

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting
October 10, 2012
City Council Chambers, Montpelier City Hall**

In attendance: Mayor John Hollar (presiding), City Councilors Andy Hooper, Thierry Guerlain, Alan Weiss, Angela Timpone (arrived late), Anne Watson, and Tom Golonka. City Clerk John Odum acted as Secretary of the Meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Hollar at 6:30. Councilor Timpone and City Manager Fraser were not present.

- 12-246. At 6:32, Deborah Lamb of C-Span addressed the Council, briefing them and the audience on C-Span3's recent filming for its special weekend profile on Montpelier. She named some of the citizens she had worked with and expressed her gratitude to the city.
- 12-247. Council Weiss moved the Consent Agenda be approved, with the addition of three Liquor License approvals and absent the approval for the purchase of a new dump truck (removed at the request of Councilor Golonka) and the minutes from the previous meeting. Councilor Hooper seconded. At 6:37, the motion passed unanimously.
- 12-248. The Council took up the vacancy on the Montpelier Housing Authority Board. Member Christine Zern's term is expiring, and she addressed the Council asking for reappointment. Councilor Golonka asked how long Zern had served and invited her to comment on the pros and cons of having members serve for multiple terms. Zern believed it was positive for this Board.
- At 6:42, Councilor Timpone joined the meeting.
- Warren Vail also spoke to the Council to express his interest in the appointment. He indicated he was interested out of a sense of civic duty. The Mayor indicated the Council would make its decision in executive session at the end of the meeting.
- 12-249. Megan Wingate, who has served as the youth representative on the Planning and the Conservation Commissions, shared her desire to stay involved. Councilor Watson moved her reappointment to the Conservation Commission. Councilor Guerlain seconded, the motion passed unanimously at 6:46.
- Councilor Guerlain moved the Council approve Thomas Nowlan as a youth member of the city Planning Commission. Councilor Watson seconded. The motion was unanimously approved at 6:47.
- 12-251. John Snell, co-chair of tree board along with Sarah Hoffmeyer, addressed the Council with a status report. He acknowledged the volunteers who were present, and noted there would soon be candidates for the two open Board positions. He reviewed the work and responsibilities, as well as

broader goals, of the Board, and praised Tree Warden Geoff Beyer, with whom Snell often works closely. Snell shared his desire to plant 100 new trees in the next couple years, and reviewed the preparations for the likely arrival of the emerald ash beetle to the area. He referenced his working in partnership with the Public Works Department, detailed volunteer activities, and indicated he was talking to possible new Board members.

- 12-252. After an introduction by the Mayor, Carl Johnson (the Budget Committee Chair) presented the committee's report at 6:58, noting that the committee dissolved itself at the close of its last meeting. He identified other budget committee members present (Justin Turcotte, Rob Kasow, Phil Dodd, Jean Olson, Harris Webster, Bob Gross, David Beatty, Toni Hartrich, Sue Zeller, Jeffrey Francis, Nolan Langwell, Mike Barranco, and Larry Myers.) Johnson noted that the committee worked through ten subcommittees to generate its report.

Councilor Guerlain asked for clarification on some of the terms used in the public safety portion of the report. At the Mayor's request, Gross explained why the group focused on the Fire Department rather than the Police Department (which was largely addressed already in the Matrix report). Councilor Guerlain engaged the group on whether or not there were more savings and efficiencies to be found in public safety.

Francis noted that the City is well-served by its public safety operations, but there can always be more savings - and that managers should be trained to identify them. Francis also praised the quality of the committee's work.

Councilor Weiss wondered about Montpelier's debt burden per capita as compared to other municipalities. Hatrick responded that the city was on the high side, but that comparisons were difficult. Kasow added that he absolutely believed the debt was high, and that the city was on course to build a level of indebtedness beyond the council's policy. Councilor Guerlain wondered if other municipalities have debt payment years where payments apply only to the debt service, rather than the principle. The committee indicated they had not examined that question. A discussion of the nature of bonds followed.

