

**St. Albans City Council  
Minutes of Meeting  
Monday, March 14, 2016  
City Hall, Auditorium**

A Finance Committee meeting and regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, March 14, 2016, at 5:45 pm in the City Hall Auditorium.

**Council Present:** Mayor Elizabeth Gamache, Aldermen: Tim Hawkins, Scott Corrigan, Jim Pelkey & Chad Spooner and Alderwomen Tammi DiFranco & Kate Laddison.

**Council Absent:** None absent.

**Staff Present:** Dominic Cloud, City Manager; Gary Taylor, Police Chief; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development; Tom Leitz, Director of Administration; Martin Manahan, Director of Operations; Kelly Viens, Recreation Director and Sue Krupp, City Clerk & Treasurer.

**Visitors:** See attached sign-in sheet.

1. Finance Committee Meeting.

a. Call to Order, Tim Hawkins.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Tim Hawkins at 5:50 pm.

b. Update from Steve Burnett, Investment Advisor.

Mr. Burnett of The Richards Group introduced himself and provided a brief market update. There has been an uptick in the market over last 6 years. 2015 was a flat year in all of the major U.S. Equity categories and International Equity categories were down significantly. Troubled areas are due to significantly low oil prices. Other factors include a shift in China's economy to rely more on domestic consumption vs. government spending. The U.S. has exhibited some resilience to ongoing challenges by achieving its sixth consecutive year of slow, steady growth, however, there has been an exhibited continued growth in employment but not an increase in wages. In 2016, the market is expected to see continued volatility. It is likely that market movements will continue to be heavily influenced by oil, foreign economic activity, the strengthening U.S. dollar and geopolitical challenges

Mr. Burnett explained that he began working on the City pension in 2013 when it was invested entirely in the Prudential GDA (Guaranteed Deposit Account). This account had a 4% interest rate for "old" balances and 2.85% for "new" balances. This generates a crediting rate that averages approximately 3.25%. Given the impact of inflation and the need to grow the pension balance to offset benefit payment costs, the decision was made to invest 35% in a diversified equity portfolio effective January 1, 2014. The current Investment Policy Statement allows for an equity allocation of between 35% - 55

To date, all the new money contributions to the plan have been invested in the GDA. The current equity exposure of the portfolio remains at approximately 35%. Prior to the recent market retractions in the last 12 months, the equity exposure had grown to almost 40% of the overall portfolio. The Investment Committee believes that the equity exposure should gradually be increased to enhance long term gains. This will be accomplished through "dollar cost averaging" of majority of new contributions to the plan into equity holding and real estate. Mr. Burnett noted that the approach for the next twelve months is as follows:

- Continue to have benefit payment withdrawn from the GDA balance.

- Adjust the current portfolio asset allocation by 5% to target a 40% Equity/60% Fixed Income allocation.
- For the next planned annual deposit due in July, 2016, invest 75% in Equity/Real Estate holdings and the remaining 25% into the GDA.

Mr. Cloud asked Mr. Burnett why the City wouldn't want to invest more than 40%. Mr. Burnett responded that it is impossible to time the markets and the best way to diversify is from the get go or gradually over time. Mr. Burnett explained that the funds are monitored on a regular basis. Mr. Hawkins asked if it's correct that we should be staying between 6% and 6.5% for the earnings rate. Mr. Burnett responded affirmatively. Mr. Hawkins asked Mr. Burnett if he is concerned about depletion of the funds. Mr. Burnett responded that he is concerned about having enough earnings to offset the depletion of funds. Mr. Hawkins asked how council would know if the fund nears depletion. Mr. Burnett stated that the plan is under-funded at 60%. Mr. Leitz stated that the actuarial is conservative and discussed changing the assumptions. Mr. Leitz stated that he doesn't see an immediate need to do anything different but believes there will be a dramatically different picture in 3-5 years and recommended slowly bumping up contributions. Mr. Hawkins asked if the goal is to be 100% funded. Mr. Leitz responded that the City Council has the authority to issue debt to finance a deficit without voter approval, so in theory, could fund the plan at 100%. He added that the goal is to never put the City in a position where there isn't a fund or in the position where the City is paying benefits that it didn't budget for. Mr. Hawkins asked Mr. Burnett how the City Council will know when there is something they should be concerned about and asked Mr. Burnett for a watch list the next time he presents. Mr. Burnett stated that the key with this portfolio is that 65% is invested in GSD and nothing can happen to it. The rest of the portfolio is a very typical diversified allocation. Mr. Hawkins asked if the auditor looks at the City's pension. Mr. Cloud responded affirmatively. Mr. Cloud recommended bringing Mr. Burnett to present more often. Mr. Leitz added that he can add portfolio information in the quarterly financial statements.

c. Consider recommendation from investment advisor regarding rebalancing of pension investments (D&V).

