

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting  
September 18, 2013  
Montpelier City Hall Council Chambers**

In attendance: Mayor John Hollar (presiding), City Councilors Thierry Guerlain, Jessica Edgerly Walsh, Alan Weiss, Andy Hooper (arrived after the meeting was underway), 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.

13-228. Latoya Coleman addressed the council, feeling she had been subjected to racist treatment in the city, including racial profiling and ridicule, in a local business. She read a statement.

The mayor indicated they had previously met and spoken, and wanted to speak with her further about making Montpelier welcoming to minorities.

13-229. Councilor Watson moved approval of the consent agenda, including late additions to facilitate the awarding of a contract for DPW repairs and authorization for the Carr lot purchase, as well as a technical correction on a duly seconded motion reported in the previous meeting's minutes. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded. The motion carried unanimously at 6:38 PM.

13-230. Helen Husher and Stephen Bousquet addressed the council regarding the open positions on the Historic Preservation Commission.

Ms. Coleman returned to address the council, adding to her previous report that an Indian man was subjected to racial discrimination by passersby, and in area businesses.

Councilor Guerlain moved the appointment of Helen Husher to another 3-year term and appoint Stephen Bousquet to a two year term on the Historic Preservation Commission. Councilor Watson seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:45.

13-231. Following her brief comments to the council, Councilor Guerlain moved the appointment of Jo Ann Corski Gibbons to the 3 year term at the Montpelier Loan Fund Committee. Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded the motion, which carried unanimously at 6:47.

13-232. The second 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 opened at 6:48PM, and was closed when no one rose to speak. Councilor Guerlain made a motion to approve the changes, and was seconded by Councilor Edgerly Walsh. The motion passed unanimously at 6:48PM.

13-233. Steve Cook (Downtown Improvement District committee) and Kevin Casey (Community Development Specialist) gave an overview of the Downtown Improvement District committee's approach to developing processes and procedures. Councilor Watson had questions.

Councilor Hooper arrived at 7:00.

Councilor Weiss noted that there was still no DID budget, despite the request from the council. Mr. Cook indicated that a line-item budget was impossible at this point. Councilor Weiss indicated he wanted a breakdown of overhead versus project funding and salaries. The mayor expressed some uncertainty about what specifically Mr. Weiss wanted, given that the allocation was exclusively for project funding.

Councilor Golonka was satisfied with the documents provided and commended the committee.

Councilor Guerlain asked about the development of the guidelines, and commended the committee for providing them.

Councilor Weiss listed elements of the guidelines he objected to - noting that the guidelines called for a budget, but no budget was provided. He also objected to what he felt was a lack of specificity regarding the council's role, grant applicants, and questioned the presence of the word "housing," which the council assumed was a typo. He and Councilor Guerlain expressed concerns about the possibility of loans being part of the program. Mr. Cook and Councilor Edgerly Walsh indicated that loaning funds was not part of the committee's plan, although elements of the document were found with "loans" referenced (the document was modeled after the housing trust fund guidelines, and inappropriate instances of "housing" and "loan" were mistakenly included as a result).

Councilor Golonka moved approval of the plan and the guidelines, with the removal of references to loan and housing. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion carried at 7:13PM by a vote of 5-1 (Councilor Weiss was opposed).

13-231A

At 7:14, the council took up a supplemental agenda item. Regarding an anticipated upcoming vote in the commission as to whether or not to continue discussions around a potential merger between that body and the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, Tina Ruth from the CVRPC addressed the council expressing opposition to the proposal (with the caveat that she would vote on the committee as directed by the council, as Montpelier's representative), while Ed Larson from the CVEDC testified in favor.

Ms. Ruth expressed the prevailing opinion within her committee that the two bodies have different missions and different priorities and don't cleanly overlap, and that the proposed changes would create a large, unwieldy body.

Councilor Guerlain asked for clarification on the voting process for the proposal.

Mr. Larson presented his view that the inherent tension between the two approaches would synergize into a "holistic" approach to planning on a combined committee. He also noted that it would be at least a year before a final decision would need to be made, should the body decide to go forward with discussions. Councilor Edgerly Walsh had questions as to the impetus behind the push to merge from proponents.

Delinquent Tax Collector Bev Hill spoke in favor of continuing merger discussions, while expressing uncertainty about the potential merger itself.

Councilor Golonka spoke favorably towards continuing the merger discussion, and moved that the city's representative on the planning commission be directed to vote yes on continuing the discussions. Councilor Hooper seconded. Councilor Guerlain spoke against continuing the discussion, as did Councilor Edgerly Walsh. Councilor Watson spoke favorably about continuing the discussion, as did Mayor Hollar.

