

**St. Albans City Council  
Minutes of Meeting  
February 23, 2015  
City Hall, Council Chambers**

A special Town Meeting Day Informational Meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, February 23, 2015, in council chambers at City Hall at 6:00 pm.

**Council Present:** Aldermen: Ryan Doyle, Tim Hawkins, Chad Spooner, Jim Pelkey & Scott Corrigan.

**Council Absent:** Alderwoman Tammi DiFranco and Mayor Elizabeth Gamache.

**Staff Present:** Dominic Cloud, City Manager; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development.

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

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

Alderman Spooner led the pledge of allegiance and called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Overview of City Budget and Special Article.

a. City Manager

Mr. Cloud stated that Town Meeting Day will be on Tuesday, March 3, 2014 and polls will be open from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm. There are two articles on the warning; the first is the City budget and the second is an article asking for voter support to redirect existing TIF debt.

The General Fund budget totals \$7.7 million with an estimated municipal tax rate of 82 cents and is a zero percent increase. Sidewalk appropriation in this budget is doubled up to \$160,000 with sidewalks being a top priority in the upcoming year. The budget also includes a 6% increase in roadways. Mr. Cloud explained that the City is currently 3 years into a 10 year plan to turn all of the City's roadways to satisfactory condition or better. The budget also includes borrowing \$475,000 for a new pumper for the Fire Department to be paid back over a 10 year period. The pump is critical equipment for the Fire Department and ensures that the department's ladder truck is able to be used for rescues in taller buildings and will not be tied up pumping water. Mr. Cloud added that the new pumper is also important for mutual aid.

The second article asks for voter support to redirect existing TIF debt. The voters have authorized \$16 million for improvements to the downtown core of which \$14.5 million has been spent. The additional \$1.5 million that staff is asking to be redirected will go toward 3 projects; streetscaping on Lake Street, streetscaping on North Main Street and Brownfield improvements on the hotel site. Mr. Cloud emphasized that these improvements along with the improvements already made to the downtown are critical to the hotel development. Mr. Cloud reiterated that this is existing debt and staff are just seeking to repurpose the funds.

b. Council Comments and Questions.

Mr. Doyle asked if the \$1.5 million is considered existing because the funds have physically been withdrawn or because it's already been on a ballot. Mr. Cloud responded that the voters have authorized up to \$16 million and the funds are not drawn down unless needed.

Mr. Spooner asked if the projects that the \$1.5 million would be used for needed to be done before the hotel is built. Mr. Cloud responded that it is a part of the agreement with the hotel; the City must offer the land free of any environmental contaminants and streetscape improvements in front of the hotel. Mr. Spooner commented that he continues to hear how great the downtown

looks and how impressed people are by how much the City has changed. He added that he is so happy the pumper and street improvements are all built into the budget and that there isn't an increase. He commended staff for all their efforts.

Mr. Doyle asked how will be spent per year for the fire truck. Mr. Cloud responded that the annual debt service is in the neighborhood of \$50,000. Mr. Cloud stated that the loan is a 20-year bond at 3.75%. Mr. Doyle asked if it's correct then that the repayment would be \$33,000 per year for 20 years. Mr. Cloud responded affirmatively. Mr. Doyle asked for the life expectancy of that equipment. Mr. Cloud responded that it's at least 20 years.

Mr. Hawkins noted the \$7 million anticipated for the property value of the hotel and asked if that was a true statement. Mr. Cloud responded that staff anticipates it to be higher than that. Mr. Hawkins asked if that was in line with what staff anticipated the property being when TIF was first introduced. Mr. Cloud responded that it is actually higher and noted the value of deeded parking rights in the garage. Mr. Cloud stated that ultimately, he believes the value will be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$8 million to \$9 million. He noted the State office building which is comparable in size and has a value of \$8 million. Mr. Hawkins commented that it seems the City is on course in its conservative numbers with exceeding those expectations. Mr. Cloud agreed that the City is definitely exceeding the projections that were embedded within the TIF.

c. Public Comment and Questions.

No public comment and questions were given.

3. Other Business.

Mr. Doyle asked Mr. Parent if he had any updates to share from Montpelier. Mr. Parent stated that the first few months in Montpelier revolve around getting bills written and submitted. He noted that he is on the Commerce and Economic Development committee and two major bills coming are the H.124 and a telecommunications bill. Mr. Parent stated that his committee will be reviewing the speed program tomorrow. He added that when the State of Vermont implemented the speed program in 2005, there was double dipping; the selling of good energy credits to other states to count toward renewable energy credit and Vermont was also counting it toward theirs. Mr. Parent stated that the Governor's proposed budget for FY 16 has a budget gap of \$130 million for the general fund and including total State funds, there is a budget gap of \$188.5 million. He added that they are still convincing folks that there is a property tax issue in the State of Vermont. Mr. Parent made council aware that he sends out a weekly legislature update via e-mail and welcomed folks to e-mail him if they want to be included.

4. Adjourn.

**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Corrigan to adjourn meeting at 6:16 pm. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith  
Administrative Coordinator

Approved by Council