**A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Corrigan to continue to have benefit payments withdrawn from the GDA balance, adjust the current portfolio asset allocation by 5% to target 40% Equity/60% Fixed Income allocation and for the next planned annual deposit due in July, 2016, invest 75% in Equity/Real Estate holdings and the remaining 25% into the GDA. Vote was unanimous, 3-0.**

2. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Gamache opened the regular meeting and led the pledge of allegiance at 6:30 pm.

3. Public Comment.

Mr. Barber noted his safety concern for the home on Walnut Street that was recently burned in the fire. He stated that he spoke with Chief Taylor who confirmed that the structure will be taken down. He also noted his concern for a sidewalk on Cedar Street that is only a year or so old and already have multiple cracks across them. He is equally concerned that the same thing might happen if the same contractor is used for the upcoming sidewalk project. He asked what the guarantee is that it won't continue to happen. Mr. Cloud stated that he will have staff take a look at it.

4. Review of Police Department Calendar Year Statistics, Chief Taylor.

Chief Taylor explained that the Department tracks calendar year stats to look for trends but also does a deeper dive using fiscal stats which is what the budget is based upon. In 2015, the Police Department handled 12,512 calls which is down by .65% over 2014. Of those calls, 3,827 were calls for Police Service in the Town (20% increase over 2014) and 8,521 calls were for services in the City (21% increase). Chief

Taylor noted that since using the Valcour system, the Department is now tracking certain statistics, such as motor vehicle stops that were not compared in the past. The Police Department made 747 arrests; 519 of those arrests were in the City and 228 were in the Town. The Department took 113 public inebriates into protective custody; 99 of which were in the City and 14 in the Town. Of the public inebriates taken into custody, 83 were male and 30 were female. A total of 3,752 Motor Vehicle stops were conducted last year; 1,019 tickets and 1,254 warnings were issued in the City. A total of 477 Motor Vehicle Accidents were responded to; 233 in the City and 244 in the Town. DUI arrests were up by 19% with a total of 101 arrests; 69 occurred in the City and 32 occurred in the Town. Mr. Hawkins noted that it would be interesting to see what times of the day the arrests occurred. Chief Taylor responded that almost all of the arrests occur between 10:30 pm and the hour the bars close. The Police Department charged 87 people operating without a license, 56 of which were in the City. There were a total of 7 Armed Robberies last year; 6 in the City and 1 in the Town. The Department responded to 165 Domestic Disturbances last year; 128 in the City (78%) and 37 in the Town (22%). Chief Taylor added that consistently this year, a little over 30% of the Department's time has been spent responding to the Town's calls. Officers issued 1,732 Parking tickets last year, 1,726 of which were in the City.

Chief Taylor explained that Central Dispatch is now a regional dispatch center, dispatching for 38 emergency entities in two Counties and part of a third (the Town of Westford in Chittenden County). Last year, Central Dispatch handled 112,569 calls; 20,463 of which were for Police, Fire and Rescue, 19,084 of which were 911 calls and 73,022 of which were informational and contact telephone calls.

Mayor Gamache asked Chief Taylor for a general overview in trends. Chief Taylor responded that he believes the Department is tracking well and receiving more tip line and informational calls. He added that there is a lot of undercover drug work going on in the City. The Department has had a high seizure rate of crack cocaine recently and continues to aggressively fight the drug problem while seeing less of diverted prescription drug-related crimes. Crack cocaine and heroin have become so cheap and readily available on the streets. The Department has experienced more drug overdoses than in the past and have been more than a half a dozen lives saved by the officers and Rescue. Chief Taylor noted that the percentage of burglaries and robberies are down over last year. Fatalities and serious injuries are also down which can be correlated to stepped up traffic enforcement.

Chief Taylor noted that a Safety Order was issued on the building that burned nearly to the ground on Walnut Street. He explained that the property owner has until Friday to raise the building and make the site safe and has every expectation that it will be done. He received confirmation today that there was an accelerant in the building and the fire is now being treated as an arson.

