

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
6:30 PM MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2025

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

Council Members Present: IN PERSON: Tim Smith (Mayor); Lindsay Hunn (Ward II); Marie Bessette (Ward III); Trudy Cioffi (Ward IV); Erik Johnson (Ward V); Chad Boudreau (Ward VI); Dominic Cloud (City Manager)

Council Members Absent: Timothy Hawkins (Ward I)

City Staff present: IN PERSON: Chip Sawyer (Director of Planning & Development); Sarah Macy (Directory of Finance & Administration); Nicole Robtoy (City Clerk & Treasurer); Katie Haseltine (Minute Taker) VIA ZOOM: Marty Manahan (Director of Operations & Business Development)

Members of the public present: IN PERSON: Mary Ellen Vickery; Troy Pudvah; Sarah Gonyeau; Scott Gonyeau; Connor Holtkamp; Chris West; Lucas Clark; Rebecca Clark; Becky Claytar; Matt Cleare; Ryan Cleare; Julia Schellenberg; Gregory Brooks; Jeremiah LaCross; Boone Burleson; David Trainer; Brendan Wells; Megan Wells; Wendy-Ayn Coy; Trisha Denton; Jeff Bean; Lynn Fitzgerald

2. T. Smith convenes Open Session with Pledge of Allegiance at 6:33 PM.

a. T. Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public comment on non-agenda items within Council Purview - none.

4. Recess for Liquor Control (see separate agenda)

- a. C. Boudreau motions to recess for liquor control. M. Bessette seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.
- b. N. Robtoy introduces Adam Monette, who is applying for his first and third class liquor license. T. Smith asks for clarification on what differentiates first and third class. N. Robtoy explains that a first class liquor license allows the sale of beer and wine and a third class liquor license allows the sale of spirits.
 1. T. Smith asks when they plan to open. A. Monette explains that a soft opening is scheduled for August 8th and 9th and the following Wednesday, August 13th, they will open to the general public.
 2. C. Boudreau asks if A. Monette is aware of the additional ordinances that the City has. A. Monette believes he does, but N. Robtoy will share those with him so he can familiarize himself with them. C. Boudreau also suggests that A. Monette obtain his individual liquor serving license through the state in the future, as it makes tracking and renewing much easier.
 3. C. Boudreau asks what their hours of operation will be. A. Monette explains that typical hours will be from 4 - 9:30 pm, and occasional earlier hours for brunch on Saturday and Sunday.
 4. L. Hunn asks if they will have outdoor seating. A. Monette shares that they plan to do that down the road, but right now it is just indoor seating, with room for 43 inside.
 5. T. Cioffi motions to approve the liquor license for Heritage LLC (Cafe Monette). C. Boudreau seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.
 6. C. Boudreau motions to recess and resume regular City Council meeting. M. Bessette

seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

5. Public Hearing, Reappraisal

- a. Overview, Mayor Smith
 1. T. Smith opens the discussion and explains that Chip and Sarah will do a presentation to provide some context and background regarding the reappraisal, and opportunity for public comments and city council comments will follow.
- b. Chip Sawyer, Planning Director
 1. C. Sawyer explains that the Grand List contains the fair market value for every property in the City and reappraisals are necessary to maintain the fairness of all of the values in the grand list. Over time, the real estate market changes, and the grand list values need to be updated. Reappraisals are ordered by the state.
 2. Notification letters, door hangers, and site visits were the ways in which communication went out to property owners. Notices were also posted on Facebook and Front Porch Forum to spread the word and notify property owners.
 3. 209 preliminary data reviews.
 4. In June, they did the normal change of value process that they do each year. This year, everyone received one because of the reappraisal. Property owners were given an opportunity to submit a grievance and meet with the City and appraiser regarding their preliminary property value.
 5. When the final numbers were mailed out, property owners were given an opportunity to grieve anything that seemed off. 134 grievance hearings were held, and 7 appeals will go to the Board of Civil Authority.
 6. C. Sawyer shares what could have affected tax bills, noting the 9% City tax levy increase approved by voters in March, and whether your property value increased lower or higher than the City average of 63%. Declaring homestead can also play a role in the income rebate property owners receive. There have also been changes in income limiters for the income sensitivity rebate.
- c. Sarah Macy, Finance Director
 1. S. Macy provides an overview of the financials and how the numbers come together to determine the tax rate that property owners are seeing on their tax bill.
 2. T. Smith thanks C. Sawyer and S. Macy for giving this context to drive the discussion.
- d. Public Comment / Questions
 1. **Both public comments and council comments were intertwined. All commentary discussion is included under "Council Comments / Questions".**
- e. Council Comments / Questions
 1. T. Smith believed that they were going through the reappraisal because the City's CLA was below 80%, but that number is still below 80% and he wondered why. C. Sawyer notes that the CLA component impacts the education tax rate.
 2. E. Johnson believes CLA notices aren't sent until December, so didn't think they would receive that increase yet. C. Sawyer explains that municipalities receive a Snap CLA when they are undergoing a reappraisal.
 3. T. Cioffi asks if it is fair to say that since Business Equipment / Commercial property categories decreased, that was the driving factor in the other property categories increasing? S. Macy jumps in and feels it did catch her off guard when they saw how it came out. C. Sawyer explains that Business Equipment does not get reappraised, rather it is depreciated year after year based on the current value of that item, not on what it would cost today to get a new piece of equipment.

