor Watson wanted to be sure that public transportation and alternatives be a part of the mix. Councilor Guerlain felt strongly that promoting carpooling and public transportation was ineffective. Conniff suggested that people could be further incentivized.

Richard Sheir testified to the continued concerns among downtown business owners about parking. He contextualized the need against the proposed business improvement district; specifically, if the program is successful, the parking crunch will increase. He suggested there are solutions short of a parking garage which could improve the situation, such as signage directing drivers to often-unfilled spaces behind Capitol Plaza. He was very supportive of a parking committee.

City Manager Fraser suggested, based on observations of other communities, that a standing parking committee with representation from different "stakeholder groups," be created, rather than an ad hoc committee tasked with a specific project. Chief Facos indicated his enthusiasm for such a committee as well.

Councilor Weiss suggested a 5-7 member core "executive committee" with an advisory committee attached. The Mayor and Councilor Timpone was concerned that would be unwieldy.

A discussion of identifying groups of interest for committee representation interest groups began. Councilor Golonka suggested that was getting ahead of the process.

Councilor Weiss asked that the previous parking committee be invited to the next meeting to advise the Council before making a committee.

Councilor Timpone moved that the Council create a standing parking committee comprised of representation from VSEA, BGS, Montpelier business, Union school, two at large members (possibly from Terrace street and Loomis street), and a city council member – and instruct the City Manager to draft a charge to the committee. Councilor Guerlain seconded.

Councilor Watson moved that the motion be amended to provide for up to three at-large members. The motion to amend died for lack of a second.

The motion passed 5-1 at 8:05 PM, with Councilor Weiss voting nay.

13-048. Councilor Guerlain asked about a bear sculpture which his house was flyered on. He asked how some of these larger art projects are approved. Mayor Hollar indicated it was the Parks Commission. Nat Frothingham provided details. City Manager Fraser indicated that the bicycle sculptures were approved by the Council. Councilor Guerlain wondered whether the Council should consider removing some of the art projects, such as the bike sculptures, that are showing signs of age. With the Council's blessing, Councilor Guerlain will consult with the City Manager on the issue.

Councilor Guerlain wanted to encourage phoned in, and texted/emailed questions, and that names and addresses should be included. Councilor Guerlain also promoted next Tuesday's public forum on the budget. He further asked for a comprehensive update on District Heat for the next meeting.

Guerlain noted the exchange of letters on Berlin's water system appearing in the newspaper – particularly praising Fraser's letter. Guerlain indicated he may put the possible sale of the land around Berlin Pond on the next agenda.

Councilor Weiss indicated he was very disappointed in the letter the City Manager put in the paper, feeling it was inappropriate.

Councilor Golonka appreciated Fraser's letter, but objected to inaccuracies in the letter from Mr. Willard of Berlin.

Councilor Watson reported that the Energy Advisory Committee has openings, and that interested individuals will attend the next meeting. She further reported that there was to be an Energy Fair March 4<sup>th</sup> at National Life.

Councilor Timpone spoke appreciatively of City Manger Fraser's letter.

- 13-049. Mayor Hollar also supported the City Manager's letter, but shared his concern and frustration with the letter that was printed in response to it. He noted that the offer Montpelier had made to Berlin was intended as an opening of discussions, and indicated his frustration with the feedback since from Berlin officials suggesting Montpelier was unreasonable and intransigent.
- 13-050 The City Clerk reported that Nancy Sherman has been appointed to the position of Justice of the Peace by the Governor. He also reviewed plans to accommodate mobility-challenged voters on Town Meeting Day.
- 13-051. The City Manager updated the Council on the progress of elevator repairs, which could hopefully be accomplished in 2-3 weeks. Until then, Council meetings would take place in the high school (which is accessible). He also reviewed the approach to his letter regarding Berlin.

Mayor Hollar reviewed the items to be covered in executive session. He reported that the state continues to insist that the city contribute to help close the projected district heat cost overruns, but that the city position is that it's the state's responsibility. The Mayor indicated that the city has, as per the good faith requirement of the contract, offered funding from future revenues. Speaking personally, the Mayor indicated he would not support moving any additional upfront costs to the taxpayer. He noted that even with the current overruns, even the state's end of the system is expected to run a financial surplus.

The Mayor also indicated that the Firefighters Union have filed suit over the release of certain emails that the Mayor and the City Manager have concluded are legally protected from disclosure.

Finally, a discussion of the city manager evaluation will begin.

Councilor Weiss moved that the Council enter two consecutive executive sessions; one on the first 2 items, and a second without the City Manager on the third. Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 8:32 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32.