

ST. ALBANS CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting Monday, April 11, 2011 City Hall, Council Chambers

A regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, April 11, 2011, in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Council Present: Mayor Martin Manahan, Aldermen: Tim Hawkins, Joseph Luneau, Aaron O'Grady, Richard Peters, Chad Spooner, Jeff Young.

Staff Present: Dominic Cloud, City Manager; Peg Strait, Director of Finance and Administration; Sarah Duffy, City Accountant; Susan Krupp, City Clerk/Treasurer; Jane Kiser, Community Development Manager; Allen Robtoy, Public Works Director; Jim Tischler, Director of Planning & Community Development.

Visitors: see attached sign-in sheet.

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Manahan called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Presentation of Conceptual Plan for Streetscape Improvements. Mayor Manahan introduced Liz Gamache, Chair of the Master Plan Committee; Laz Scangas, member of the Streetscape Sub-Committee; and Greg Backus and Mike Willard, from the SE Group.
 - a. Ms. Gamache explained that the Master Plan Committee has been meeting over the past year and a half with approximately 15 community members which then split into sub-committees to address the variety of the pieces of the puzzle that go into master planning. She then went on to explain the process. She stated that the subcommittees were comprised of areas such as: a façade program, a parking committee which will be presented in the near future, a branding committee, a Taylor Park committee, and a streetscape committee. She explained that all of these subcommittees touch on one another—no one is isolated. She stated that it is very important that the Master Plan Committee integrate the issues and needs that arise as work comes up in these committees—subcommittees do the work, then share with the Master Plan Committee along with staff in attendance at those meetings. She explained that the streetscape is still in the conceptual stage and seeking approval from the Council in order to move forward to the next stage of implementation. In their plans the common thread for the downtown is the economic and social connection for people. She stated that recently, public hearings were held and well attended with a “thumbs up” approval and a majority of the people expressing excitement about the changes.

Laz Scangas, Streetscape Subcommittee Chair, explained how they attained public feedback, holding approximately five to six meetings along with Greg Bakos and Michael Willard.

b. Greg Bakos, VHB and Michael Willard, SE Group. Mr. Bakos began the presentation by giving the background of each sub-committee. He stated that he is requesting endorsement from the Council on the overall concept of the design so that they can go to the next phase. He stated that initially he conducted an inventory of the existing conditions. Secondly, he built upon existing history. Mayor Manahan asked about the negative feedback of parallel parking that was brought up at the last public hearing. Mayor Manahan asked about the proposed sidewalk on the west side of Taylor Park. Mr. Bakos said that it would be sloping. Mr. Robtoy stated that he approves of the bump outs and thought it would be easier than what is currently there. Mayor Manahan asked about the lighting relating to WalMart. Alderman Luneau wanted to know when the façade subcommittee would report to Council. Ms. Gamache stated that it would be forthcoming. Mr. Cloud gave the background of the financial history for this project. Mr. Bakos said that the final cost is not known until further engineering studies are completed. He reiterated that they are still in the conceptual stage. The next stage will be design and they will be partnering with VTRANS on this project. If approved, the goal will be to start construction next year which would be a formal process. He explained that there is a design side and an implementation side. He said it will take the community to embrace the project. An example of success in a similar downtown project is Littleton, New Hampshire. He stated that no businesses went under while construction took place. Alderman Luneau wanted to know if there were plans with keeping most of the parking. Mr. Bakos explained that it will affect the park considerably. Ms. Gamache explained that there were concerns from merchants but overall, they were favorable with the project. With this plan, she explained that there will be a connectedness with the park and merchants. Alderman O'Grady asked how many spaces would be lost. Mr. Bakos said that there would be a net loss of 27 in the specific core. If Church Street was one way with parking available on both sides of the street, there would be an overall gain of four spaces. Mayor Manahan asked about handicapped spaces. Mr. Bakos said that he will include those in his plans. Chad and Marty gave suggestions on the plan. Mr. Bakos also added that if Federal Street Project moves forward, Main Street will have less truck traffic and more of a downtown atmosphere. Ms. Gamache summed up everything and looked for their support. Mayor Manahan closed this part of the meeting.

