

Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting
June 25, 2014
Montpelier City Hall Council Chambers

In attendance: Mayor John Hollar (presiding), City Councilors Tom Golonka, Thierry Guerlain, Jessica Edgerly Walsh, Justin Turcotte, Dona Bate, and Assistant City Manager Jessie Baker (Councilor Anne Watson was absent). City Clerk John Odum acted as Secretary of the meeting.

- 14-158. At 5:15 PM, the meeting was called to order by Council President Tom Golonka. Also present were Councilors Guerlain, Edgerly Walsh, Turcotte and Bate. At 5:16, Councilor Edgerly Walsh moved that the council enter executive session (and to include the Assistant City Manager and City Attorney Robert Fletcher) to discuss the Vermont College of Fine Arts vs. City, Tax Appeal Case. Councilor Golonka seconded. The motion carried unanimously.
- At 5:21, Mayor Hollar joined the meeting.
- At 6:16 Councilor Golonka moved the Council return to open session, and was seconded by Councilor Edgerly Walsh. The motion carried unanimously. Councilor Golonka moved for a recess to accommodate a brief meeting of the Board of Abatement. Councilor Turcotte seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- The Mayor called the meeting back to order at 6:30 PM to begin regular business.
- 14-160. Vicki Lane asked that future large-scale fireworks displays be clearly publicized so citizens could be prepared. She also noted it is still difficult to hear councilors on the television feed.
- Steven Syz asked if any of the Council members intend to replace those who normally clean up on July 3rd. The Mayor felt the question as phrased was inappropriate and Mr. Syz instead asked that the Council ensure the city is cleaned after July 3rd celebrations.
- Megan Schultz, organizer of the recent Park in the Street event, thanked the Council and the city and reported on the success of the event.
- 14-161. Councilor Guerlain moved approval of the consent agenda. Councilor Bate seconded. Councilor Edgerly Walsh asked that item g be pulled and the motion was so amended, passing unanimously at 6:36.
- Councilor Golonka moved to take the Boy Scout's request to sell water before the parade (tabled at the previous meeting) off the table. Councilor Turcotte seconded. Motion failed on a 3-2 vote (Councilors Guerlain, Bate, Edgerly Walsh voting nay).
- 14-163. The Mayor opened the public hearing on the One Taylor Street project.

Economist Richard Heaps reported on the One Taylor Street economic impact study examining the different potential uses of the site that have been under discussion. Mayor Hollar and Councilors had questions about some of the underlying figures and assertions supporting some of the report's conclusions regarding the potential residential use. Councilor Guerlain asked for additional information on the residential option.

Larry Williams of Redstone came forward to address councilor's questions. Councilor Guerlain asked about relative demand for housing and office space, given assumptions on parking capacity made in the study.

Another resident noted that green space, river access and public gathering space were part of the original vision and wondered if they were still part of the project. He further asked about the impact on the Farmer's Market.

Eric Hoekstra from Redstone responded to the question, relating his conversations with the Farmer's market that included the Assistant Manager.

Mr. Williams responded to Councilor Golonka's questions about potential residential use. Councilor Guerlain had questions about mixed use. Mr. Williams stayed at the table to answer questions from Nancy Sherman about contamination on the site.

Jay White rose to stress that the discussion should focus on what the city needs, rather than what would generate the most income. He advocated a flexible design that could be modified over time, if necessary. Mayor Hollar noted that this was a discussion of a private development, which had different implications than a public project.

Lindsay Wade read a prepared statement, praising the recently announce agreement between Redstone and the Bashara family before advocating for housing on the site, as well as public/community use.

Ron Wild rose to advocate for residential or mixed use business/residential in order to integrate it well with the downtown. He then asked about the long-term relationship between the city and the developer. Mr. Williams responded to Mr. Wild's question.

Erica Garfin addressed the council, thanking the city for the public process around the project. She felt that parking and housing are commonly-cited needs in the city, and office space is generally not.

Joslyn Wilschek felt that office space in the location would be disappointing and would not encourage public use. She was particularly supportive of condominiums, while suggesting mixed use was not a good idea. She also had concerns and questions about the projected amount of transit traffic and its potential impact on residential use. Finally, she felt that the city erred in not fully identifying and acquiring access rights earlier in the process.

Mary Alice Bisbee suggested that seasonal housing could be an option, and felt that single-bedroom housing was more appropriate than two-bedroom. She suggested that downtown housing could encourage less vehicle use by young residents.

Jim Eikenberry spoke in favor of apartments.

Bob Troester asked about the costs for a transit center (and bike path) only. The Mayor responded, enumerating the financial impacts for the city.

The mayor closed the public hearing at 7:54 before calling for a recess. The meeting reconvened at 8:08.

- 14-164. Tax Collector Bev Hill gave the Council an update on delinquent taxes, water and sewer bills, and the city's established policies surrounding them. Councilors had question about enforcement and abatement policies.

Councilor Guerlain moved that the Council request the Finance Department to come back with a report showing what the financial impact would be to reduce the delinquent tax & water/sewer late penalty from 8% to 5% within 5 business days of the due date. Councilor Golonka seconded. Motion carried unanimously at 8:39.

- 14-161(g). The Council returned to consent agenda item g (a request that the Council accept the Community National Bank's bid for a Tax Anticipation Note for \$2,500,000 for FY15 to cover the expenses for the General Fund, School Department and Recreation Department). Finance Director Sandra Gallup stepped to the microphone to respond to Councilor Edgerly Walsh's questions about the item.

Councilor Edgerly Walsh moved approval of item g. Councilor Guerlain seconded. The motion carried unanimously at 8:41.

On a supplemental agenda item, the Council considered a request from Montpelier Alive to waive the noise ordinance until 10:00PM on July 3rd. Similarly, the Council entertained a request from McGillicuddy's to waive the noise ordinance on Langdon Street on July 3rd until 1AM for their annual block party. Councilor Guerlain moved approval of both requests, and Councilor Edgerly Walsh seconded. The motion carried unanimously at 8:42.

- 14-165. Councilor Bate related emails from constituents indicating confusion around the decision on developing the One Taylor Street lot, and echoed some of that uncertainty herself. The Mayor elaborated on the decision-making process, acknowledging that it may not have been as clear as it could've been.

Councilor Bate encouraged councilors to wear Berlin Pond buttons (or carry signs) in the July 3 parade, and also indicated there was an upcoming demonstration being planned on the matter.

Councilor Turcotte thanked citizens for their involvement in the One Taylor Street process and expressed excitement about an upcoming city event. Finally, he noted that Ken Jones was working on a financial analysis to present to the city.

- 14-166. The Mayor announced that the Boy Scouts would not be helping clean up after the July 3rd celebration and encouraged councilors to join him in assisting in the cleanup. He also noted the banner to be used in the parade.

The Mayor also noted that he had been asked to participate in a reading of a historic Frederick Douglass speech as part of the July 3rd celebration, inviting councilors to join him. Finally, he reported positively on the Park in the Street event the previous weekend.

- 14-168. Assistant City Manager Baker noted the upcoming Senior Center annual meeting. She also noted that the Planning Department and the Energy Committee was moving forward on a \$5 million grant/prize project. Finally, she reported on the upcoming mental health summit at the senior center.

- 14-167. The City Clerk reported on some of the changes to the open meeting law.

Councilor Edgerly Walsh moved to adjourn. Councilor Guerlain seconded. Motion carried unanimously at 8:54 PM.