Councilor Guerlain expressed concern that the public may not be sufficiently prioritizing infrastructure needs.

Councilor Golonka expressed disappointment that the report did not specifically address equipment budgets, which concern him.

The Mayor engaged several on the committee about the organizational structure in regards to the Recreation Department (whether it should remain under the school system, whether it should be brought into the city and managed with the Senior Center, what other cities have done, etc.).

Several members of the committee indicated they would remain available to work with the Council, despite the recent dissolution of the committee. Councilors Watson and Golonka praised the committee.

Councilor Guerlain probed the committee on why the planning and development budget had increased 36% in recent years, but their payroll hadn't. The committee had no firm answer, and Guerlain expanded his line of questioning to ask whether the department had become too expansive in its activities. Olson cited the Matrix report's concerns about planning department core functions, and its recommendation that core functions be defined. Mayor Hollar expressed concerns that there could be mission conflicts within the department. Guerlain also questioned the cost efficiency of the department's planning software.

Councilor Weiss moved that the City Council receive the report with its commendation to the committee. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 7:55.

- 12-253. The Council took a brief recess before reconvening at 8:04, when Paul Carnahan provided an update on the City Hall sign project. He reported on the reasoning behind the Design Review Committee's rejection of the sign (objections to the color, the need to drill into the building face, and concerns that the sign was contrary to the original intent behind the building design). He presented a second proposal for a sign in the area currently used by Lost Nation Theater for its banners. Councilors generally expressed preference for the rejected proposal.

Councilors Guerlain and Timpone expressed their desire that the City Hall have a sign, and had anecdotal evidence that the public's identification of the building as the City Hall was lacking, and problematic. Guerlain wondered about the possibility of affixing letters with adhesive, rather than drilling.

Councilor Golonka quoted from ordinances he indicated gave the Council sole authority over identification signage, and suggested the Council proceed with the sign regardless of the design review vote. Mayor Hollar suggested that members of the committee be invited in to explain their decision before the Council takes further action.

Councilor Golonka moved that the city move forward with the proposal over the objections of the Design Review Committee. Councilor Weiss seconded. During the discussion, Councilor Guerlain indicated the city should go forward with an adhesive option. At 8:20, the motion was approved 5-0, with Councilor Watson abstaining.

- 12-254. The Council was addressed by members of the Montpelier Community Fund Board, who had modifications to their proposed procedures. Bernie Lambek passed out a final edit which differed from the one provided to the Council before the meeting. The new proposals included absorbing all the arts grant funding into the fund process. Lambek responded to Councilor Golonka that the Fund Board would not return to the Council

with its specific application form. The Mayor felt that requiring Council approval on the application form would be cumbersome, but asked that the Board run the final form by the Council when it was available.

Councilor Weiss asked about the Board's staffing needs and supervision. The Mayor indicated there would be staff support through the City Manager's office, and that the Board would report directly to the Council.

Councilor Hooper moved that the Council approved the revised guidelines, and specify that \$10,000 of the fund be set aside for arts grants. Councilor Golonka seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 8:35.

- 12-255. The final disposition of the Hebert Road transmitter was discussed, with residents Lara Merchant and Jim Hutton returning before the Council. Councilor Golonka moved the issue be taken off the table, with Councilor Timpone seconding. The motion passed unanimously at 8:38.

Councilor Golonka reviewed the history of the issue and the work of the Board subcommittee put together to address it. He felt the City had done what they could to mitigate the issue, and repeated his preference that the neighborhood reference work out a cost share with the city to cover a full transition to a hardwired warning system (which the resident indicated was still their desired outcome). The Mayor described the issue as a difficult one.

Councilor Guerlain suggested that if the Council acceded to the neighborhoods request, it would be comparable to demanding that police stop using radios and that all cell phones be banned from schools. He was concerned about the political message a decision to replace the system would send in regards to radio frequencies and claims of their effect on human health which he believed ran contrary to science. Councilor Timpone suggested it was not an issue of science, but of making accommodations for residents at their request. Councilor Weiss suggested it was a negligible expenditure to replace the system as the residents requested, and that not every expenditure of the city has to serve every citizen.

