

**CITY OF MONTPELIER  
CAPITAL CITY OF VERMONT**

**City Manager's Weekly Report – 3/15/2019**

**UPCOMING MEETINGS...**

Monday, March 18	Cemetery Commission, 12 PM, City Manager's Conference Room
Monday, March 18	Design Review Committee, 5:30 PM, Council Chambers
Monday, March 18	Development Review Board, 7 PM, Council Chambers
Tuesday, March 19	Social & Economic Justice Advisory Committee, 5:30 PM, Council Chambers
Tuesday, March 19	Parks Commission, 6:00 PM, Police Dept. Community Room
Tuesday, March 19	Energy Advisory Committee, 7 PM, Memorial Room
Thursday, March 21	Housing Task Force, 5:15 PM, Council Chambers

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT...**

**1 Taylor Street/Recreation Path**

Construction on this project remains on schedule. The Transit Center and Housing work is well underway – which is clearly visible from Taylor Street -- and plumbing for the building has begun. A team from the FTA will be visiting next week and touring the site and viewing progress. The full schedule:

- Weather tight building – March 22, 2019
- Substantial Completion – Aug. 15, 2019
- Project Completion – Aug. 22, 2019

**Public Parking Garage**

All information has been submitted to the Act 250 District Commission. The Commission will determine whether another hearing is needed. Once all evidence is closed, the Commission has 15 days to issue a decision.

Representatives of the Capitol Plaza, Christ Church, City and Appellant group are scheduled to meet on Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Flood Watch**

As you know, Montpelier and the surrounding area (and much of the State) are under a flood watch, with temperatures rising, a light rainfall, and a thick ice pack covering the river. Montpelier Fire Department and Police Department are keeping a close eye on the rivers. In addition, the Department of Public Works added additional release of treated, clean warmer water from the Wastewater Treatment Plant to help open channels in the ice – and that has been successful. DPW also moved a long-reach excavator to a site near the river to help create water flow channels and assist with ice break-up if that becomes necessary.

City staff has met over the course of the week, and also included the National Weather Service, to try to stay ahead of the challenges. It's impossible to accurately predict whether Montpelier will experience any flooding, much less how severe. But like the cliché, we're planning for the worst and hoping for the best.

The latest report from NWS indicated that the initial prediction of 3 to 7 feet of water rise has been lowered to

between 1 and 3 inches. While that is obviously good news, we will continue to take this situation seriously because ice jam flooding can be unpredictable.

We have done extensive media outreach to prepare residents and business owners, particularly those in flood-prone and downtown areas. We have also used social media, the press and fliers at the March 5 City Meeting to prod residents and business owners to sign up for VT-Alert. Although we do this all year long, a pending emergency is a good opportunity to push the message.

We will keep Council updated as warranted over the weekend.

### **Legal**

The Environmental Division has issued a decision upholding the Wastewater Treatment Plant discharge permits issued by the Agency of Natural Resources. The Court's decision granted summary judgment in favor of the State and municipalities, including the City, and denied CLF's motion for summary judgment. The 30-day appeal period to appeal to the Vermont Supreme Court has now expired so the decision is final.

### **Legal – unchanged**

The City's petition to enter the proceedings concerning GMP's re-construction of the Marshfield Dam has been approved. We are now a party to the matter, for the purpose of monitoring the information in case there is anything relevant to the city.

### **Strategic Planning -- unchanged**

We have scheduled our strategic planning work with Julia Novak for April 15 and 16. Details to come.

## **WEEKLY REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS ...**

### **Buildings**

We recently received our updated Forest Management Plans and Maps for 899 acres of City owned property in Berlin and Northfield from Redstart LLC, our Forestry Management Consultant. They have been forwarded to the Washington County Forester for his approval. Updating of the Plans and Maps is required every 10 years for continued enrollment in the Current Use Program. This is a State program which significantly reduces property taxes on enrolled land.

Since 2010 when these lands were first enrolled in the Current Use program, the City has saved \$233,116 in property taxes and received \$83,904 in stumpage payments for wood products harvested in management activities, primarily thinning of overstocked areas.

The management plans for the next 10 years require no further harvesting activities but recommend addressing invasive species seen spreading into some areas of the forest and wetlands.

### **Public Works**

Water Resource Recovery Facility Upgrade: ESG has mobilized an office trailer and has staff on site part-time preparing for construction. The project Kickoff meeting was held with ESG and their subcontractors on March 6th where safety procedures, work sequencing and scheduling was discussed. It is anticipated some light construction work will begin on April 1st. ESG and DPW continue to finalize permits and hope to have all of them submitted by the end of next week. DPW and finance are pursuing funding opportunities with the State of Vermont and USDA Rural Development and it is very likely that project will receive some grant funding as a result of these efforts.

DPW Street Division: The focus continues to be on removing ice along the flatter streets and opening up paths to critical catch basins. A portion of the crew is also being used for pothole patching work.

One Taylor & Shared Use Path Project: The walls for the fourth floor are complete and plumbing installation has begun for the entire building. Next week, work will start on the roof and components for the mechanical system will begin to be installed on the fourth floor.

