

**St. Albans City Council
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, July 9, 2018
City Hall, Council Chambers**

A regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, July 9, 2018, at 6:30 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Council Present: Mayor Tim Smith; Aldermen: Michael McCarthy, Tim Hawkins and Chad Spooner; Alderwomen: Marie Bessette and Kate Laddison.

Council Absent: Alderman Jim Pelkey.

Staff Present: Dominic Cloud, City Manager; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development; Curry Galloway, City Clerk; Marty Manahan, Director of Operations & Business Development & Tom Leitz, Director of Administration.

Visitors: See attached sign-in sheet.

1. Executive Session re: Litigation (second floor).

a. Consider a finding that premature disclosure of above matters could compromise the City (D&V).
A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to find that premature disclosure of above matters could compromise the City. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

b. Consider a motion to enter Executive Session for purpose of discussing litigation (D&V).
A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to enter Executive Session at 5:30 for purpose of discussing litigation. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

2. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and led the pledge of allegiance.

3. Public Comment on items not on agenda.

Roger Langevin introduced himself and explained that he is currently running for Franklin County Sheriff. He is a retired Detective with the Vermont State Police and was in the Infusion Center during his last two years. He explained that he was part of the Intel Division which collected information, organized it and sent it back out into the field in order to advance criminal investigations which would lead to successful prosecutions. Prior to that he was a Control Commander in St. Albans for six years and prior to that he was a State Trooper. He has a master's degree in Criminal Justice Leadership and is currently working with the St. Albans Police Department in the educational training division of the schools. He is currently working in a K-8 school with 720 students and believes he's made a positive impact.

Mr. Langevin stated that he is a supporter of the St. Albans Police Street Crimes Unit and as Sherriff, he would like to have to two Deputies, two Troopers and possibly a Swanton Police Officer on that unit and expand it through the county. He believes the biggest impact would be made countywide and everyone would benefit as a community. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Langevin if he is in a primary race. Mr. Langevin responded negatively. He stated that he is running as a Democrat but doesn't believe the position should be political. Mr. Cloud asked Mr. Langevin if there's a common theme that he's hearing as he visits other Selectboard meetings. Mr. Langevin responded that he's hearing a lot about heroin use and people finding needles anywhere off the beaten path such as the rail trail, cemeteries and even little league fields. He's also hearing a lot about ATV's and stated that there are some successful ATV programs out of New Hampshire. He would like to do more research and present to Selectboards to

discuss how to open up lands and how to do community policing. He is also hearing a lot about speeding vehicles countywide.

Mr. Langevin explained that the State Police are not going to take any town contracts beginning next year and would like to cover highway patrol and major crimes. He stated that the existing Sherriff's Department is set up so that it can grow. He would like to see towns like Fairfield, Fletcher and Bakersfield to have policing and stated that there are some creative ways through Federal funding to accomplish that. His goal is to grow the department, build relationships and continue to impact the community countywide. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Langevin if the State Police would be keeping their existing town contracts. Mr. Langevin responded affirmatively. Mr. Spooner asked how well the Sherriff's Department works with City Police and asked if he sees other opportunities aside from the Street Crimes Unit to work together. Mr. Langevin responded that that he would like to pool resources, conduct fire arms training together, for example. He believes if resources are shared, costs can be reduced countywide.

4. Public hearing on grant application to Vermont Community Development Program, Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer stated that this is a required public hearing. He explained that the City typically goes through the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) to request access to housing and urban development funds. This grant would be associated with the Congress and Main project and specifically it would contribute toward the construction of the new housing on Maiden Lane. Staff is proposing that the City and Champlain Housing Trust apply for \$1 million through the VCDP to be used in many ways including demolition, brownfield mitigation, construction of parking, infrastructure, site improvements, acquisition of property and construction of housing units. Mr. Sawyer stated that at least 30 of those housing units would be subsidized for affordability and approximately 24 or 25 would be at market rate, perhaps more. Staff is still in the process of getting local and State permits for this project and all of the environmental and historic preservation reviews will be completed as required. The City would be required to follow the Uniform Relocation Act for any residents who are impacted by the project and there will be some very specific rules that the City will have to follow to find new housing for those residents.