Mr. Pelkey found it interesting that based on the statistics provided, Friday's are the busiest day of the week in the Town and Tuesday's are the busiest day in the City. Mr. Spooner noted the top five locations where the most police related activity occurs and asked if there are certain houses that the Police visit repetitively and asked if anything is being done to reduce those visits. Mr. Taylor responded affirmatively. He noted that a Northwest Counselor is assigned to the Police Department to assist in repeat calls to any of Northwest Counseling's clients and has been widely successful. Chief Taylor explained that he is in the process of drafting a letter to some of the area's gas stations about gasoline drive-offs close to the interstate and stated that there are significant training resources and remedies that business owners can use. He added that Com-Stat meetings continue to be held once per month. Mayor Gamache asked what those meetings entail. Chief Taylor responded that they are monthly meetings where different trends, data and statistics are analyzed and are attended by different departments and agencies in the City and the Town. Mr. Spooner asked if the City's data is similar to other towns in Franklin County. Chief Taylor stated that many of the problems the City once

experienced have migrated north of the St. Albans, however, St. Albans City tends to be busier because it is a shire town and houses the hospital, a shelter, soup kitchen and State assistance.

5. Adjourn for Liquor Control (see separate agenda).

**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Corrigan to recess for liquor control at 6:49 pm. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

6. Interview Amy Paradis for Planning Commission.

Mayor Gamache welcomed Planning Commission candidate, Amy Paradis and explained that she'd be asking a series of interview questions. Later in the agenda, council will make a decision to either increase the number of seats on the board to 6 or to make an appointment as an Alternate. Mayor Gamache proceeded to ask Ms. Paradis the following questions:

a. What has motivated you to apply and serve on the Planning Commission?

Ms. Paradis explained that she is a landlord and currently owns two properties in St. Albans with the hopes of expanding. She read the Housing Study which she found very interesting and is a supporter of the City of St. Albans.

b. What experiences in your background have influenced your desire to serve on this board?

She has worked in the public sector in some capacity for 10 years and as a landlord, she has experience with tenant/landlord and housing issues. Mayor Gamache asked Ms. Paradis if her public sector experience has all been in VT. Ms. Paradis responded affirmatively.

c. What contributions do you think you will make to the board?

She would bring a lot of knowledge about the housing industry in the State and local area and is well versed in writing policies and budgeting.

d. What are the qualities of a successful Planning Commission?

Being active, approachable, willing to work in concert with everyone involved in the process and being knowledgeable.

e. What is your vision for the Planning Commission?

She would like to see the commission take stock of the local current housing and find ways for tenants and landlords to work together to make improvements.

Mr. Barber stated that he has spoken with Ms. Paradis and believes she would be an excellent candidate and addition to the Planning Commission. He would recommend increasing the commission by one chair to resolve attendance issues.

7. Parks Commission Recommendations.

Mayor Gamache introduced Mr. Chevalier, Chair of the Parks Commission. Mr. Chevalier stated that the commission is in strong support of art in the City's parks. Upon lengthy discussion, it was decided that qualifying or quantifying art is a difficult if not impossible task, and that the commission supports consideration of all types of art displays on a case by case manner while applying the questions of safety, appropriateness, placement and duration. The commission presented a possible template for art placement applications and supports administrative approval by the City Manager and/or staff instead of having to wait for the application to go before the council or commission for approval. Mayor Gamache noted that it is exciting to see the diverging focus of arts in the City.

Mr. Chevalier presented the following priorities cumulated by the Parks Commission;

1. Parking at Houghton Park

- a. A large amount of parking is currently being taken up from 5 M – 3 pm with employees from Mylan and INS. There are also reports of residents using the parking during the winter. It is

believed that there are cars parked there that are inoperable. It is also believed that a lot of the unsavory behavior is not necessarily happening in the park, but in and between the cars parked in the spaces. Snow removal is difficult with cars parked there all day, and then snowbanks become an issue pushing cars further into the street with the reduction of parking space. The fire hydrant is regularly parked in front of. The City is making a significant investment in Houghton Park with the new playground and not having adequate parking gives a mixed message. The commission would like easy access for families wanting to use the area.

- b. As suggestions for consideration the commission offers: 2.5 hour parking, or some type of permitted parking as well as increasing signage to give notice of whatever solution is reached.
2. Pavilion at Houghton Park (similar to the pavilion at the St. Albans City Pool). It is the commission's opinion that a covered facility would create a place for families and allow for more events to be held on site.
3. Drinking fountain at Houghton Park

Mr. Chevalier stated that it is also the commission's opinion that more activities and events should take place at Houghton Park sighting examples such as the Easter Egg Hunt and Winter Carnival. It is thought that activity, presence and accessibility should follow the investments made to Houghton Park to help create a positive image projecting a safe, family venue to enact a culture shift in the use and consideration of Houghton Park. The new playground at Houghton Park is scheduled for installation in early April. Removal of existing features will begin late March and will be done by Public Works. The new playground will take two full days to complete. Removed features that are in good shape will be reinstalled at other locations with the primary consideration for relocation being the City Pool. The commission would also like to be included in the discussion for tree replacement once the cottonwood trees currently at Houghton Park are removed.