Shared Use Path Project (Granite St – Gallison Hill Road): The contractor has begun roughing in the new path from the railroad crossing to Gallison Hill Road. This work will continue as conditions permit. Work is also taking place on Barre Street where a new sewer system is being installed at the Trakside, LLC property which is necessary for the construction of the storm water bio-retention pond.

VTrans has provided the requested assistance to overcome the organizational issues impacting Consolidated Communications lack of response and delaying critical utility pole relocation work. The city issued a formal relocation order last June which gave notice that project delays could result in a contractor claim for damages. We are pleased to report that a meeting was held with Consolidated this week and they provided assurances that work will begin next week. GMP is also assisting in moving this work forward

Clarendon Avenue Project Development: Project design development is proceeding on schedule. Staff is working on the water system component of the project attempting to ascertain house connection information. There are presently two water mains on the street and the plan is to replace both mains with one new larger diameter main. The street is also served by two sewer mains which we believe is unnecessary which will also be addressed through re-design when house services are located topographic data is collected and plotted.

### **Planning**

The Planning & Community Development Department released their Request for Proposals for the State Street Streetscape and Downtown Master Plan project. This project combines the earlier streetscape project with the desire for a downtown land use plan that will review current and potential land uses in order to inform the Planning Commission and Council on competing public demands for sidewalks, bike routes, parking and additional greenspace in the downtown plan. Copies of the RFP are available from Mike Miller ([mmiller@montpelier-vt.org](mailto:mmiller@montpelier-vt.org)) or the City website under “Bid postings”. Proposals are due by April 12 at 4:00 p.m.

### **Finance Department**

Water/sewer bills are due TODAY, Friday March 15, 2019. Payments may be made via mail, in person in the City Clerk's office, online at [www.montpelier-vt.org](http://www.montpelier-vt.org), or by using the drop box to the left of the rear entrance to City Hall. Please be sure to make your payment by the due date to avoid penalties.

You may also enroll in automatic payments by submitting a completed enrollment form located here: <http://www.montpelier-vt.org/document/view/4532>

Reasons to consider enrolling in automatic payments:

- Payments are automatically withdrawn from the account you designate on the actual due date, no need to pay days in advance or risk a payment being late or lost in the mail.
- Electronic payments are more secure. Checks contain your financial institution's routing number and your account number, information that is susceptible to fraudulent transactions and misuse.
- Electronic payments significantly reduce processing time. Checks and cash must be manually processed by staff and take a considerable amount of time to enter, especially during high volume payment periods.
- You may cancel anytime!

**Vermont Homestead Declarations are due by April 15, 2019! Even if you have, or are planning on extending your income tax return filing due date, you are still required to file your Vermont Homestead Declaration form.** Not only are late returns assessed a late filing penalty, but a timely filing will allow the State of Vermont enough time to process your return and provide accurate State Tax Payment information to the city prior to the printing property tax bills in July.

### **Community Justice Center**

Though it is invisible to many, in our community there are children who have an incarcerated parent. As a community that wishes for all children to thrive, we are better able to put efforts into helping that happen when we are more aware of the challenges some children live with and when we are having conversations about and putting efforts into what we can do to help make things better.

Having become well aware that many of the (primarily) men we work with in our reentry program have more than an average number of children, the Montpelier Community Justice Center (MCJC) wanted to make a difference. We heard from many men that they were motivated to do better because they wanted to take care of their children, yet many of these men had neither been well-parented themselves nor had little understanding of what their children needed from their parents. So, in 2011 the MCJC began developing *Parenting with Respect*, a curriculum for a class for fathers who are under supervision with the Department of Corrections or whose children's well-being is being supervised by the Department for Children and Families. The MCJC has offered this 10-session parenting class once or twice a year since then; has written and published a manual to guide others in presenting the class; and is helping other community justice centers start a class in their areas. However, there is so much more that we as a community can do. To learn about the effects on children of having an incarcerated parent, we urge you to mark your calendars for April 2, 2019 and go see a new film by Brad Salon, *DOWNSTREAM: THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION*. This film will broaden your understanding of the topic and may spur you on to think about what you can do, within your capabilities and sphere of influence, to help.

*DOWNSTREAM* is a one hour documentary film featuring the compelling stories of those left behind when a parent goes to prison. Vermont children and caregivers share their experiences, revealing the complex and emotional terrain they navigate in the wake of a parent's incarceration. Film reviewers have been deeply moved by the courage, vulnerability, and wisdom they show. The film also includes the voices of a number of Vermont leaders and advocates whose perspectives help give larger context to the children's and family's stories. Those appearing in the film include: elected and state officials, educators, a law school professor, and a pediatrician. *DOWNSTREAM* is being shown Tuesday, April 2 at 6:30 pm at the Pavillion Auditorium at 109 State Street, Montpelier. It is free and open to the public. A panel discussion will follow the film. Reserve your seat for this event by going to:

[www.lrcvt.org/downstream-film-screening/](http://www.lrcvt.org/downstream-film-screening/). To learn more about the movie and to see the trailer go to: [www.Downstreamfilm.com](http://www.Downstreamfilm.com).