Councilors Timpone, Weiss and Golonka discussed how a motion to replace the system could be worded that would not be used as political fodder by activists working to limit radio frequency radiation for health reasons. Councilor Guerlain and Mayor Hollar suggested there was no adequate wording.

Daniel Stein of Plainfield (the ORCA technician, who indicated his views were his alone, and did not reflect the views of ORCA), said that a decision to replace the system at the citizens' request should be a point of pride. He expressed concern about the health effects as presented by the citizens.

Councilor Weiss moved that the Council "approve the expenditure of \$5000 to hardwire the instrument on Hebert Road." Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed 4-1 at 9:14, with Councilors Weiss, Timpone, Golonka and Watson voting aye, Councilor Guerlain voting nay, and Councilor Hooper abstaining.

- 12-248. Councilor Guerlain moved that the Council go into executive session to discuss the Housing Review Board appointment. Councilor Watson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously at 9:15.

At 9:18, Councilor Hooper moved that the Council return to open session. Councilor Watson seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 9:18.

Councilor Hooper moved that Christine Zern be reappointed to the Housing Review Board. Councilor Timpone seconded the motion, which passed unanimously at 9:19.

- 12-247.c. The Council returned to the question, originally on the consent agenda, as to whether to approve the purchase of a dump truck. Councilor Golonka indicated he had pulled the item - and intended to vote nay - in an effort to force a discussion on escalating equipment purchases that he felt had not received adequate attention. Todd Law indicated that the Public Works Department had provided the Council with a plan in the past, but Golonka felt his action would incentivize a more thorough accounting and discussion within the Council.

Councilor Hooper moved the Council approve the truck purchase. Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed 5-1, with Councilor Golonka voting nay.

- 12-256. Councilor Weiss reported on the open house at the Community College of Vermont and spoke highly of the new location. He praised the City for supporting several diverse colleges. He also reminded Councilors to provide him with recommendations for the Charter Review Committee to act on.

Councilor Watson reported that the Energy Committee would like to have an energy fair before town meeting day. She also indicated there would be a state weatherization challenge which would not cost the City, but would mean weatherization crews on site.

Councilor Golonka indicated he would not make the upcoming regional services meeting, and expressed concern about the direction the group was moving. Councilor Weiss assured him that he would attend, and reviewed the challenge faced by the group. Councilor Timpone suggested a fuller discussion of the matter be a future agenda item (the Mayor concurred). Councilor Golonka added that the City should promote the regionalization of emergency dispatch functions and briefly touched on the challenges to creating a fair system. The Mayor agreed that it could be pursued on behalf of the Council.

Mayor Hollar indicated he would like to spend time next meeting creating an overall budget target and clarifying budgetary priorities. He asked Councilors to do the necessary work before then to insure the matter can be discussed comprehensively and authoritatively, as he intends to do. Councilor Timpone suggested individual councilors email the entire group when they receive answers to their questions to maximize efficiency.

The Mayor related his experience at the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Meeting. He noted a motion he presented (which passed) that removed what he perceived as disincentivizing language for renewable energy projects from a proposed VLCT policy motion.

Hollar announced a November 7th, 7:00-9:00 “bike summit” (to discuss the promotion of Montpelier as a location for biking enthusiasts) would be held at Noble Hall. He also had breakfast with the Irish ambassador recently.

The Mayor echoed Councilor Weiss’s praise of the Community College of Vermont’s open house.

Finally, Mayor Hollar passed on an announcement from Ed Larson of the Vermont Granite Association that a public meeting about how to move forward on the Granite Museum was to be held the following evening.

Councilor Guerlain moved for adjournment, and was seconded by Councilor Timpone. The motion carried unanimously at 9:39. Guerlain seconded.