#### 4. The Fountain at Taylor Park

The commission sees urgency now in the final plan for work around the base of the fountain and in Taylor Park and would like to be part of that process working with Mike Willard of SE Group. Additionally, the commission would like to continue working with Mr. Willard in developing long-term plans for each of the City's parks which would demonstrate continuity throughout the City.

Mr. Chevalier noted that the parking issue at Houghton Park is one that he had brought up to council in the past and has been an ongoing problem. He has noticed that there are a lot of empty spaces in the INS parking lot during the day and isn't sure why their employees aren't parking in the INS lot. Mr. Spooner responded that contractors are not allowed to park in the main INS parking lot and agreed that the parking issue has gotten increasingly worse. Mr. Chevalier asked what the old Handy parking lot is used for. Mr. Spooner responded that he believes Mylan contracts to use that space. Mr. Pelkey asked Mr. Cloud if the parking along Houghton Park is public. Mr. Cloud responded that the parking is City-owned but not actively managed. He explained that staff could choose to time limit all of the parking and add it to the enforcement program or time limit a portion of the spaces. Mr. Spooner noted that there is a triplex located on South Elm Street with no driveway and the tenants have no other choice but to park in the Houghton Park spaces.

Mayor Gamache asked Mr. Cloud if he'd like to come back with a recommendation. Mr. Cloud stated that the Parks Commission is advocating to put the park first which is their charge. When staff has looked at the parking issue in the past, surveys have shown that there were always spaces available. Mayor Gamache stated that she has concerns for the park as well as resident concerns. Mr. Pelkey commented that if the City can create public parking on Maiden Lane and Main Street designated for

certain businesses, it should be able to designate parking for Houghton Park. Mr. Chevalier added that if improvements are made to the park and there is no parking available, people will not visit and stressed the importance of making sure the park is accessible to the public. Mayor Gamache asked Mr. Cloud if staff has interactions with INS. Mr. Cloud responded that staff can manage the relationships with INS but the issue is the community impact and finding parking for the residents. Mr. Cloud stated that he will do some work to find a way to accomplish the goal without being too destructive. Mr. Chevalier stated that there is currently demand for roughly 7 spaces for resident parking which would allow the remaining spaces to be open for park use only. Angie Sturm, a member of the Parks Commission stressed that the commission cares about the residents that park there as well. Mr. Spooner asked if the same parking issue exists at Barlow Street. Ms. Viens responded negatively. Mr. Cloud asked what time of day would be a good time to observe the problem. Mr. Spooner noted anytime in the morning before coming to work. Ms. DiFranco stated that the workers begin leaving the parking lot at 2:30 pm. Mr. Chevalier added that since Houghton Street has been blocked off, South Elm Street has become more busy.

Mr. Barber stated that during a walk, he noticed parking spaces in front of Green Mountain Power on Lower Welden Street blocked off and asked if they are in the public right of way. In terms of the Houghton Park parking issue, he believes a letter should be sent to all involved parties. He added that his only concern with the Taylor Park fountain is with the bank of gravel and doesn't believe it's a good long term solution because it has already moved. Mr. Sawyer responded that the gravel is a stop measure and staff plan to take a further look at it this year.

Mr. Manahan stated that there are several residents who live on Main Street and sell passes to the municipal lots. He believes the parking at Houghton Park could be managed in a similar fashion. Mr. Cloud stated that the issue is that anyone can buy a parking pass and there is no residency test to prove that the person buying the space is in fact a resident. Mr. Pelkey stated that another possible idea would be to make South Elm Street one-way southbound with parking along one side. Mr. Cloud asked how many parking spaces currently exist along Houghton Park. Mr. Spooner responded that there are about 35. Mr. Chevalier stated that he believes there are only 7 residents that absolutely would need to use the Houghton Park spaces. Mr. Spooner stated that he would guess the number is closer to 12. Mr. Cloud suggested creating 20 parking spaces with a 2 ½ hour time limit and 10 parking spaces requiring a parking permit. Mr. Spooner noted that there is only one vehicle in the triplex right now but if 3 other families move in with 2 cars each, there will not be enough parking.

