

Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting
September 11, 2013
Montpelier City Hall Council Chambers

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

Mayor Hollar called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

- 13-216. Nancy Sherman rose with other members of the charter revision committee (Page Guertin, Liz Dodge, Jonathan Williams) to address the council on their work. Sherman noted that the committee had completed its charge. Sherman offered the committee's help in crafting a methodical approach for the council to review the recommendations, in order to meet the deadlines of the March City Meeting ballot. She acknowledged others who helped in the process.

Councilor Guerlain relayed a letter of complaint from an unnamed constituent, frustrated at the lack of details in the posted police log. Councilor Guerlain indicated he followed up with the constituent, who indicated that, when he took his complaint to the Times Argus, he was told that the police were not forthcoming with full information. He wanted details on crime in the city and what was being done. The mayor added that an update from the police chief would be appropriate for next week's meeting.

- 13-217. Councilor Edgerly Walsh moved approval of the consent agenda, Councilor Golonka seconded. The motion was amended to pull Item c at Councilor Watson's request. The measure was approved unanimously at 6:40.

- 13-218. At 6:41, the mayor reconvened the Public Hearing that City Council began on June 5, 2013, "to hear testimony and consider the necessity, and possible compensation to be paid, for acquiring lands and rights in land for public purposes, namely a Multi-modal Transportation Center, pursuant to 24 V.S.A., §2801 et seq." City Manager Fraser approached the council as a witness for the public hearing, in regards to the issue of contamination at the Carr Lot site. He entered his report as exhibit G, and the Mayor concurred with the witness that he was still under oath, given that the meeting had been in recess only. Fraser reviewed the report.

Councilor Hooper arrived at 6:43.

Alan Carr, property owner, presented a recorded document stating that the lot was not a hazard.

The mayor closed the hearing at 6:45.

- 13-219. Applicants for the position of alternate to the Development Review Board addressed the council. Michael Sherman spoke first, summarizing his history of civic involvement over many years in the city. He was followed by John Fox, who (as a relatively new city resident) focused on his desire to get involved in the community, and related his history

of, and approach to ,community action in previous places he'd lived. Councilor Weiss asked Mr. Fox what he felt the most important function of the DRB was. Mr. Fox touched on his general philosophy, and placed it in context with a proposal relating to Vermont College.

Kate McCarthy then approached the council to present her perspective on the town as a relatively new resident, and suggested she would be a good fit (as a professional/credentialed planner) for the complexities that face the body.

Councilor Watson moved the council enter into executive session to discuss the appointment. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:57.

Councilor Watson moved the council come out of executive session, Councilor Golonka seconded. The motion carried unanimously at 6:59.

Councilor Guerlain moved that Kate McCarthy and Michael Sherman be appointed alternates to the Design Review Board. Councilor Weiss seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 7:00.

13-220. Tawnya Kristen and Meredith Burkett from the Green Mountain Transit Agency approached the council to give an update on the circulator bus route.

Councilors Watson and Golonka had questions about the long-term expectations and stability of funding for the route. Councilor Edgerly Walsh asked for confirmation that, under current ridership rates, the funding should remain consistent, before also asking about route deviation requests and how they are handled.

Nancy Sherman rose to recognize Harris Webster and Marilyn Mode who had worked with GMTA. Harris Webster then rose, representing VT Interfaith Action, to speak about the importance of the circulator bus to that group, and noted the work they had done to support it. Ms. Mode followed Mr. Webster to the microphone and also spoke of the importance of the circulator to many, especially to many area seniors.

13-221. Julie Hendrickson approached the council on behalf of the Montpelier Community Fund to request a \$118,000 grants budget. She reviewed the previous year's allocation, and indicated the body would like to move the application deadline to November 15.

Councilor Hooper questioned the proper way to approve the request, given that it would attach to the next year's budget, which had not been discussed yet, let alone approved. Councilor Edgerly Walsh asked about carryover, as well as the reporting requirement for grantees.

