

Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting
March 9, 2022, 6:30pm
City Council Chambers and videoconference

In attendance: Mayor Anne Watson, City Manager William Fraser, Councilors Dona Bate, Conor Casey, Cary Brown, Lauren Hierl, Jack McCullough, and Jennifer Morton. Deputy City Clerk Crystal Lamell acted as secretary.

2022-062. The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

2022-063. Jody Pettersen urged the council to consider holding district meetings to allow councilors to get to enhance communication. Senior Center Director Sarah Lipton announced the “March for Meals” campaign. Peter Kelman offered his congratulations to the elected councilors and for the strong support on budgetary items on City Meeting Day. He also echoed the comment from Jody Pettersen noting the importance of regular communication. He also spoke on the importance of the Elks club.

Stephen Whitaker voiced concerns with campaign signs, the City Manager’s contract, an incident involving a snowplow, as well as public records and the transit center restrooms. He further suggested that there be a formal process put into place for public comments and concerns that are brought to the council and city staff’s attention.

6:47- 2022-064. Consent Agenda

- a. Payroll and Bills
- b. Minutes
- c. Public Arts Commission Recommendation
- d. Purchase of Berlin Pond Land
- e. Street Sweeper Purchase
- f. Parking System Investments: Parking Meters & Ticket Management Software
- g. Budget to Actual
- h. Habitat for Humanity Planning and Feasibility Stud

The mayor recused herself from item H. Councilor McCullough made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the exception of item H and B. This motion was seconded by councilor Bate. Motion passed unanimously. McCullough left item B for a future date for some clarification.

Councilor Bate made the motion to accept the Grant Agreement (item H). With a second from Councilor Casey, the motion passed with no nays and with Mayor Watson recused.

Linda Berger voiced her concerns about item C in consent agenda objecting to the process. Rob Hitzig from the Public Arts Commission responded that they will be looking for more artists to complete the project and that the commissions meetings are open to the public and that the next meeting was March 23rd.

2022-065. City Manager Fraser informed the council that the operational handbook is in the process of being updated and that Mary Smith is working on scheduling tours of the City’s Various buildings and departments for the new council.

- 2022-066. Councilor Bate nominated Councilor McCullough to continue as President. Councilor Morton nominated Councilor Bate as Vice President and Councilor Bate nominated Councilor Brown as parliamentarian. With a Second to all three nominations from Councilor Casey the motions carried unanimously.
- 2022-067. Councilor McCullough made the motion to readopt the rules as presented which was seconded by Councilor Bate. After some discussion of Item 8 with public comment from Peter Kelman and Stephen Whittaker there was an amendment to the motion to change item 8 from 10 to 5 minutes per topic. This motion failed with Councilors Casey, Morton, Hierl, and Brown voting against the change. A Second motion to adopt the rules as presented was made by Councilor Bate and seconded by Councilor Hierl. This motion passed unanimously.
- 2022-068. Councilor Casey moved to approve the ethics policy with a second by Councilor Hierl. The item passed unopposed.
- 2022-069. Mayor Watson spoke in regard to social media and making sure the council doesn't violate any open meeting law. Resident Stephen Whittaker offered comment. The council approved the item unopposed.
- 2022-070. The following committee assignments were agreed upon:
- Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Committee: Jennifer Morton
 - Building Code Appeals Committee, Lauren Hierl: Jennifer Morton
 - Capital Improvement Plan Committee: Lauren Hierl, Cary Brown, Jennifer Morton
 - Central VT Regional Planning Commission, Transportation Committee (TAC): Dona Bate
 - Central VT public Safety Authority: Justin Deshler was appointed as a liaison for the Council (2-year term)
 - Central VT Solid Waste Management: Donna Barlow Casey
 - Community Justice Center (CJC) Citizen Advisory Board (CAB): Dona Bate
 - Energy Advisory Committee: Anne Watson, Lauren Hierl
 - Harry Sheridan Scholarship: Anne Watson
 - Homelessness Task Force: Jennifer Morton, Conor Casey
 - Housing Task Force: Jack McCullough, Cary Brown
 - Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board: Jack McCullough
 - Investment Committee: Conor Casey
 - Montpelier Alive Board: Cary Brown
 - Parks Commission Liaison: Dona Bate
 - Social & Economic Justice Advisory Committee: Lauren Hierl, Jennifer Morton
 - Transportation Infrastructure: Dona Bate
 - MyRide Committee: Conor Casey, Dona Bate
 - Stormwater Utility Committee: Lauren Hierl and appointing Jay Ericson as a representative

Regarding the Public restroom committee Council member Casey felt like it needed a council discussion and noted that it has also been a discussion with the homelessness task force. Councilor McCullough moved to add a discussion of the Public Restroom Committee to the next meeting's agenda. Seconded by Councilor Casey and motion was approved. Councilor McCullough then moved to approve all other committee assignments as discussed. Councilor Casey seconded the motion, and the motion was passed uncontested.