8. Second Reading, proposed amendments to Title 17 of City Ordinances concerning intersections, bike lanes and no parking areas.

Mr. Sawyer noted that the purpose of this amendment is to clarify some rules and making way for bike lanes. Changes are in Section 5158 to strengthen the justification or rule that would prevent someone from entering an intersection if they know they can't clear it. The plan would be to hatch out the area and put up a sign that says do not block the intersection and would be used at Main, Lake and Fairfield Street. The change would also prohibit parking on a bike lane. Section 5170 states that you cannot drive on a bike lane unless directed to do so by a public safety official, or if crossing to enter a driveway or street. Section 5308 lists all of the no parking areas in the City. Mr. Sawyer explained that there is a rule currently that says you cannot park within 50 feet of another street which caused some issues with the State's Class I paving project. In the State's plans, parking spaces would not be put in where the City's ordinances doesn't allow them. The State and Federal standard states that you can't park within 30 feet of a flashing signaled stop sign or traffic control light or 20 feet in any other case. The proposal is to adopt these general standards. Other minor changes were added to the list of no parking areas in the City which would also correspond to where the bike lanes would go.

9. Consider adoption of proposed amendments to Title 17 of City Ordinances (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to adopt proposed amendments to Title 17 of City Ordinances. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
10. Consider adoption of draft of agreement between City and St. Albans for the Future (D&V).  
 Mr. Sawyer noted a longstanding conversation about merging what was the Downtown Master Plan Implementation Committee and St. Albans for the Future Board of Directors in recognition of the fact that they were both working toward the same goals with limited resources. The merger is one of the reasons why the Downtown Program is strong and the envy of many other Downtown Programs in the State. That agreement lasted for 5 years and is now time to consider extending it. The Downtown Board and City Council recently extended the agreement through the end of April. The agreement itself adequately manages that merger and also incorporates a lot of the verbiage that is associated with the Downtown Designated Program itself. Mr. Sawyer explained to council that the option is to suggest changes, sign the agreement next month after the Downtown Board signs it, or wait until the April council meeting. Mayor Gamache noted that she had the opportunity to meet with different downtown organizations in Vermont over the last several months and thinks this model works. She believes it was very pivotal for the City in finding a relationship that is mutually supportive. If time is not of the essence, she would suggest bringing to the Downtown Board tomorrow and back before council in April.  
**A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to table for April meeting after the Downtown Board sees and approves the agreement. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
11. Consider Approval of Minutes: Reg. Mtg. 2/8/16 (D&V):  
**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 2/8/16 minutes. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
12. Consider Approval of Warrants: 2/19/16 & 3/11/16 (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve warrant from 2/19/16. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**  
**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve warrant from 3/11/16. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**  
**Agenda item # 14 was discussed next.**
13. Executive Session to discuss real estate developments, contract negotiations and appointments.  
 a. First Motion: The City Council hereby finds that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to find that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**  
 b. Second Motion: To enter Executive Session for the purposes of discussing 1) real estate purchase or lease options 2) contract negotiations and 3) appointment of a public officer (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Hawkins to enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing 1) real estate purchase or lease options 2) contract negotiations and 3) appointment of a public officer to include the City Manager, Kelly Viens and Marty Manahan. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
14. Consider appointment to Planning Commission (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey to appoint Amy Paradis to the Planning Commission as a voting member.** Mr. Cloud asked if council could first take some testimony from the Planning Director.

**Mr. Pelkey withdrew his motion.** Mr. Sawyer stated that there are no strong feelings from staff either way but in terms of a quorum, having an even board bumps you up one person in terms of a “quorum burden requirement.” If quorum is the concern, Mr. Sawyer stated that an Alternate does make the board stronger for the time being. Mayor Gamache asked what the maximum number of board members allowed is. Mr. Sawyer stated that he believes it’s 9. Mr. Barber stated that when he first started on the board there were 7 members and believes more input from the public is better. He would like to see another full time member and believes its assurance. Mayor Gamache noted the quorum issue is a concern but understands the desire to have more members. She asked council for thoughts on adding an Alternate until if and when it’s decided to increase the board size to 7 members. Mr. Corrigan stated that he was an Alternate for a couple years on the Development Review Board and voted every meeting due to absences of voting members.

**A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to appoint Amy Paradis as an Alternate to the Planning Commission for a term of 3 years. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

15. Adjourn City Council Meeting.

**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to adjourn meeting at 8:36 pm. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith  
Community Relations Coordinator