Councilor Weiss asked about the definition of "arts grants." He also questioned the adequacy of the allotted arts grant monies, as well as what sorts of grants have been made.

Councilor Guerlain, after disclosing for the record that Ms. Hendrickson is his wife, followed up on Councilor Hooper's concerns about approving a request that impacts next year's budget before that budget is crafted. He advocated for provisional language (which the City Manager indicated should be mirrored in grantee notifications, should those notifications come prior to the City Meeting).

Councilor Watson moved the council approve a November 15 deadline for grant applications to the Community Fund and provisionally level-fund the Community Fund's budget, contingent upon a final budget proposal and voter approval. Councilor Watson seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 7:25.

- 13-222. At 7:25, the mayor opened the first public hearing to consider a proposed amendment to the City's Code of Ordinances, Article VII, PARKING AND PARKING METER ZONES, as it relates to parking on East State Street.

Todd Law, (Public Works Director) indicated that two residents had expressed concerns about a blind spot created by the recent additional parking added to State Street, and that these concerns were the basis of the proposed changes.

Councilor Edgerly Walsh expressed frustration that this issue had not been anticipated and addressed by city staff previously. Councilor Guerlain spoke positively of the proposal, and had follow up questions about the implementation schedule.

Mayor Hollar asked an (admittedly) unrelated question about gravel in the bike lane heading out of town towards the pool. The mayor also thanked and commended Mr. Law for some of the recent cleanup along the roads.

Councilor Guerlain asked about the legs of some of the construction signs that were creating hazards on some bike paths. Councilor Weiss commended Mr. Law for the work on Berlin Street.

Councilor Guerlain moved that the council pass the 1st reading of the proposed ordinance change. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded. The motion carried unanimously (and the public hearing was closed) at 7:39.

- 13-223. City Manager Fraser and Planning and Development staffer Kevin Casey explained the request for a statement of support of a new, 6-unit housing development on Cedar Street, from the perspective that it works towards the City Council's goal "to create a hospitable environment for residential growth." Casey and Fraser acknowledged it was an unusual request, and explained that complications arise from the fact that the development is in the historic district.

Councilor Golonka was uncomfortable giving council approval to the project with limited information, and given the potential of antagonizing the Development Review Board. The mayor agreed with Councilor Golonka. No action was taken.

- 13-224. Councilor Golonka indicated that Tina Ruth was still looking for specific direction on the CVDC and Regional Planning Commission merger, and suggested the body discuss it next week. He indicated he was favorably inclined towards the proposal, but had concerns. The mayor agreed, and suggested Ruth come in next week, as well as someone to speak in favor of it.

Councilor Guerlain had a question about front porch forum. He also repeated his concerns about the rash of break-ins.

Councilor Weiss reminded the council of the September 30 meeting of the public safety regionalization project.

13-225. The mayor noted the September 11 anniversary. He also noted that the council would be going onto executive session to discuss Carr Lot negotiations, and explained the reasons for doing so. He reported that Prevent Child Abuse VT was having a walk on Saturday.

Mayor Hollar related his discussion with an independent organization that was qualified to offer recommendations for downtown development and promotion, if it could be coordinated. Finally, he noted the "construction fatigue" on the district heat construction, while adding that the construction process was on schedule.

13-227. The City Manager noted that the deadline on removing the firebox pull boxes was approaching. He also asked for clarification on the Capital Projects Committee membership, before giving an update on district heat construction. He reported that he will be meeting with "mini-system" customers that will be brought into the system before the new state boiler is active.

Councilor Weiss asked about the connection between the system and the state heating plant, wondering why it was proving so challenging. The City Manager indicated it was a matter of timing and logistics.

At 8:24, Councilor Weiss moved the council go into executive session to discuss Carr Lott negotiations (and to include the City Manager and Assistant City Manager).

At 8:52, Councilor Hooper moved that the council leave executive session and adjourn the regular meeting. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

The councilors then proceeded into deliberative session (without the City Manager or Assistant City Manger present).