2. Approval of Conceptual Plan for Streetscape Improvements (D&V). **A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Young to approve the Conceptual Plan for the Streetscape Improvements. Alderman Spooner and Mayor Manahan thanked all the volunteers involved in the project. Alderman Luneau stated that he would like to see an alternative to the proposed parallel parking. Mayor Manahan said that if the merchants support it and the community as a whole supports it then he will support it since he is only one vote. Vote was unanimous.**

3. Introduction and Overview of City Departments .

- a. Planning and Development. Mr. Tischler gave an overview of the Department. He stated that in the private sector, the Planning and Development Department is representative of a research and development operation. Alderman Luneau referenced the last Council meeting in which there was a discussion exploring the idea of a reduction in staffing within this department if the grant portion of the position could be subcontracted out. Discussion ensued on clarification of the information that was actually requested by the Council at that meeting. The Mayor explained that the typical process when someone retires from the City is to re-evaluate the position and duties. **A motion was made by Alderman Young; seconded by Alderman Peters to direct the City Manager to bring back findings to justify the position at the next Council meeting. Vote was unanimous.**

- b. Police, Dispatch, and Animal Control. Chief Taylor gave an overview of the Police Department which included an organizational chart of the various divisions within the department, annual statistics by officer for the period of January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2010, a three year statistical overview of offenses, and a summary of parking enforcement and revenue. He stated that the department is currently fully staffed. He stated that crime activity had decreased for each of those three years. There was a rise in DUIs, possibly due to the enhanced motor vehicle system now used by the state. He explained that these figures do not include miscellaneous dispatch calls. Mayor Manahan asked about the dispatching fees. He explained that the department has the largest dispatch in the state. Alderman Hawkins stated that he's not convinced that the number of traffic stops will help with finding other crimes. Chief Taylor explained his philosophy in this area. Discussion ensued about whether particular officers have a tendency to issue more tickets than others. Chief Taylor explained that each of the officers has their strengths and weaknesses and some are patrolling more than others. Alderman Hawkins asked whether he has seen an increase in a particular illegal substance. Chief Taylor stated that there has been a large amount of crack, marijuana and heroin in the area. Mayor Manahan stated that he was approached by a local pediatrician who wanted to speak at a council meeting regarding the oxycontin problem. Alderman Peters asked about the animal control officer. Chief Taylor stated that the City had been without an animal control officer for approximately six months and the police department has picked up the slack. Alderman Young asked whether there would be interns working this summer. Chief Taylor replied that there is no funding for it this year. Alderman Young asked about the City - Town Police contract. Chief Taylor stated that there will be three additional police officers.

4. Federal Street Multi Modal Connector Update.

- a. Peter Cross, Project Manager, gave a brief update of the project. VHP is the engineering firm for the project. Mr. Cross reviewed the report. He stated there

is a team meeting in May with the City Manager and at the end of June going down to meet with VTRANS representatives in Montpelier. There will be a public meeting at the end of May where they will present the alternatives and incorporate the comments from the fall meeting. He stated that he's looking for Council feedback and then will move into conceptual plans. That will complete Phase A. Alderman Young asked about the Stevens Brook Bridge on Lemnah Drive and the bike and pedestrian lane. Mr. Cross gave an explanation about how this would be addressed and stated that the bike and pedestrian lane is pretty much a given. Alderman Luneau asked at what point are property acquisitions needed and have they been identified. Mr. Cross explained that the right-of-way process will be determined after the conceptual plans have been completed. Once the conceptual plans are complete, then the right-of-ways can be determined. He said that the request for proposals for appraisals is ready to go out. Alderman Luneau asked if there is any consideration for the Solo Cup property purchase. Mr. Cross explained that at this point in time, he's not sure if it is needed, possibly a small portion of the property. Alderman Hawkins stated that this project has been a bureaucratic nightmare and asked if the costs are on target. Mr. Cross reported that there have been no change orders thus far and everything has been within the contract and confirmed that we are on target. Alderman Hawkins asked if there was anything that came up not included in the contract that Council should be aware of. Mr. Cross stated that he approves the invoices and forwards them to Dominic, who in turn forwards them to Sarah Duffy for payment. He explained that any changes would also have to be approved by VTRANS.

5. Federal Street Purpose and Need Statement (D&V).

Mr. Cross explained the purpose of this document. Mayor Manahan asked whether the proposed bridge will be strong enough for the extra truck traffic. Mr. Cross replied in the affirmative. **A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman O'Grady to approve the Purpose and Need Statement for the Federal Street Multi Modal Connector. Vote was unanimous.** Alderman Hawkins asked whether the boundaries have been determined on the west side of the property along the corridor from Nason Street to the beginning of Market Street through this process. Mr. Cross explained that the railroad has done extensive research on this on the request of the City Manager, but he said that yes, we need to know where the boundaries are to determine if we need the right-of-way. Alderman Hawkins asked whether we can be certain that from the west side of Lemnah Drive over to the fence by the railroad belongs to the City. Mr. Cross explained that he's not at that point yet but will know the answer to that question at some point. Alderman Young asked what effect there would be on this project if there are Brownfields in that area along the tracks. Mr. Cross explained that part of the process is to evaluate the possibility of this but he's not anticipating any issues here.