### **Community Services**

#### **Montpelier Senior Activity Center**

- Spring Registration is underway with over 20 classes already full or nearly full, but space remains in dozens more classes, including many open to adults of all ages and even youth in some cases!
- As of March 14, MSAC Membership was 1,131, with 66% from Montpelier, 27% from our six Supporting Towns, and 7% from other towns. Dues are half off for anyone wishing to join for spring classes, and membership runs through June to coincide with our fiscal year.
- We are grateful to voters from six supporting towns who voted on Town Meeting Day 2019 in strong support for a total of \$33,800 in FY20 appropriations to MSAC, including an increase of \$4,500 over last year from the Town of Berlin, some of whose residents receive home delivered meals through MSAC's FEAST program!

## Racial Justice Series Kicks-off 4 Community Events, March-June 2019

Co-sponsored by the Peace & Justice Center (PJC), City of Montpelier and Kellogg-Hubbard Library  
Hosted at Montpelier Senior Activity Center (MSAC), 58 Barre Street

- The 2018-2019 Montpelier City Council has—as one of its eight Strategic Outcomes—“Inclusive, Equitable and Welcoming Community.” One of the relevant initiatives includes “to host racial and social justice workshops.” In response to that directive, along with MSAC Program Committee support, and following on a successful related program MSAC ran a year ago, we are pleased to present this series.
- Though walk-ins are welcome, advance registration is encouraged at the MSAC office and can be done over the phone at 223-2518, with an MSAC registration form or online; space is limited. No one will be turned away for lack of funds, and people age 25 and younger are not charged.
- **First Event: Film Screening: “13th” and Facilitated Discussion: Monday, March 25, 7-9pm** (Free and Open to the Public)  
The title of this documentary refers to the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which reads, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States...” The progression from that second qualifying clause to the current rate of mass criminalization and the state of the American prison industry is thoroughly laid out in this film. This event is being hosted as part of a series put together in collaboration with the Montpelier Senior Activity Center. Consider joining in more of these curated events. It will include a short facilitated discussion following the film.
- **Following Events (inquire for full descriptions):**
  - Seeing and Disrupting Racism: A Workshop: Tuesday, April 9, 7-9pm (\$25 per person, \$15 for PJC members)
  - Film Screening of "The Way Home: Women Talk About Race in America" and Facilitated Discussion: Tuesday, May 21, 7-9pm (Suggested donation of \$5-15)
  - Disrupting Racism: A Role Play Workshop: Sunday, June 16, 3-5pm (\$25 per person, \$15 for PJC members)

## Recreation

The rink on the State House lawn is currently closed due to the warm weather. If another freeze occurs, the rink may re-open, but for the time being please refrain from using further.

## Parks and Trees

We have a substantial amount of news and activity from the last couple weeks, including being awarded a \$15,021 grant from the Lake Champlain Basin program (LCBP) to empower us to do important watershed related work in our parks, especially the North Branch River Park. This grant will allow to help bring our 20 year effort to bring woody invasive plants “under control” to virtual completion. There are about 5,000 honeysuckle, buckthorn, Japanese barberry and multi-flora rose plants left in the North Branch River Park, which we expect to be able to pull this spring with staff, volunteers, groups and the key help of another grant of a NCCC crew. The NCCC crew of 10 AmeriCorps members come for 7 weeks this spring and will not only help us pull woody invasives, but will also help plant hundreds of native trees. Planting the trees will not only help keep the woody invasives displaced, but will also restrict and shrink the spread of non-woody invasives, such as knotweed.

The great snow we have had for skiing and snow play this winter has been leveraged by a number of landowners giving us *winter* permission to groom trails connecting the North Branch River Park all the way to County Road, right across the street from Morse Farm Sugar Shack. Many thanks to the Morse Farm, the extended Morse Family and eight landowners! A number of volunteers helped clear the trails and area residents have had over four miles of wonderful and beautiful additional ski trails to enjoy!

Mud season began this week in Hubbard Park, and we are asking people to walk in or drive in only through the

Corse Street entrance. As mud season progresses normally there are different places in the park that get muddy and closed off. Mud season is often a favorite time for many visitors, with spring showing its head and there being fewer cars.

**Trees**

Despite quite a number of very windy days lately, we haven't seen much wind related damage, helping us feel good about the work that we accomplished this winter.

The Tree Board and Parks and Trees Department are planning on working with a couple new neighborhoods this spring to expand our street tree planting efforts. Contact the Community Services Department and/or a Tree board member if you know of good planting sites or you would like to help out.

**UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS (TENTATIVE)...**

<b>Mar 27</b>	Voluntary rental inspection program <b>P&amp;D</b> Zoning Public Hearing <b>P&amp;D</b> Scooters- <b>ACM/ATCM</b> Audit <b>Finance</b> Tax Stabilization – Conor Bros.	<b>Apr 10</b>	Tax Stabilization
<b>Apr 24</b>	Parking Ban debrief	<b>May 8</b>	
<b>May 22</b>	ADA Report	<b>June 5</b>	



William Fraser  
City Manager