

**Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting
November 28, 2012
City Council Chambers, Montpelier City Hall**

In attendance: Mayor John Hollar (presiding), City Manager Bill Fraser, City Councilors Andy Hooper, Alan Weiss, Angela Timpone, Anne Watson, and Tom Golonka. City Clerk John Odum acted as Secretary of the Meeting. Councilor Thierry Guerlain was absent.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Hollar at 6:31.

12-287. Councilor Weiss asked that item (f) from the previous meeting's Consent Agenda (updates to The City of Montpelier Title VI and Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) plan and policy) which had been tabled, be taken off the table and added to the current consent agenda. Kevin Casey took a moment to explain the item.

Mayor Hollar cited the 15% increase in health care costs, noting that he'd like to discuss the matter in more depth at a later date. Finance Director Sandy Gallup spoke briefly to explain that it amounts to a 5% budgetary increase based on the calendar.

Councilor Weiss moved approval of the amended Consent Agenda, Councilor Hooper seconded. It passed unanimously at 6:36.

12-289. At the Mayor's request, City Manager Fraser summarized the written material detailing the bids. The preferred bid was offered by Kingsbury Construction.

Councilor Golonka asked for some clarification relating to finances and logistics of the school's participation. He also wondered about the status of the review of the water and sewer lines, as well as contingency plans for inadvertent damage done in the District Heat construction process. Fraser indicated that Golonka's concerns had borne out, and there were a couple places where care will be necessary – and which may provide opportunities to make some improvements to that system.

Finally, Golonka asked about the status of agreement with the state on language providing for spinning off the project into a third party or separate entity. Fraser indicated that agreement was reached with the state, but beyond that, it was in the preliminary stage, and advised that in any final third party arrangement, the city would likely continue to own the infrastructure.

Councilor Weiss asked about the charge structure in the proposal – specifically capacity rate versus the delivery rate – whether it was reflected in the proposal. Fraser assured him it was. Councilor Weiss further asked about the status of the Courthouse as a client, and whether the process to solidify that relationship had progressed. Assistant Judge Barney Bloom rose to assure the Council that participation had been budgeted for by the County.

Councilor Weiss asked if the construction bond includes all piping controls, meters, electric power – items that may be considered peripherals but necessary for the project to run. City Manager Fraser indicated that they were included. Bill Neuberger rose to concur, with the exception of the metering system and the heat exchanger.

Councilor Weiss noted that in the first five years of operation, expenses will exceed revenues. He asked how that deficit would be made up. Fraser indicated that between prepayment, the bond, and other issues, there would be a surplus in the aggregate.

Weiss also asked about the status of the third party ownership option, and Fraser repeated that the state had agreed to language accepting that.

Fraser also offered Weiss clarification on the ownership cycles envisioned in the project. Weiss also asked how Montpelier will provide power into the system during the 5 months the boiler is not running. Fraser indicated that it would be domestic hot water provided through the City Hall system. District Heat fund will pay that cost. That will be fuel oil based.

The Mayor spoke positively and enthusiastically about the project before calling for a motion.

Councilor Hooper moved approval of the Contract Award Recommendation, Councilor Timpone seconded. The motion passed 4-1, with Councilor Weiss voting no, at 6:52 PM.

12-290. Police Chief Tony Facos and Fire Chief Bob Gowans rose to brief the Council on the public safety departments. Facos reviewed the structure and mission of the department, as well as the allocation of personnel and resources. He compared the staffing structure with that of Barre City, and went over some of the statistics on calls and arrests. He went on to explain the changes the department would like to see to improve operations.

Councilor Timpone had several questions on the details of crimes against children, narcotics, guns, and sexual assaults. Councilor Hooper asked for clarification on Vermont gun laws.

Chief Facos also indicated that some of the city's approach to drug crime was being replicated in Rutland due to its success. At Councilor Timpone's questioning, Facos indicated that much of the department's approach was "proactive."

Mayor Hollar asked about the Matrix conclusion that the proactive versus reactive policing ratio was overly slanted to the "proactive." Facos indicated that incident numbers have increased, their tactical and strategic approach to deploying their proactive resources have changed, and these elements have

somewhat balanced that (while granting that there will be some nights where that ratio remains closer to how Matrix had identified it).

Facos reviewed some of the cooperative efforts underway, noting the lack of state or federal funding for some of the mandated cooperative expectations. He briefly touched on the department's training models as well.

Chief Facos shared his thoughts on the regionalization process, speaking supportively of regionalizing dispatch and contrasting it with current contracts with neighboring communities. The concern he noted was that if regional dispatch was not based in Montpelier, the police building would often be inaccessible to the public due to staffing schedule changes. Councilor Golonka thought that the Chief should veer away from such specifics and respond only to the broadly defined approach (which Facos supported).

Beyond communications/dispatch, Facos felt that a broader regionalization could bring benefits, so long as the funding was appropriate – but he was concerned about the early ideas around the number of full-time officers in such a system. Facos questioned the projected \$187,000 savings for Montpelier suggested in the report.