The Council convened for a five minute recess.

The Council reconvened.

6. Review of the 2012 – 2017 Capital Improvements Program. Mayor Manahan asked the City Manager if anything has changed since the FY12 budget was approved. Mr. Cloud explained that the Council is not appropriating money but looking to see if the plan of what we had set makes sense.
 - a. Approval of the 2012 – 2017 Capital Improvements Program (D&V).
A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; second by Alderman Luneau to approve the 2012—2017 Capital Improvements Program. Vote was unanimous.
7. Mayor's Report.
 - a. Council sub-committees and appointments. The Mayor explained that he appointed Alderman Hawkins to the Recreation Commission as a liaison and Alderman Spooner to the Community Justice Committee. Public Safety Committee appointments included Alderman Spooner as Chair with Alderman Peters and O'Grady. Finance Committee appointments included Alderman Hawkins as Chair with Aldermen Luneau and Young.
 - b. Re-appointment of Master Plan Implementation Committee Members as Slate (D&V). **A motion was made by Alderman Peters; seconded by Alderman Spooner to reappoint the Committee members as slate to the Master Plan Implementation Committee. Vote was unanimous.**
 - c. Northwest Regional Planning Commission Representative (Young), (D&V). **A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Peters to appoint Jeff Young to the Northwest Regional Planning Commission to represent the City of St. Albans for a two year term. Vote was unanimous.**
 - d. NRPC Transportation Adv. Committee (Luneau). **A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Peters to appoint Alderman Luneau to the TAC Subcommittee of the NRPC for a term of one year. Vote was unanimous.**
 - e. Update on Land Use Board Appointments. Mr. Cloud explained that the DAB has been consolidated into the Planning Commission, an alternate to the DRB is needed. In regards to the Planning Commission, Mr. Cloud stated that there are one or two vacancies. Lori Jordan resigned from the Planning Commission. He explained that Jeff Young wanted to still be involved as an ex-officio member. Mayor Manahan asked Alderman Young if he wanted to remain on the Commission in that capacity. Alderman Young replied in the affirmative. Mayor Manahan recapped that there is one alternate vacancy on the DRB and one vacancy on the Planning Commission to fulfill the remainder of the term (two years) vacated by Lori Jordan. Mayor Manahan recommended advertising for the Planning Commission vacancy and then interviewing the candidates at the next meeting. Alderman Luneau asked whether there were any other board members up for reappointment. Mr. Tischler said that there is but all of them wish to be reappointed. Mayor Manahan requested that he be provided a list of the names with the corresponding committee at the next meeting.
8. Fonda Demolition Update.

- a. Ms. Kiser reviewed the results of the bids for the project and the process in which they arrived at the lowest bid. She stated that they were looking into phasing the project in order to use the money currently available to us which is \$600,000. Out of that amount, \$200,000 is Weston's contract, including their supervision of the demolition which leaves \$400,000 available to use for demolition. She said that the State has been approached for additional funding. Staff will also approach the Regional Planning Commission to tap into its Brownfield Cleanup Fund. Mr. Cloud stated that the intention is to work in phases with the lowest bidder. Discussion ensued about the bids and qualification of the lowest bid. Alderman Luneau wanted assurance that we will not be paying this company up front and "left in a mess."
9. Finance Report. Ms. Strait stated that at the end of March, we were 3/4th of the way through the fiscal year and gave an overview of the status of the City's finances to date (please see attached). She explained that the City Manager and City Attorney have been in preparation for the annual tax sale for delinquent property taxes to be held on Friday, May 13. Mayor Manahan asked about the status of the new fire truck. Ms. Duffy anticipates the arrival of the truck in late April. Alderman Luneau asked why Planning and Development Department revenues are only at 20%. Ms. Strait explained that \$50,000 of that money is the WalMart funds which have not been drawn down yet. The funds are in the bank but are not recognized as revenue until they are drawn down for spending. Mr. Cloud explained further what those funds are going to be used for. Alderman Luneau said that he is concerned about the timing of the money being spent out of the capital budget amongst each department. He feels that there are some departments who seem to spend all their money in the beginning of the budget year whereas other departments don't spend until the end of the budget year. He asked if there was a way that the money could be spent more consistently over the course of the budget year. Mayor Manahan explained that it might all depend on what the purchase is. Discussion ensued around this issue. Ms. Duffy reported on the Water/Wastewater Budget, currently at 75% which is on target.
 - a. Sullivan and Powers Engagement Letter (D&V). Ms. Strait gave the overview of the purpose of this document. She highlighted how critical it is about grant administration. It also includes a fee schedule. **A motion was made by Alderman Luneau; seconded by Alderman Spooner for the entire Council sign the Sullivan, Powers & Co. Engagement Letter. Vote was unanimous.**
10. Clerk/Treasurer Report. Ms. Krupp announced that there will be a tax appeal workshop on Thursday, April 14 at 6:00 p.m. and asked if any Council members would be attending. Alderman O'Grady, Spooner, Luneau and Mayor Manahan stated they will try their very best to make it. She also gave an update on the new computers in the Clerk's Office which will assist attorneys and anyone wanting to research properties in the City. She said that Peg and Dominic have a meeting at the Milton Town Offices to look at their computerized land records system there to see whether the City wants to go that route.
11. Taylor Park Update. Jeff Young gave an update on the status of the improvements to Taylor Park. A major undertaking will be the removal of some of the sidewalks with