2022-071. Kate Stephenson spoke on behalf of the Montpelier Energy Advisory Committee and presented the Metrics summary report.

The meeting went into recess at 8:21 and reconvened at 8:31.

2022-072. City Manager Fraser noted that the current mandate that the state had given the city authority to enact was coming to an end and the council needed to decide whether or not to continue. Assistant City Manager Neidemeyer informed the council that the state had announced they will be stepping back their masking mandate on the 14th. Mayor Watson noted that she had received an email from Montpelier Alive director, Dan Groberg, who had spoken with many businesses in town who were hoping we would not renew. After a brief discussion a motion to terminate the mask mandate effective immediately was made by Councilor McCullough and seconded by Councilor Casey. The motion carried unanimously.

2022-073. Assistant City Manager Niedermayer, on behalf of the Meals On Wheels program, said that they have had a very successful year since taking it in-house and to watch for announcements on events happening in March. Councilor Bate moved to approve the proclamation which was seconded by Councilor Morton, and all voted in favor.

2022-074. At 8:47 Mayor Watson opened the public hearing. Council Member Hierl gave her support stating it was great for the community and the businesses, but she would suggest changing the May 1st start date to April 15th. Councilor Casey agreed with Heirl's comments. Stephen Whittaker voiced safety concerns of some of the allowed locations and his displeasure for public properties being blocked for private use. City Manager Fraser advised that police and fire were involved and inspected all locations and there were no safety issues. At 8:54 Mayor Watson closed the public hearing

Councilor Bate made the motion to pass the first reading with the replacement date of April 15th instead of May 1st. Councilor Hierl seconded the motion and it passed unanimously

2022-075. City Manager Fraser informed council that after discussion with Chief Peete in February, it was clear that some topics required the council's attention, so they created a schedule to try address the issues.

- Changing the minimum standards for officer recruitment & public drinking - Apr 27
- Sex work - May 11
- Fair and Impartial Policing - May 25

- Internal Affairs/Citizen Complaints & Creating a Civilian Montpelier Police Advisory Committee - June 8
- Check-in on implementation of other PRC recommendations (data transparency, community engagement, etc.) - June 22

Councilor Hierl moved to adopt the schedule as adjusted, this was seconded by Councilor Bate and passed with no objection.

2022-077. Councilor Bate reported that at the next council meeting there will be a short presentation regarding a “trial” two lane bike lane for barre street. She also mentioned that CVPSA is down one member as Capital Fire/Mutual Aid has withdrawn.

Councilor Casey spoke briefly on the future of retail cannabis in Montpelier and suggested that they may want to start brainstorming about if the council wanted any local control over this, but it would all depend on how it plays out in the legislature.

Councilor Brown thanked the voters for the opportunity to serve on the council. Councilor Morton also thanked the voters and noted she was looking forward to getting to know her constituents.

Councilor McCullough thanked City Manager Fraser for the information on voter turnout in his last Manager’s report. He also said was pleased to see the dialog regarding the Elks Club property starting already. He also shouted out the DPW as he had been approached by two people that week who commented on their great services.

Councilor Hierl expressed her concern and support for the people of Ukraine and thanked the voters for coming out on City Meeting day. She is excited for the elks club public hearing.

Mayor Watson echoed the concern for Ukraine. She also thanked the voters for their support. She also noted that she would be holding office hours on Sundays at 2pm. She also reminded folks of the upcoming virtual forum next Tuesday at 6:30 regarding the Elks Club property.

Deputy City Clerk thanked all the volunteers that helped on election day and reminded the residents of the upcoming water and sewer payments due on March 15th.

City Manager Fraser started a brief discussion on whether to continue meetings over zoom or in person. Vicki Lane offered comments. Council Bate made the motion to have the March 23rd city council meeting in person, which was seconded by Councilor Casey, and all voted in favor.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 9:24.