4. J. LaCross asks what their options are now. D. Cloud explains they don't have a lot of options, noting that the Grand List is a measure of wealth and we are not in the driver's seat. D. Cloud explains that municipalities are the vehicle for funding the state revenues which drive the education fund.
5. J. LaCross asks if the City properties are taxed as well. D. Cloud confirms that the City pays taxes on taxable buildings just like everyone else. City Hall, for example, is tax exempt, and would not be subject to paying.
6. One of the property owners has a problem with the company the City hired. The grievance process is about a conversation to determine if the data regarding their property is accurate. (Person with them) walked around the exterior of the property, measured it, and reassessed the value.
7. J. LaCross asks if there has been any consideration of a tiered system to increase rather than shocking property owners with such large increases. D. Cloud references a lack of discretion in the system to do that. The state would still require the tax to be paid for education, and that is the driving force of the unexpected increases.
8. M. Vickery felt the tax sale delinquency letter was lacking in tone. S. Macy agrees with that observation and shares they can look at and make some edits in consideration of timing and tone.
9. T. Cioffi asks what the income sensitivity limits are. S. Macy is not positive but believes it is 120% or lower.
10. J. Bean is curious how the TIF has affected their tax bill. D. Cloud shutters to think about what it would be if they hadn't gone the TIF route and done the redevelopment they've done. A lot of that growth is still tied up in the debt service through bonds. Where you begin to get some return on investment is when you start to have some growth in those previously vacant properties.
11. T. Pudvah asks about the Commercial and Industrial categories and how growth in those areas can be bolstered to potentially reduce the impact on residential properties.
12. C. Boudreau asks if there can be discussion regarding next year's taxes versus abatement. D. Cloud explains that if property owners want to dispute their values, the best time would be June 2026. C. Sawyer provides more information on that timeline and what the process looks like: obtaining your property card from the assessor's office, researching comparable home values/sales, etc.
13. D. Cloud shares that this is a new phenomenon based on rapid growth from the pandemic, and he owns that it may be a good idea for the City to send out a mock tax bill prior, which is great feedback to have for the next time this happens.
14. T. Cioffi asks about the 134 people who submitted grievances, noting only 7 appeals. D. Cloud and C. Sawyer explain that the assessed values may have remained unchanged or adjusted based on information provided by the property owners, hence why it didn't move into an appeal for many.
15. J. Bean reiterated feedback regarding the grievance process and feeling that it went too quickly and didn't allow property owners to consider a grievance.
16. G. Brooks reflects that the process was quick, and felt shoved through, which leaves him to believe it isn't an accurate representation of how many people are feeling this way. He will have to sell his property and leave because it is not affordable.
17. G. Brooks asks if there has been any thought about how they are going to manage when people can't pay their taxes. D. Cloud explains that there is something they can do.