The motion carried by a vote of 4-1 (Councilor Guerlain voted no, while Councilor Edgerly Walsh abstained) at 7:47.

- 13-234. Police Chief Tony Facos gave an update on the recent increase in break-ins, the police response, and how the department is communicating with the media on the matter. He noted that while burglary/larceny was up, violent crime was down. He also noted that substance abuse addiction was driving the break-ins.
- Facos cited the September 4th burglaries - including forced entries - and the "smash and grab" at Katie's jewels. He explained how the department has modified its approach since then.
- Chief Facos referenced the new Facebook page for the department as one method for communicating directly with the public. He also gave an example of the "media log" generated from the police report, which goes out to the press.
- Facos encouraged citizens to lock cars, which would prevent the bulk of the car break ins. He noted that other communities were having similar spikes in burglaries.
- Councilor Weiss asked what percentage of police time was spent on "special activities" such as planning for parades and the like. Chief Facos responded that it was an enormous question to quantify work time divided between such functions, and there is a lot of discussion in the professional community about quantifying these issues and identifying costs.
- 13-235. City Manager Fraser reviewed the "steady state" capital/infrastructure plan. A brief discussion of the prioritization of paving work followed. Mayor Hollar asked about planning and allocations for filling cracks that emerge in roads.
- Councilor Guerlain noted the number of excess utility poles that had been removed.
- 13-236. Councilor Golonka expanded on the firebox committee meeting. He noted that the recommendation would be that "first dibs" on removed boxes would go to nonprofits, and then they would be made available to the general public. Councilor Edgerly Walsh added that the group would entertain Barre City's request for some as well.
- Councilor Watson reported on the PACE program, noting it was open for enrollment. Interested homeowners could apply for loans to add efficiencies, and that applicants should contact Gwen Hallsmith (with a deadline in October). Watson added that on October 5, Efficiency VT and VNRC are hosting Button-up day to promote home efficiency, and that they were looking for volunteers.

Councilor Hooper felt that some of the agenda item recommendations didn't make sense.

Councilor Guerlain thanked Chief Facos for his report. He also noted the Fire Pull-box committee met, and wanted to discuss the matter in more depth at a future meeting. He also hoped to review the recreation department status discussion initiated in a March meeting.

Councilor Guerlain also recommended meeting on the 6th and 20th of November, and the 4th and 18th of December (1st and 3rd Wednesdays, instead of the usual 2nd and 4<sup>th</sup>) to minimize holiday conflicts). The City Manager indicated that was on his list to attend to. Councilor Guerlain suggested there be an executive session over district heat (the Mayor suggested it be after the planned forum on the 9th). Finally, he asked about a joint council/planning commission meeting (the Mayor indicated it would be on the 23rd).

Councilor Weiss noted the upcoming summary report (expected the 30th) on the regional public safety authority. He also noted -on behalf of the charter committee - that the members of that body anticipated an opportunity to address the council at an upcoming meeting.

- 13-237. The Mayor reported on a "good" discussion at the Vibrant and Affordable Montpelier forum the previous night. He also noted that he had a chance to lead a Prevent Child Abuse Vermont march with Spider-Man (or a reasonable facsimile).

The Mayor repeated Chief Facos recommendation that citizens lock cars and doors.

The Mayor noted the coming October 9th forum with a representative with the Project for Open Spaces.

- 13-239. City Manager Fraser reviewed the upcoming meeting schedules. He noted the limited agenda for the next council meeting, and the sense of the council was that the discussion could start earlier than usual. He also cited his written recommendation echoing the schedule changes for council meetings just recommended by Councilor Guerlain.

Mr. Fraser asked for guidance on the schedule of meetings to discuss the next budget. He also noted that the Vermont College of Fine Arts had appealed their taxable status.

Mr. Fraser reviewed issues with Berlin regarding billing for a sewer line and the history of communications between the two municipalities. He also reported on Berlin's next steps in developing their water system.

Councilor Golonka volunteered to be the council's representative to meet with Berlin on sewer issues.

Mr. Fraser noted that the city could submit comments on Berlin's proposed new water system as part of the approval process, given the fact that Montpelier's current system is a viable alternative. Councilor Golonka felt it was important to get involved in this way to set the record straight. Councilor Edgerly Walsh moved that city staff be instructed to

proceed with the development and submission of such report in the ANR environmental review process. Councilor Hooper seconded. The motion carried unanimously at 8:52.

Councilor Hooper moved to adjourn. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion carried unanimously at 8:52.