Mayor Hollar asked the Chief if he would be amenable to continuing the Budget Committee process by looking at his department. He indicated he would be, and suggested some professional development for him as a department head could yield savings. He advised that phone and record management systems would need to be upgraded soon. To close, he briefly reviewed departmental performance metrics.

Councilor Hooper asked why Montpelier PD resources were so parallel to Barre City's. Facos discussed how crime rate statistics are tracked, and how they can be deceptive.

Fire Chief Gowans briefed the Council on the structure, status and mission of the department, and its impact on the budget (particularly the decrease in the overtime budget). He also reviewed the increase in the number of calls over the last decade, characterizing it as roughly a 3% per year increase (driven largely by emergency medical calls). 98% of emergent calls are responded to within 3:21. This is well above industry expectations and the national average.

Chief Gowans reviewed the department's outreach to schools and the community CPR instruction. He discussed how the department interacts with regional support services. He also noted the grants received by the department to support equipment purchases, as well as new grants applied for. He reviewed the departmental fleet and discussed how additional years of work are being squeezed out of several.

Gowans noted the regional contracts they are party to. He expressed some concern on the personnel depth/capacity for building inspection, and indicated

department personnel would be trained in the procedures. Long term issues cited by Chief Gowans included the potential loss in federal grant funds, significant upcoming changes in state certification requirements, health care reimbursement for ambulance service, and the water/hydrant system. Gowans also indicated that internal policies and procedures are being updated. He expressed his concern at the lack of a fireworks ordinance.

The chief unequivocally stated he thought the First Night floating sky lanterns were an unacceptable risk, and that he had not approved them. He also spoke positively about the sprinkler ordinance; although he indicated he believed there was room for modification of the ordinance in regards to property renovations. Additions of less than 1000 feet or 50% do not need sprinkling, and he recommended adding language allowing for an alternate, lower-impact/lower-cost plan for larger additions.

Mayor Hollar suggested it be made into a motion for a later meeting. Councilor Weiss recommended the Chief work through the sprinkler committee, and the Mayor concurred.

Chief Gowans addressed the Budget Committee report, noting his responses to the fifteen recommendations in the final document. One recommendation discussed was that ambulance transfers be eliminated. Gowans believed that they should be continued - that despite the overtime costs, the city ends up financially benefitting under the current approach.

The committee also questioned the process of sending a fire truck on every ambulance call. Gowans replied that it's an industry best practice followed by all other towns.

Councilor Weiss returned to the subject of ambulance transfers, wondering what the effect of the two ambulances at the Berlin Hospital on their operations are. Gowans indicated that they do far fewer transfers now than they used to.

On the regional public safety report, Gowans indicated he was a supporter of the regionalization concept for several reasons. In response to a question from Councilor Golonka, he indicated additional federal grants would be available for regional systems. He also suggested there could be opportunity for equipment reductions under such a system.

Mayor Hollar solicited feedback from the Council on how to move forward with the regionalization process, based on the proposal that was made at the November 15th committee meeting. Councilor Golonka noted that the political question of whether or not the city would be willing to surrender much of its authority over public safety services, and that he would need clarity on that soon. He also noted that it may be necessary to proceed with just Montpelier and Barre City under the agreement, noting that the formula would ease smaller towns into the arrangement, but that it would entail budgetary increases.

Councilor Weiss suggested that the city attorney begin the process of drawing up documents to formalize a potential arrangement.

Councilor Watson indicated continued interest in the process, but noted her right to object based on future information.

Mayor Hollar referred to his interaction with Barre Mayor Lauzon suggesting ways Lauzon's expressed concerns about the process could be addressed.

- 12-291. Councilor Weiss reported on the Vermont State Colleges open house, indicating that the building improvements were excellent, and that VSC was happy to be there. He also noted that the upcoming Washington County budget meeting, and expressed his intent to attend.

Councilor Hooper reported on Montpelier Alive's expectation to have an assessment district on the ballot to change their funding mechanism. The Mayor suggested to Councilor Hooper (who serves on the Montpelier Alive board) that the Council would appreciate a briefing on the issue.

Councilor Timpone thanked Chief Facos and the Police Department for her ridealong.

Councilor Hooper asked for clarification on the Council meeting schedule.

- 12-292. The Mayor indicated, in discussion with the City Manager, that the next council meeting should be put off until December 12th when budget materials would be ready. He recommended that the Council be somewhat deferential to the Manager on budgetary details. He also suggested to the Council that they consider proposing offsetting budgetary reductions with any additions made in the process of deliberation.

Councilor Weiss wanted clear delineation on discussions of the basic city budget, versus capital budgets that are bonded for.

- 12-294. City Manager Fraser reported that budget work was underway, and again requested that the budget introduction be moved to the 12th, with the rest of the schedule remaining the same.

Councilor Hooper called for adjournment, Councilor Golonka seconded. The motion passed unanimously at 8:48.