

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting
September 26, 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, Angela Timpone, 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.

- 12-232. Under general business, Nate Smead rose with questions about the Berlin Pond access issue. Mayor Hollar indicated that there was no plan for a Council discussion, and that the matter was on hold until a vote in Berlin.
- 12-233. After Councilor Guerlain requested and received clarification on a content issue, Councilor Guerlain moved for passage of the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilor Golonka and passed unanimously at 6:39PM.
- 12-234. The Council then discussed reconsidering the appointments made to the Design Review Committee at the previous meeting. Tim Senter addressed the Council, expressing his desire to be appointed. Seth Mitchell then spoke, suggesting that James Duggan should not be automatically reappointed, and noting that he serves on another committee (and that this appointment represented an opportunity for other citizens to participate).
- Councilor Golonka moved that James Duggan be appointed to the regular position on the committee, and Liz Pritchett, Seth Mitchell and Tim Senter be appointed as alternates. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:45.
- 12-235. Councilor Timpone moved that the two candidates for the two open positions on the Historic Preservation Commission – James Duggan and Eric Gilbertson - be reappointed to the vacancies. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 6:46.
- 12-236. The Council moved to consider proposed policy for the Montpelier Community Fund. Board members Julie Hendrickson, Bernie Lambek, and Warren Vail presented the proposed changes to the policy-in-progress recommended by the full Board. A list of outside agencies funded by city, and a community fund draft organizational document was reviewed. Lambek indicated that the proposals were meant to incentivized outside agency participation in the fund. The recommended changes were moving the timeline for application and award back to before Town Meeting, and to expand the fund to encompass other historical city grants to more community enhancement organizations and arts organizations (increasing the fund to about \$115,000). City Manager

Fraser noted that arts funding was largely event-driven, and was a combination of individual and organizational grants.

Mayor Hollar and Councilor Golonka expressed reservations, particularly around the proposed change in timing and its possible conflation with the budget process.

Councilor Weiss expressed concerns about the adequacy of the planned reporting process for Fund participants, while City Manager Fraser noted that event-driven arts grants might not be a clean fit into the fund. Councilor Golonka expressed his opinion that the proposed modifications were significant enough that the matter should be continued to the next meeting. Councilor Weiss also referred to the fact that an individual would not be bound by any agreement not to place a funding request on a ballot on behalf of an outside agency that had agreed not to engage in the ballot process themselves.

Councilor Weiss moved that the Council accept the report including the changes. The motion died for lack of a second at 7:26.

After some discussion of the current process of awarding city arts grants, Councilor Hooper moved that the issue be tabled at 7:31. At 7:32, Hooper withdrew his motion. The Council decided not to take action, and to revisit the matter at the next meeting.

12-238. The Council moved to agenda item 8. Gwen Hallsmith & Casey introduced a proposal for a Community and Economic Development Committee. The idea was introduced by the City Manager, and expanded on by Hallsmith.

Councilor Timpone spoke positively of the idea, but expressed concern that the committee could meander and/or be unfocused.

Mayor Hollar was concerned that the committee's work would prove an unproductive parallel to the work of the City Council. Fraser responded by suggesting the Committee could work to implement the Council's broader goals, by working to particularize those goals into specific action proposals.

The Mayor indicated he was dubious about the proposal. Councilor Watson noted her concern about the size of the committee, but was warm to the general idea. Councilor Golonka was also concerned that the committee would be unwieldy and be overly burdensome to staff.

Councilor Weiss shared his thoughts on the approach such a committee could take, but also expressed concerns with expanding a committee-style dynamic to issues inappropriately or needlessly. Councilor Guerlain was concerned that the committee could end up generating further work for the council, rather than taking burdens away. Fraser agreed that such a result would be contrary to the committee's goals and would constitute a failure on its part.

Councilor Weiss suggested the group refine its proposal and return. The Council did not act on the recommendation.

