



America's Small Town Capital

Autumn Overview

By William Fraser, City Manager, and Evelyn Prim, Communications Coordinator

October 18, 2023

Autumn is a busy time for local City government. In the coming weeks, the City Council and City staff will be reviewing the FY22-23 Strategic Plan, planning for the budget cycle, and preparing for winter operations. As we move through this transitional period, we wanted to feature the stories of a few department leaders who are pivotal in helping us navigate this busy time.

Deputy's Report – by Montpelier Public Works Deputy Director Zach Blodgett

As we roll through fall and begin prepping for the winter season, DPW is finishing up projects that began in the spring/summer this year. We've wrapped up the North Street paving project, Pleasantview Street and Nelson Street repairs, and paved Quesnel Drive. By the end of October, the State Street project will have been completed. Construction of the new Grout Road Bridge will continue throughout fall and into early winter.

As these projects wrap up during this transition period, DPW will begin prepping for the upcoming winter season. Prep work includes the removal of the amenities within the downtown such as benches and flower pots. Crews will also be patching potholes in anticipation of the asphalt plant closing in mid-October. The autumn season is the final push for us to wrap up street repair work.

It should be noted that staffing levels in DPW are not entirely full. Some currently vacant positions will remain open during the hiring freeze, thus impacting operational capacity.

Throughout the winter months, we will be focusing on designing and building projects to begin during the next construction season. The three biggest projects are resuming the design of the East State Street reconstruction project, the Water Resource Recovery Facility which includes biosolids processing, secondary clarifier improvements and odor control, and water line upgrades to the FEMA emergency housing site located on Country Club Road.

Lastly, there is over the next year, the City will be working with MSK Engineers to conduct a water service line inventory for the entire city to comply with federal regulations. You may be asked to allow staff to enter your building to allow us to determine the size and type of your water service. We will be providing more information on this project in the DPW Weekly Newsletter and on our website in the coming weeks.

Approaching Budget Season – by Finance Director Sarah LaCroix

This budget season, the City will be facing many of the same financial challenges already affecting our community. While we can't predict entirely what those challenges will mean, we know the lost revenue from the flood, changes to the grand list by the reappraisal, and rising inflation will all play a role going forward.

Some of the challenges will be in our control while others are not. Inflation, for instance, affects the price we pay for contractors, fuel, equipment, and other service-related items. All of these individual increases eventually trickle down to the budget. As many already know, our dollar doesn't go as far as it used to. Creating a plan to accommodate for that fact is an important part of the budget process.

As we consider and plan for the next budget, we'll be working hard to build up our fund balance in accordance with the operational needs of the City and City Council's priorities. We'll be focusing on what we can do to lessen the impact on residents while ensuring the City can continue to provide essential public services.

In the coming weeks, I'll be providing a memo to the City Council detailing items that will impact the fiscal year 2025 budget and the ways we'll work with them to align our needs and goals.

Strategic Plan Update – by Assistant City Manager Kelly Murphy

We presented a year-end wrap-up on the City's FY22-23 Strategic Plan at the City Council Meeting on Wednesday, October 11th. Each quarter, City staff present a report to the Council on the progress being made toward the Strategic Goals outlined in the plan. Within each goal are *Strategic Initiatives* which are the tasks and activities that form the roadmap for achieving each goal. Drilling down further, each strategic initiative has performance indicators used to measure progress.

For instance, the City Council has Improving Public Health and Safety as one of the six Strategic Goals. One of the Strategic Initiatives (the City's activity) set to accomplish that goal is to "Provide Policing which fits Montpelier's needs and Effective Mental Health".

We keep track of all this data in an online dashboard available to the public on our website.

When you explore the online dashboard and click into this section, you can see the corresponding update above the data table showing the iterative breakdown of progress toward each measurable indicator. Here's Montpelier Police Chief Eric Nordenson's progress report for the example above:



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“On September 7, 2023, MPD along with Washington County Mental Health (WCMH) and Barre City Police Department (BCPD) interviewed another candidate for the shared, embedded crisis worker. The candidate was relocating to Vermont around September 25, 2023, and has a background in military law enforcement and social services. She was offered a conditional offer of employment, pending a background check.

It should be noted that this position is strongly supported by MPD and the Montpelier community, but finding the right fit has been a challenge. Just like when we were hiring police officers, we decided we would not seek to just fill the position to get it filled, we wished to fill it with a qualified candidate who would be a good fit for Barre, Montpelier, and WCMH. We think we have identified that candidate.

On October 5th we will host our second Washington County Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT). Registrations have been very slow and MPD currently has 25% of their staff trained in this important topic. 100% of our sworn and dispatch staff is trained in Team 2 training, a scenario-based co-response model that MPD has been utilizing for over 20 years.

MPD is also working directly with the Vermont Responder Center for officers, dispatchers, staff, and family mental health wellness. We have also established a robust internal peer support initiative.

Chief Nordenson and Kristin Chandler (Team 2/WCMH) will be presenting at the Department of Mental Health Conference on October 19, 2023 in Killington, Vermont. The topic will be "The Intersection of Policing and Mental Health: Washington County's CIT Pilot Project".

Lastly, Chief Nordenson will be joining the Board of Directors at Washington County Mental Health and have an important seat at the table when decisions are made to support those in our community who are in crisis.”

October 6 Update: We are pleased to welcome Annie Kasper as our new crisis response team member. Annie has recently relocated from Texas where she has extensive experience with investigations and those experiencing mental health crises. Annie will be working for Washington County Mental Health Services and will be shared by our police department and the Barre City Police Department.



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Annie is currently attending the Washington County Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT) where she is building great relationships with our community partners. After completing CIT, she will spend the month of October working with WCMH and their orientation program.

Thank you for reading this article and for your interest in Montpelier City Government. Please contact me at 802-223-9502 or wfraser@montpelier-vt.org with questions or comments.