- 18.L. Fitzgerald explains that the same people who are complaining about the increases are the same people who are voting yes on the school budgets, referencing that the education tax is the driving factor in the larger than expected increases and city residents should be more mindful before casting their “yes” vote on the school budget.
19. The property owners feel there should be a cap on increases. T. Smith explains that the City may very well be able to put a cap on the City portion, but it still comes down to the Education tax.

6. St. Albans Museum Presentation, Trish Denton

- a. T. Smith introduces T. Denton. T. Denton wanted to give an update on the St. Albans Museum and has been here for about 9 months now (coming from Center for Research in Vermont, oldest research center at UVM). They’ve done a bit of rebranding over the last few years in preparation of many founding members exiting their volunteer roles.
- b. FY24 Annual Report:
 - a. Hosted 3,740 visitors - from 35 states and 14 countries
 - b. Hosted 380 youth - 12 youth events, and launched a kids cove exhibit sponsored by 8 community partners
 - c. 14 special events across 4 programs, and 1 partnership with The Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street
 - d. Provided volunteer opportunities for 30+ community members, including elders
- c. T. Denton goes on to share that they are stewards to the conservation of this historic building, as well as contributing to the preservation of the historic Church Street District in Saint Albans. Funding initiatives include window restoration, bliss room upgrades, youth and education, and museum operations.
- d. T. Smith asks if the elevator is fixed. T. Denton confirms it has been fixed for about a year.
- e. T. Smith asks for an estimated percentage of building restoration/renovation. T. Denton estimates about 70%, noting it is a fairly old building and some lingering costly projects.
- f. T. Smith asks about the banners for the underground railroad that the City funded and if those will be circulated again. T. Denton has some ideas for that, so yes.
- g. E. Johnson asks if they’ve ever considered recreational groups, who host kids’ camps, as groups to bring into the museum. T. Denton very much would like that and thinks this conversation will progress now that they have added an Outreach Coordinator position, noting they’ve already hosted many school groups and would like to grow it even more.
- h. T. Cioffi requests to shift the agenda so that item 10 is now number 7 and shifts everything down. T. Smith allows that change.

7. Appointments

- a. Consider Connor Holtkamp and Cody Hooper-Kaufmann for appointment to Belonging, Equity, and Inclusion Committee(D&V).
 1. T. Cioffi shared that her, E. Johnson, and L. Hunn interviewed Connor and Cody. They were both very wonderful candidates, and they enthusiastically would like to appoint them to the board. L. Hunn adds that they discussed having more communication between the BEI Committee and City Council so they are updated on their activities.
 2. T. Cioffi motions to appoint Connor Holtkamp to the open seat and Cody Hooper-Kaufmann to the alternate seat. E. Johnson seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

8. Taylor Park Rules

- a. Consider a motion to adopt revised rules for Taylor Park and direct staff to post new signs consistent with City way finding program (D&V).

1. T. Smith provides an overview. D. Cloud adds that the rules are sprinkled about throughout the park and will include some design cues for the downtown Wayfinding Program. The design will be historic and fitting the character of the City, while also addresses the behavioral expectations for the park and holds folks accountable.
2. T. Cioffi asks how many signs they plan to put up. D. Cloud shares that at least 2-3 will be put up at the main entrance corridors to the park.
3. L. Hunn shares concern around the daily time limit. T. Cioffi spoke with Lieutenant Wetherby, one of the park patrol persons, and even the gardener, and learned they are all in favor of the time limit as it encourages movement.
4. T. Cioffi asks if other downtown parks / sidewalks also prohibit bicycle / scooter riding, noting that the City does have an ordinance against it. C. Sawyer believes that most municipalities do not allow bike / scooter riding on downtown sidewalks/parks.
5. C. Boudreau motions to adopt the Taylor Park Rules. M. Bessette seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

9. Ralston Redevelopment Property Transfer

- a. Consider a motion to authorize the transfer of the Ralston building from the City of St. Albans to the 54 Main Street LLC, of which the City is presently the sole member (D&V).
 1. D. Cloud explains that the City is the sole member of LLC; this transfers it from the City to the corporate entity to make the tax credits flow better.
 2. T. Cioffi motions to authorize the transfer of the Ralston building from the City of St. Albans to the 54 Main Street LLC, of which the City is presently the sole member. E. Johnson seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