Mayor Smith asked Mr. Sawyer what the deadline is for the application. Mr. Sawyer responded that it is due around September 4th but would try to get it submitted before then. The VCDP Board would be considering this in early November. Mr. McCarthy asked Mr. Sawyer if this is a highly competitive grant program and asked how he thought the City would fair. Mr. Sawyer responded that it can be competitive and depends on what is presented to the board. He stated that the board meets 3 times a year and will look at what comes before them for every meeting and doesn't try to give away their entire years' worth of funding at every meeting. Mr. Sawyer stated that staff was encouraged to apply for \$1 million by the VCDP and doesn't believe the City is going up against any other big projects. Mr. Spooner asked if the VCDP could grant the City less than \$1 million. Mr. Sawyer responded that he believes they can issue partial awards. Mayor Smith asked how the timing of the award fits into the construction. Mr. Cloud responded that it would depend on which part of the project the award would be going to and this award is primarily geared toward the housing units which is back loaded. There is some overlap between the central parking lot and the commercial building but it's the commercial building that the City envisions beginning in the fall and demolition with DRB approval. Mr. Cloud stated that the City owns the properties but would be increasing its degree of readiness.

Mayor Smith opened the floor to public comment. Mr. Berthiaume commended the City for its investments and believes this is another project that will enhance the entire community. He is very supportive of the project.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to approve the grant application to the Vermont Community Development Program. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

5. Consider approval of revised facility rental rates, City Manager (D&V).

Mr. Cloud stated that staff is proposing some adjustments to the facility rental rates at City Hall. It's been staff's experience that it is out of the market with its rates which are very low and haven't been adjusted since the City Hall renovation. He explained that there is a big difference between what the Recreation Department brings in when renting the auditorium for a birthday party vs. what staff takes in for a full day rental. These proposed rates line up well with some of the comparable local rates that City Hall is benchmarked against, particularly the Bliss Room in St. Albans and the Community Room in North Hero which are similarly sized spaces. Mr. Cloud stated that the proposed rate hourly for the auditorium is \$60.00/hour on weekdays and \$100.00/hour on weekends and the proposed daily rate is \$300.00/day on weekdays, \$500.00/day on weekends and would offer a package from Friday through Sunday for \$750.00. Currently, the cost to rent the auditorium is \$35.00/hour or \$150.00/day. Mr. Cloud proposed pausing and moving into Liquor Control while photocopies of the revised facility rental rates were made.

A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderwoman Laddison to recess for Liquor Control Board at 7:00 pm. Vote was unanimous, 5-0 with Alderwoman Bessette recused.

Mayor Smith asked Mr. Cloud if he has chosen not to offer a non-profit rate. Mr. Cloud responded that the rates are way below market rate and it's almost all non-profits that are renting. The sentiment is that it's a community supported facility and is not exclusively for residents and by and large, it is non-profits and community groups using the space. The alternative would be to have a higher rate for folks that don't fit that category rather than having a rate that is still lower for the non-profits. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Cloud what the birthday party rate is through Recreation. Mr. Cloud responded that it's \$250 - \$300 for a two hour birthday party and there are typically 3 per day.

Mr. Spooner asked Mr. Cloud what the demand is currently. Mr. Cloud responded that it's very busy. Mr. Spooner stated that he would be interested to know what the demand looks like in 6 months because he would rather rent it out twice as much for half the price as opposed to half as much for twice the price. Mr. Spooner noted that there are also a lot of costs associated such as trash removal, cleanup and electricity. Ms. Laddison commented that she worries a little bit about pricing City Hall too high and hears a lot from people that the Bliss Room is not affordable for what they're trying to do. She wants it to be priced right because it's a gorgeous space but would like there to be a balance struck instead of coming right up to what the museum charges for the Bliss Room. Mayor Smith asked what the plan is for the installation of a PA system. Mr. Sawyer responded that the City has received \$15,000 from the National Life Foundation and the Vermont Community Foundation toward amenities in the auditorium such as a sound system, lighting and curtains and have applied to the Cultural Facilities Program through the State for more. Mr. Sawyer stated that once staff hears back on that grant, a decision will be made in terms of what items to start pursuing and a PA system will likely be at the top of that list. Mayor Smith agreed with Mr. Spooner and stated that he'd like to run the new rates for 6 months and then review to see if it's impacted by Ms. Laddison's concern. Ms. Laddison stated that she would also like to consider a non-profit rate. Mr. Cloud proposed keeping the old rates in place for a non-profit rate and revisit in December.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderwoman Bessette to approve revised facility rental rates as proposed with addition of non-profit rates. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

6. Recess for Liquor Control (see separate agenda)

7. Consider approval of Revised Financial Policy, City Manager and Tom Leitz (D&V).

Mr. Cloud recalled that at the last audit, the auditors pointed out that the City wasn't strictly following its fund balance policy between what's committed and what's not and hadn't adopted a policy to build up its reserve fund. This policy was an effort to align the City's policy with its practices.