an overarching plan of reducing the number of impervious surfaces in the Park. In addition, all the current crab apple trees, due to their deteriorating condition, will be removed and replaced with 20 new crab apple trees. A large maple tree is also being removed. Overall, the changes will give the Park a more formal appearance, which is what it was intended to be. The Master Gardener Club, which received a grant from Jeff's Seafood, is planting a wild garden that will take the place of the reflecting pond. This part of the project is being funded by money that is currently in the Park fund—not city or state funds. He highlighted the remainder of the proposed changes. The Farmer's Market will be temporarily moved down so grass can be planted in that area. Mayor Manahan asked what the status is of the proposed pervious sidewalk on the east side of the park. Mr. Tischler stated that the plans are at 85% completion with VTRANS needing to review before going to bid. Mayor Manahan asked whether it will be completed by the end of the year. Mr. Tischler replied in the affirmative. Mayor Manahan asked if there were any plans to do the north and south sidewalks. Mr. Young replied "not at this time, but the long term plans include replacement."

12. Second Reading, Water/Wastewater Specifications (D&V). Mayor Manahan asked Mr. Robtoy if there were any changes from the first reading. Mr. Robtoy replied that no changes were made. **A motion was made by Alderman Luneau; seconded by Alderman Peters to approve the Second Reading of the Water and Wastewater Specifications, as presented. Vote was unanimous.**

13. Minutes (D&V):

- a. 9/30, 11/19, 1/3, 1/10, 1/18, 1/24, 2/3, 2/14, 2/22, 3/7, 3/18.

A motion was made by Alderman Peters; seconded by Alderman Luneau to approve the minutes of 9/30, 11/19, 1/3, 1/10, 1/18, 1/24, 2/3, 2/14, 2/22, 3/7, 3/18. Alderman Hawkins abstained from voting on the minutes of 2/14 and 2/22 as he was absent from those meetings. Alderman Luneau requested that the 1/10 minutes reflect that he had a strong preference for funding the Houghton Park Tennis and Basketball Court Rehabilitation with cash versus borrowing the funds due to the size of the project. Alderman Hawkins asked that his name be removed from the 2/22 minutes to reflect that he was not present at the meeting. Vote was 7-0 for the minutes of 9/30, 11/19, 1/3, 1/10, 1/18, 1/24, 2/3, 3/7, 3/18; with a 6-1 vote for the minutes of 2/14 and 2/22, with Alderman Hawkins abstaining due to his absence from those meetings. The vote was amended to reflect that Alderman O'Grady and Young abstained from voting on the minutes of 9/30, 11/19, 1/3, 1/10, 1/18, 1/24, 2/3, due to the fact that they were not on the Council at that point in time.

14. Warrants (D&V)

- a. Payroll—3/16, 3/23, 3/30, 4/6

A motion was made by Alderman Luneau; seconded by Alderman Spooner to accept the Payroll Warrants of 3/16, 3/23, 3/30 and 4/6, as presented. Vote was unanimous.

- b. Accounts Payable—3/23, 4/6

A motion was made by Alderman Peters; seconded by Alderman Spooner to accept the Accounts Payable Warrants of 3/23 and 4/6, as presented. Vote was unanimous.

15. Other Business. Mr. Cloud announced that the Finance Committee will be meeting on Thursday, April 14, at 5:00 pm. Ms. Strait informed Council that panic buttons have been installed throughout the building for safety reasons.

16. Executive Session. **A motion was made by Alderman Luneau; seconded by Alderman Spooner to go into Executive Session to discuss legal and contractual matters where premature disclosure would place the City at substantial disadvantage. Vote was unanimous.**

Submitted by,

Sarah Longley
Administrator Coordinator

APPROVED BY COUNCIL