

Minutes of the Montpelier City Council Meeting
September 25, 2019 6:30pm
City Council Chambers

In attendance: Mayor Anne Watson (Chair), Councilors Dona Bate, Conor Casey, Glen Hutcheson, Jack McCullough, Ashley Hill and Lauren Hierl. City Clerk John Odum acted as secretary.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:30.

19-273. Proposed agenda approved by unanimous consent.

19-274. Under general business, Fire Chief Gowans received 40 year pin presented by City Manager Fraser.

Other speakers and their topics included:

Zach Hughes: Thanks to Chief Facos for his engagement with the Mental Health Council and announcement of a team to respond to people living on the street. He also thanked the City for openness on climate demonstration.

Richard Sheir: Concerns about street closing process and communication between City Manager and Council.

Ken Russell: Homelessness Task Force member, offered meeting report and expressed group's priorities. Brief discussion. Offered the following resolution language: "take any action necessary, including identifying available funds, to open-up the Bethany shelter as soon as possible and staff it until the Good Samaritan contract begins."

Seth Collins: Would like to see implementation of a "feminist" neighborhood watch. Brief discussion followed.

Steven Whitaker: Concerns about City Center restroom availability, inadequate City response to his questions regarding the original sales conditions, signage and garbage collection on the bike path bridge, concerns about "vigilantes" harassing homeless.

Further discussion on homelessness recommendation. Rick DeAngelis and Rob Farrell, as well as Ken Russell and Steven Whitaker participated.

Councilor Bate moved the City Council "puts this item on its October 9 agenda or the very first October meeting we have and that the committee and the providers will come forth with more information and more clear numbers and likewise staff will come back with more options of where we could find money should we decide that we want that." Councilor McCullough seconded. Further discussion followed.

Councilor Hutcheson moved to amend the motion to approve the Homelessness Task Force's recommendation as it stands and move forward as soon as possible. The motion to amend died for lack of a second.

The underlying motion was, by unanimous consent, approved to be amended to read "at next October city council meeting we consider the request to fund the opening of the homeless shelter early and at that October meeting we hear from the homelessness task force and the providers at Bethany and from the staff on sources for funds." The motion passed unanimously.

The City Manager introduced Lisa Maxwell, the new head of the Montpelier Development Corporation.

19-275. Consent agenda – discussion of item c. consent: McCullough move, Hutcheson second. Unanimous at 7:32

19-276. Zoning item: Planning Director Mike Miller opened discussion. The public hearing opened at 7:35. Comments came from Joe Castellano (reading comments from Phyllis Rubenstein) and Seth Collins. The Mayor closed the public hearing at 7:30.

Councilor McCullough moved approval of proposed zoning changes as presented tonight with the agenda. Seconded by Councilor Bate.

Councilor Hill moved to amend the motion to remove the border changes from the property line. Motion to amend died for lack of a second.

After further discussion, the motion carried 5-1 (Councilor Hill voting nay).

19-277. Michael Sherman spoke in support of his candidacy to the Community Fund Board. Councilor Casey moved the reappointment of Michael Sherman to the Community Fund Board. Councilor Bate seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

19-278. Marcella Dent addressed the council regarding her candidacy for the Regional Planning Commission. Councilor McCullough moved to appoint Marcella Dent to the Regional Planning Commission. Councilor Hill seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

19-279. The Confluence Park discussion opened with a presentation by Roy Schiff and Ricarda Ericson. Councilor Bate moved that the city accept concept (e) as our vision for our river parks concept. Councilor McCullough seconded. After more discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

The Mayor called a recess at 7:54. The meeting reconvened at 8:03. Councilor Hill left the meeting.

19-280. The public hearing regarding proposed changes to City Ordinances Chapter 7 opened at 8:03. No public comments were offered.

Following discussion, Councilor McCullough moved to amend 7-1 to include those words ("except materials being fermented for human consumption"). Councilor Hutcheson seconded. Unanimous (5-0) in favor.

Councilor Hutcheson moved to strike the words "government sanctioned" from the composting section. Councilor Casey seconded. Discussion followed.

The proposal was amended without objection to change the related composting language to "maintenance of a composting bin or a vessel in compliance with state law or regulation."

Councilor McCullough moved" from the last line of 7-2 to change the semicolon after composting to a comma." Councilor Hutcheson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

The Mayor closed the public hearing at 8:16.

Councilor Bate moved to accept the Ordinance Chapter 7 changes as amended. Councilor Hierl seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

19-281. The public hearing on proposed Chapter 8 ordinance changes was opened at 8:17.

After discussion, Councilor Hutcheson moved to change the proposed language to "no person owning or who has custody and control of any domestic animal except cats shall permit such animal to go at large." Councilor McCullough seconded. After brief further discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

After further discussion, Councilor Hutcheson moved the Council approve changes to ordinance sections to 8-3 and 8-4 as read back by the City Manager. Councilor McCullough seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Councilor McCullough moved to pass the Chapter 8 ordinance changes as amended. Councilor Bate seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The public hearing was closed at 8:34.

19-282. City Manager Frazer delivered a strategic plan update. Discussion followed. No formal action taken.

19-284. Councilor Bate noted the coming Enchanted Forest event at Hubbard Park before asking visitors to the city to turn their side mirrors in while parking. Finally she expressed frustration with the system to review the agenda.

Councilor Casey reported that he is working on a draft of a responsible contracting ordinance based on staff input.

Councilor Hutcheson announced the drawing class at the TW Wood Gallery before reminding listeners of his weekly meetings at Bagitos.

Councilor McCullough indicated he had reached out to Secretary of State Staff to advise on municipal licensing.

Councilor Hierl noted the gathering of energy committees around the region at coming meeting on October 2. She also offered an energy efficiency ordinance report.

12-285. The Mayor also reported on the progress towards an energy efficiency ordinance before reporting on Drive Electric Day and commending the Police Department for their work during the recent climate demonstration. Finally, she noted the coming ribbon cutting for the Taylor Street project.

12-286. The Clerk clarified his concerns about motion wording.

12-287. The City Manager reported on a severe water leak, as well as the recent transportation forum and his research on whether there was a public restroom requirement for the City Center building. He opened a brief discussion on the Council's October meeting schedule.

Hearing no objection, the Mayor adjourned the meeting by unanimous consent at 8:53.