

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting (draft)**  
**September 12, 2012**  
**City Council Chambers, Montpelier City Hall**

In attendance: Mayor John Hollar (presiding), City Manager Bill Fraser, City Councilors Andy Hooper, Thierry Guerlain, Alan Weiss, Anne Watson, and Tom Golonka (City Councilor Angela Timpone was not present when the meeting was called to order). City Clerk John Odum acted as Secretary of the Meeting.

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At 6:30 PM the Mayor called the meeting to order.

- 12-218. Councilor Weiss introduced Larry Novins, “fairly new” resident of Montpelier, and employee of the Vermont Secretary of State Office of Professional Regulation.
- 12-219. Councilor Weiss moved for approval of the Consent Agenda, Councilor Hooper seconded. The motion carried unanimously and without discussion at 6:32.
- 12-220. The Council discusses filling vacancies for the Design Review Commission (one regular seat open, two alternates). Candidate Liz Pritchett addressed the Council, indicating she had recently moved here and wants to contribute to civic life. She has worked on preservation projects in the city, with area colleges, and with the Central Vermont Community Land Trust.

Candidate Seth Mitchell briefed the Council on his ten years as a project designer at an architectural firm. He indicated he had done consulting work on historic preservation in New York City, and also had a background in the arts. He is married with three children, and has lived in the city for ten years.

Councilor Weiss indicated that James Duggan (who would like to be reappointed as a regular member) had a conflict, and would appear at the meeting as soon as he could.

At 6:37, Councilor Golonka moved that the Council go into executive session to discuss the appointment. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:37. Councilor Timpone arrived and joined the rest of the Council in executive session.

At 6:42, Councilor Golonka moved the Council return to open session. Councilor Guerlain seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Councilor Golonka moved that Liz Pritchett be appointed to Design Review Committee as a regular member, and that James Duggan and Seth Mitchell be appointed as alternates. Councilor Weiss seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:43.

- 12-221. The Council considered letters from three applicants to serve on the Charter Revision Committee. Candidate Jonathan Williams addressed the Council, indicating he was an employee of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, has lived in Montpelier for two years, and presented his interest in serving as part of his civic duty. Candidate Earl Fechter recounted his long history with the City, noted that he has practiced law for 18 years, and that the committee is a good match for his skillset and his desire to make a contribution. Council Weiss indicated that he had spoken with the third candidate, Michael Doyle, who could not attend due to a meeting at the Historical Society.

Councilor Golonka moved that the three candidates be appointed to the committee, and that Councilor Weiss serve as the Council's liaison. Councilor Guerlain seconded the motion.

After the Mayor expressed his appreciation to the candidates, there was a brief discussion about the size and makeup of the committee, with councilors noting the target size was 7 members with representation from all three districts. Councilor Golonka agreed to modify his motion to include the specification that the committee is fully empowered to operate with the three appointed members, and that city staff is directed to readvertise for the positions in an attempt to bring the committee size up to its optimum membership level of seven persons. The motion passed unanimously at 6:48.

- 12-222. Councilor Timpone moved that the discussion of the Hebert Road transmission system be tabled, given that the committee's final meeting on the matter was pending. Councilor Golonka seconded. The motion carried unanimously at 6:50.

- 12-223. The Council opened the second required public hearing regarding the proposed city redistricting ordinance. Councilor Weiss noted that 155 voters will be transferred from District 3 to District 1 under the proposal. When no public testimony was forthcoming, Councilor Hooper moved that the Council approve the ordinance. Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:52.

12-224. City Manager Fraser opened the budget overview discussion with a presentation that provided a status report on city finances, including projections on how tax rates would have to be modified if no other changes are made. He indicated that the city was starting off in a better financial position to make budgetary choices than it had in many past years. He discussed the different approaches to paying for needed infrastructure maintenance (taxes, bonding, etc), looking for situations where the state could be responsible for maintenance, and prioritizing upkeep. He noted that nothing in his report constituted a proposal or a recommendation, but rather should serve as a starting point for discussion.

Councilor Guerlain asked for details on the origin and the purpose of the documents presented, and Finance Director Sandra Gallup provided clarification, noting again that the documents on hand were preliminary in nature. Guerlain further questioned Gallup on the basis of her cost projections for health insurance, and the two had a more detailed exchange on the history and quality of the city's insurance plan in recent years, and as projected forward. Mayor Hollar asked about, and received a description of, the employee wellness programs that the city has implemented.