- 12-237. For Item 7, Gwen Hallsmith was joined by Clancy DeSmet and Jon Anderson to discuss the ongoing redevelopment of the zoning ordinances. Mayor Hollar invited the group to bring potentially controversial elements of their work to the Council as they arise, rather than simply holding off until the entire process was complete. Councilor Golonka strongly agreed, noting the potential for deviations from state guidelines on wetlands classifications, and waxing cautious about the possible implications for both city staff, as well as potential developers.
- Golonka and Hallsmith engaged in a lengthy back and forth on the topic, as well as a discussion on what the demands of the City Master Plan are. Mayor Hollar noted that the decisions of previous City Councils would not necessarily bind this Council, noting that there are significant political controversies that could come into play. Councilors repeated the Mayor's desire that potential points of controversy be brought before the Council as the process develops, rather than at the conclusion of the process.
- 12-241. The Mayor directed the Council to take up item 11. Finance Director Sandra Gallup reviewed the City's debt policy, including a report on the current debt levels. There was some confusion over the charts before Councilor Golonka wondered if the revenue projections presented were too optimistic. Gallup believed it was sound, and based on historical trending. The level of pension debt, as well as the payment schedule was scrutinized by Councilor Guerlain, with particular notice paid to the fact that the city is not currently paying on the principle.
- Councilor Guerlain applauded the report, but was concerned about financial flexibility while the City was near its self-imposed debt limit. Councilor Weiss noted the citizen Budget Committee was also looking at city indebtedness and would address it in its upcoming report. After significant discussion, City Manager Fraser defended the budgetary approach to capital improvements in the context of the discussion, noting that financial conditions are tipping back to an increased flexibility which should allow the city to focus more resources on roads.
- 12-239. At 9:19, Councilor Weiss moved approval of the proposed time, date and location for the General Election and Special City Meeting (7:00AM-7:00PM, November 6th, City Hall auditorium). Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 9:20.
- 12-240. Councilor Weiss expressed concerns about the wording of the Special City Meeting warning as it related to the redistricting ordinance as passed by the Council. City Clerk Odum acknowledged the appearance of a technical contradiction, but assured the Council that the wording had been reviewed by City Attorney Paul Guiliani. Councilor Weiss moved approval of the warning. Councilor Hooper seconded the motion, which passed unanimously at 9:26.

12-242. Under council updates, Councilor Guerlain asked the City Manager about an unspecified illegal use of city water. City Manager Fraser indicated it was being dealt with, that the alluded-to use had been terminated, and the city would respond. He noted the possibility of civil or criminal charges against the person responsible, and that the city would bill for water use. Guerlain also asked if there had been any more members added to the Charter Review Commission (Fraser indicated there was one).

Councilor Weiss indicated that the Charter Review Committee had met Monday, and that more citizens were likely interested in participating. He indicated the Council would be solicited by the committee for input (staffing was being handled by city Americorps workers).

Councilor Golonka noted the final meeting of the Budget Committee the following night, adding that there was also a meeting of the Regional Public Safety Committee. Golonka indicated he could not attend the latter, and Councilor Weiss indicated he was planning to attend. He noted that the committee was at a crucial point in its work.

Councilor Watson indicated she had been speaking with the City Manager about getting new speakers for the Council Chambers. She reported that the Energy Committee had discussed asking the Council to waive permit fees for pellet stoves, weatherization, and photovoltaics. Council feedback was encouraged.

Councilor Timpone reported that the Housing Task Force would like an opportunity to report directly to the Council.

12-243. The Mayor noted that he was meeting on October 2nd with citizens interested in bike issues and encouraged others to participate.

12-244. The City Clerk indicated that early voting was underway.

12-245. City Manager Fraser reported that his goal was to get the District Heat project out to bid on Friday. He also indicated he had nudged Fairpoint on dealing with the dual light poles, and that he was assured it would be dealt with.

The City Manager indicated the need to set up a Capital Projects Committee meeting, and suggested the dates be worked out outside the City Council meeting.

Fraser then asked if the Council intended to follow a similar budget schedule/consideration process (with regards to reporting by department heads) as last year. Councilor Timpone responded positively, calling the process helpful.

Mayor Hollar hoped the Council would set an overall budgetary target for departments to work towards (rather than work department by department as done in the past) by the second meeting in October.

Councilor Golonka wanted to insure that there would be comparative budgetary documents presented to the Council would be similar to the previous year's which he noted were helpful.

Councilor Guerlain moved the Council enter executive session to discuss the negotiation status on the Carr Lot process, and Berlin Water services. Councilor Golonka seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 9:39.

Councilor Guerlain moved the Council return to open session at 9:50, Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Councilor Weiss moved for adjournment at 9:51, Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion passed unanimously.