



America's Small Town Capital

Looking Toward the Future

By William Fraser, City Manager

November 16, 2022

With the recent elections just concluded, many of us are looking toward the future wondering what changes lay ahead. Here in Montpelier, we congratulate Mayor Anne Watson and City Council Member Conor Casey on their elections to the Vermont Senate and House respectively. We will see how this plays out locally with regard to possible Council changes. We also congratulate Senators Ann Cummings and Andy Perchlik on their re-election and congratulate Kate McCann for her election as a representative. Thanks to all the candidates for all of the seats – as always, a healthy democracy and government depend on people stepping forward to fill elected positions.

Budget

The City Council and city staff have begun work on the FY24 budget. Our current schedule calls for the Manager's budget to be presented to the Council on December 14th. The council will discuss the budget on December 21st as well as January 4th. Formal public hearings will be held on January 11th and Thursday, January 26th which is the deadline for completion. The annual City election (Town Meeting) will be held on Tuesday, March 7st.

Contrary to some local discussion, no budget or tax increase has been proposed. City staff presented a preliminary outline of budget challenges to the City Council using the current inflation rate of 8.2% as a guide. Neither the staff nor the Council has made any decisions about budget recommendations.

The December City Page in the Bridge will detail the City Manager's budget proposal.

Strategic Planning

The budget will be greatly informed and guided by the City Council's annual strategic planning and priority-setting process.

The Council updated their two-year plan on October 12th. They confirmed their six main goals:

- Improve Community Prosperity.
- Provide Responsible and Engaged Government.
- Create More Housing.
- Practice Good Environmental Stewardship.
- Build and Maintain Sustainable Infrastructure.
- Improve Public Health and Safety

Several strategies, initiatives, and activities were incorporated into the plan to help accomplish or advance these goals. Prioritized strategies were identified as:

- Effectively support Economic Development and promote Outdoor Economic Development.
- Communicate Effectively.
- Increase available housing units.
- Promote conservation of river, water, and land resources.
- Address climate change issues.
- Address new or improved infrastructure needs.
- Address homelessness in the community.
- Provide policing which fits Montpelier's needs and provides effective mental health support.

The full plan will along with quarterly progress reports is posted publicly.

National Citizen Survey:

Concurrent with Strategic Planning, the City Council has received the results of the statistically valid National Citizen Survey conducted for Montpelier by Polco. While a complete look at the survey data is necessary, the City notes that Montpelier residents rated certain areas higher than residents in benchmark communities and certain areas lower than residents in benchmark communities.

Where Montpelier Rated Lower than Benchmark:

- ✓ Overall quality of utility infrastructure
- ✓ Cost of Living (much lower)
- ✓ Ease of public parking
- ✓ Well-planned residential growth
- ✓ Variety of housing options (much lower)
- ✓ Availability of affordable quality housing (much lower)
- ✓ Overall quality of new development
- ✓ Availability of affordable quality childcare/preschool
- ✓ Economic Development
- ✓ Street Repair (much lower)
- ✓ Garbage collection
- ✓ Yard waste pick up
- ✓ Recreation centers or facilities

Where Montpelier Rated Higher than Benchmark:

- ✓ Montpelier as a place to visit
- ✓ Resident's connection and engagement with their community
- ✓ Vibrancy of downtown/commercial area
- ✓ Ease of walking
- ✓ Preservation of historical or cultural character of the community
- ✓ Availability of paths and walking trails

- ✓ Community support for the arts
- ✓ Opportunities to participate in community matters
- ✓ Watched a local public meeting
- ✓ Carpooled with other adults or children instead of driving alone
- ✓ Walked or biked instead of driving
- ✓ Public Library services

Full survey results, including demographic breakdowns, are posted on the city's website.

Winter Parking

Winter parking regulations will work the same as the last two years with alternate side parking.

Starting November 15th, vehicles must be parked on alternate sides of the street each night. On odd-numbered days (the 1st, 3rd, 5th, etc.), parking may occur on the side of the road with odd-numbered addresses. On even-numbered dates (the 2nd, 4th, 6th, etc.), parking may occur on the side of the road with even-numbered addresses.

This system will be in place and enforced from November 15th through April 1st, regardless of weather conditions. Having one side of the street clear every night will allow DPW to plow and remove snow more effectively.

Thank you for reading this article and for your interest in Montpelier city government. Please feel free to contact me at wfraser@montpelier-vt.org or 802-223-9502 with any questions, comments, or concerns.