Gallup also provided background (at Councilor Guerlain's request) on the workers compensation projections in the preliminary documents.

Councilor Golonka advised that increasing debt to close any budget gap could put the city in conflict with the Council's debt policy. Mayor Hollar noted that he and the newer members of the City Council were likely not up to speed on the debt policy, and that they should receive a primer on it before more in-depth discussions take place in upcoming meetings.

Councilor Guerlain wondered if infrastructure maintenance may have waned over the years due to a disproportionate budgetary emphasis on other city services, and that it may be time for a reciprocal approach.

City Manager Fraser noted that the Budget Committee was still working. He also noted that giving staff increased flexibility on capital funding for specific items might be practical.

Mayor Hollar indicated he was encouraged by the preliminary information. Councilor Golonka cautioned that the School budget process could impact their discussions, and Hollar agreed that the bodies would coordinate their deliberations.

12-225. Councilor Weiss wondered about the appropriateness of having City Councilors serve on committees overseeing the Senior Center and the Community Justice Center, given that both are functionally departments of the city. Mayor Hollar commented on the uniqueness of the two entities as city departments, noting that they have the characteristics of independent non-profits.

The directors of both the Senior Center (Janna Clar) and the Community Justice Center (Yvonne Byrd) rose to indicate that their associated boards are advisory in nature, and that the presence of City Councilors serving as members is welcome. Neither was opposed to discussing other paradigms.

After some discussion, the Mayor appointed Councilor Watson to fill the Council (liaison) seat on the Community Justice and Energy Committees, Councilor Hooper to the Council seat on the Montpelier Alive board, and Councilor Guerlain to the (liaison) seat on the Senior Center committee. At Councilor Weiss's request, the City manager indicated he would provide the Council with an updated list of committee memberships.

12-226. The City Manager reviewed the role of the Council-appointed Voting Delegate to the VLCT Annual Business Meeting (he also noted that any city officials were welcome to attend in a non-voting capacity, and encouraged councilors to do so, if they were so inclined). Councilor Weiss moved that Mayor Hollar be appointed as the Voting Delegate, and that he attend in an unrestricted capacity. Councilor Watson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously at 7:48.

12-226. Councilor Hooper reported that the initial meeting of the Community Fund Board was positive, and that it was a good group.

Councilor Guerlain passed on a citizen compliment to the Public Works Department, regarding their handling of maintenance and repair on upper Main Street. He also noted that the proposed rescheduling of the next Council meeting for October 3<sup>rd</sup> would conflict with his schedule. It was noted that meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> would make the City manager unavailable. Mayor Hollar indicated that should tentatively stick with the October 3<sup>rd</sup> plan, but that the matter would be settled over email in the coming days.

Councilor Weiss asked that Mr. Williams and Mr. Fechter stay to chat for a few minutes after adjournment.

Councilor Watson noted that the last meeting of the Energy Committee had been excellent.

12-229. The City Clerk noted that water and sewer payments were due on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

12-220. James Duggan approached the Council and asked that the body reconsider its decision earlier in the meeting to appoint Liz Pritchett to replace him as a full member of the Design Review Committee following the expiration of his term. He indicated that he was the Vice Chair of the committee, and that his change of status (to an alternate) would be disruptive to the committee. He indicated he would not be inclined to attend meetings if he did not serve in a full, voting capacity. Councilor Guerlain moved that the Council enter executive session to discuss the matter. Councilor Watson seconded. At 7:59, Councilors Guerlain, Watson and Golonka voted in favor of passage, Councilors Timpone, Weiss and Hooper voted nay. Being a 3-3 tie, the Mayor voted in favor, and the motion passed.

The Council entered executive session. Councilor Weiss did not participate. City Manager Fraser was invited into the session.

At 8:04, Councilors Timpone and Hooper left the room where the Council's executive session was being held. At 8:06, the remainder of the Council returned to the Council Chambers. Councilor Guerlain moved that the Council return to open session, Councilor Hooper seconded the motion. It was agreed to unanimously.

Mayor Hollar indicated that the Council had opted to defer a final resolution to the matter for the moment.

Councilor Hooper moved for adjournment. Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 8:06 PM.