10. First Reading, ordinance ban overnight parking along Barlow Street Park, C. Sawyer

- a. C. Sawyer explains that in response to concerns presented, they have amended the prohibition of overnight parking along Barlow Street Park.
- b. E. Johnson asks if the timing is common or if that can be adjusted to 11:00 PM. C. Sawyer explains that the time can be adjusted based on what the City Council feels it should be and asks if they'd prefer to match the hours of the park to when parking is prohibited. E. Johnson agrees.
- c. T. Smith suggests that council members do some research (driving by to see who is parking there and when, touching base with neighbors) and prepare for the second reading in September.

11. Mayor's Report

- a. Fountain in the Park - D. Cloud explains that M. Manahan is working on it.
- b. T. Smith shares that a resident who used to live in St. Albans and has moved to North Carolina, Mary Riley, watches the livestream of the meeting each month, so was saying hi.
- c. Tree Carving in the Park - it is amazing, people love it
- d. E-Bike Complaints - driving in and out of traffic, disobeying traffic. T. Smith isn't sure there is much they can do about it but just wanted to bring attention to it. C. Sawyer explains that E-Bikes are meant to be held to the same laws that bikes/motorcycles are. He can do some research on local and state level laws on that.
- e. Rooster Complaints - C. Sawyer has received 2 in the last 2 weeks. Other municipalities have prohibited roosters, if the City wants to pursue that they can continue discussion at another meeting as needed.

12. Council Reports

- a. Ward IV - T. Cioffi
 - a. Public Safety Meeting - in the park, on purpose, well attended.

- b. Goats at Hard'Ack - wanted to share that Hard'Ack has a fenced area for some goats to keep the lawn mowed, and it is a sight to see.
- c. Large hole on the green belt on Bishop Street - M. Manahan will be taking care of.
- b. Ward II - L. Hunn
 - a. Litter Cleanups - noticed that there were a couple businesses who had a lot of trash on their property and it was clearly tenant trash not restaurant trash. M. Manahan asks L. Hunn to send her a note on where that was and they can consider a notice to those buildings regarding the Public Health & Safety Ordinance.
 - b. Taylor Park - looks great, she does walking supervisions with her staff through the park and it looks great.
 - c. Free Items on the Street - seeking clarity for a concerned property owner. M. Manahan explains that free items cannot be on the green belt but can be on their own lawn. L. Hunn thinks that might have been the confusion and thanks M. Manahan for providing that clarity.
 - d. Pearl Street - was not aware that paving was going to be happening but wanted to share that the people doing the work were so kind and it was done quickly.
- c. Ward III - M. Bessette
 - a. Speeding Scooter - person is often driving by, no helmet, concerned about safety
- d. Ward VI - C. Boudreau
 - a. Lower Newton Stop Light - concerned about yellow light configuration. C. Sawyer and M. Manahan can double-check that.
 - b. E-Bike Concerns & Walking Patrol - concerned with poor choices, feels that some walking patrols downtown could help with that.
 - c. Finance Meeting - the subcommittee met recently and discussed the retirement fund, specifically rebalancing bonds and equity market. It was a good informational meeting, and C. Boudreau is happy to discuss it further with anyone interested.
- e. Ward V - E. Johnson
 - a. E-Bike Concerns - reiterates safety concerns that other council members brought up.
 - b. Lower Newton Stop Light - red arrow light concerns. C. Sawyer would like to leave it and give it some time as he doesn't believe it is needed right now.
 - c. Gilman Street Development - is there any consideration of a sidewalk being added now that more development is going in.

13. Consider approval of meeting minutes: 6/9/25 Reg. Mtg. And 7/22/25 Special Mtg. (D&V)

- a. E. Johnson motions to approve. C. Boudreau seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

14. Consider approval of warrants: 6/30/25 & 7/31/25 (D&V)

- a. T. Cioffi motions to approve. E. Johnson seconds. Motion passes with all in favor.

15. Adjourn

- a. T. Cioffi motions to adjourn. E. Johnson seconds. Motion passes with all in favor. T. Smith adjourns meeting at 9:16 pm.