Mr. Leitz stated that the issue really boils down to the City's reserves. From a staff perspective, reserves can be used on a temporary basis and that is frequently done. He gave the example of the wastewater upgrade. He explained that there are temporary uses and the permanent uses which go through the warrant process and the auditors wanted more clarity on that. Mr. Hawkins asked Mr. Leitz if this policy needs to be run by the auditors. Mr. Leitz responded that the auditors were just concerned with what's assigned and whose authority it is. He doesn't believe it's necessary to run it by the auditors because it is council's policy and staff deals with them most directly. The role of the staff is to fulfill what the council tells staff to do and if that's sometimes in conflict with the auditors, that's ok. Mr. Leitz stated that the standard recommendation is to have 2 months of reserves in the fund balance and from staff's perspective, the fund balance isn't cash. From a cash perspective, all three of the City's funds have separate accounting but one bank account. The expenses and revenues are known well in advance and staff can plan ahead. As it stands right now, the Water and Wastewater Fund and the General Fund with the benefit of the Redevelopment Fund are very strong.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to approve revised financial policy. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

8. Consider approval of meeting minutes: Regular mtg. 6/11/18 (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to approve 6/11/18 regular meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

9. Consider approval of warrants: 6/22/18, 6/29/18 and 7/6 (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to approve 6/22/18 warrant. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to approve 6/29/18 warrant. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to approve 6/29/18 warrant. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

10. Mayor's Report.

Mayor Smith stated that with the help of the St. Albans Messenger, Bordeau Brothers and Ben & Jerry's, he received about 125 agricultural themed photos that will be on display. He recalled that the contest is in place to celebrate the Co-ops 100th anniversary and people will be voting on their favorite photos. The top 12 – 15 photos will be blown up and mounted in Taylor Park to showcase what our region does. Mayor Smith stated that it will be a tourist attraction in the Downtown area and a community event. There will be a reception at City Hall and an auction to benefit the Downtown Arts Council. The same photos will be relocated to the museum a week from Thursday for the Chamber Mixer for another voting opportunity.

Mayor Smith stated that he received an email about children swimming in the fountain and climbing on it. The suggestion was to have some bigger notification around the fountain as to what the City's expectation is. Ms. Laddison stated that it's another vote for a splash pad.

Mayor Smith stated that he and Marty Manahan coordinated an effort with the Red Cross to do a blood drive at City Hall on August 7th. The main purpose it to promote the City's downtown businesses. Donors would receive a gift card to a local business for participating and would like to do it twice a year. Mr. Spooner asked Mayor Smith what the hours are. Mayor Smith responded that it is 10 am – 3 pm.

11. Other Business.

Mr. Hawkins noted that the Kingman Street Classic will be held on July 21st and benefits a new charity every year. He commended Kathy Manahan for all the work she's done over the years.

Ms. Laddison stated that the truck traffic on Upper Welden Street continues. She's also been asked for a sidewalk and paving update on High street. Mr. Manahan responded that they are confident that the will north side will be completed this year and hopes the south side will be completed next year.

Mayor Smith asked if staff could encourage Wrights to get out to residents with a 2 day notice on a door hanger before work begins. He noted that they tore out a lot of perennials on the curb near his street and would like to give residents a heads up. Mr. Manahan responded that they typically give notice a week and a half out but must have missed a couple on Rublee Street.

Mr. Spooner stated that he read in the paper that Swanton residents are also concerned with speeding in neighborhoods and is the main complaint he receives. He was at the fountain last night in Taylor Park and a lot of the lion's mouths around the bowls didn't have water coming out of them. Mr. Sawyer responded that Public Works is aware of that and will need to shut the fountain down to clean it out.

Mr. Cloud stated that resume reviews for Allen Robtoy's position is underway.

Ms. Bessette stated that her ward is also having issues with excessively speeding vehicles and loud vehicles. She stated that the speed dips are slowing down the people that weren't a problem before and the speeders speed over them and the neighbors are not happy with the dips either because they are very noisy. Mr. Spooner stated that another option for that intersection is a 3-way stop at Lasalle and North Elm.

12. Adjourn.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to adjourn meeting at 7:32 pm. Vote was unanimous, 6-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith

Community Relations Coordinator