

**St. Albans City Council
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, January 8, 2018
City Hall, Council Chambers**

A regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, January 8, 2018, at 6:30 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

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

Council Absent: None absent.

Staff Present: Dominic Cloud, City Manager; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development; Tom Leitz, Director of Administration; Sue Krupp, City Clerk & Treasurer; Gary Taylor, Police Chief; Ron Hoague, Police Captain and Ben Couture, Lieutenant.

Visitors: See attached sign-in sheet.

1. Executive Session in second floor conference room re: litigation and contract negotiations.
 - a. Consider a finding that premature disclosure of litigation and contract negotiations could compromise the City or person involved (D&V).
A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to find that litigation and contract negotiations could compromise the City or person involved. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.
 - b. Enter Executive Session for purpose of discussing litigation and contract negotiations where premature disclosure could compromise the City or person involved (D&V).
A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Hawkins to enter Executive Session for purpose of discussing litigation and contract negotiations where premature disclosure could compromise the City or person involved. Vote was unanimous, 7 -0.
2. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance in Council Chambers.
Mayor Gamache called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and led the pledge of allegiance.
3. Public Comment.
No public comment was made.
4. Interview candidates for Downtown Board.
Mr. Sawyer recalled that at the last meeting, Denis LaPointe and Dick Thayer were considered for the Development Review Board. Council interviewed them and wished to appoint them to the board but hadn't heard yet from Owen Manahan about his expiring seat and also wanted to hear from Alternate, Judith Leonard to see if she wished to seek the other open regular seat. Council appointed Mr. LaPointe and Mr. Thayer as Alternates for the time being and extended Mr. Manahan's term. Mr. Manahan communicated to staff that he would like to seek his open regular seat and Ms. Leonard communicated that she would like to keep the alternate seat. Mr. Sawyer explained that council can choose to appoint Mr. Manahan to an open seat and there will be another open seat. Staff recommends appointing Mr. LaPointe or Mr. Thayer to the other open seat available.
 - a. Make appointments to DRB (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to appoint Owen Manahan and Dick Thayer to open seats expiring 12/31/20 and to appoint Denis LaPointe to the alternate seat expiring 12/31/20. Mayor Gamache added that Judith Leonard would remain as an Alternate. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

5. Second Reading of Land Development Regulation amendments for stream corridor protection, Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer recalled that the stream corridor protection rules have been proposed for the Land Development Regulations and is part of the City's MS-4 permit meant to prevent erosion in the City streams. At the last meeting, council requested a list of the properties that are known to border a brook and located in the proposed stream corridor and riparian buffer area and that the list be kept in the City Clerk's office as well as the Permitting office. Mr. Sawyer stated that other than that, there were no changes made to proposed amendment from the last meeting.

Mr. Hawkins stated that he noticed there are 5 "unknowns" in the list of properties presented. Mr. Sawyer responded that those are open land parcels that are probably assigned to others appearing as condos elsewhere on the list. Mr. Hawkins asked if it's correct that they belong to the City. Mr. Sawyer responded that they do not belong to a property on the grand list and when the parcel maps are created, you sometime get orphan parcels or common land assigned to condominiums. Mr. Hawkins asked if it's correct that those "unknowns" are common lands within the condominiums that are on the grand list but also on the list provided tonight. Mr. Sawyer responded affirmatively.

Mr. Pelkey asked if he could vote tonight if he wasn't present at the first reading. Mayor Gamache responded that he could vote.

a. Consider adoption of amendments (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to adopt second reading of Land Development Regulation amendments for stream corridor protection as drafted. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

6. Recess for Liquor Control (see separate agenda).

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to recess for Liquor Control Board at 6:41 pm. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

7. Second reading of City ordinance amendment re: Market St. traffic direction, Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer stated that this would codify the new traffic direction on Market Street which is one-way, southbound. Mr. Spooner asked if the parking has been utilized well on that street. Mr. Sawyer responded that he has seen the parking utilized.

a. Consider adoption of amendment (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to adopt amendment for Market Street traffic direction. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

8. Consider adoption of municipal policies for VCDP program, Chip Sawyer (D&V).

Mr. Sawyer recalled that the City was recently granted funds from VCDP to be passed through to Champlain Housing Trust so they can operate their home loan program. The City needs to show that it's adopted some policies and codes that are compliant with existing City policies. Mayor Gamache asked Mr. Sawyer if he has any feedback on the participation of the program. Mr. Sawyer responded that they are still working through the agreement with the City but can get an update on how the program is going now. He added that the program has been in effect for several years and this grant with the City would extend the program. Overall, it's a good program and staff has some properties in mind that would be good contenders. Mayor Gamache asked if staff makes that information available to people

that come in to City Hall. Mr. Sawyer responded that staff needs to do more. Mr. Cloud recommended a postcard or flyer as a direct mailing once the agreement is final.

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman McCarthy adopt municipal policies for VCDP program. Mr. Spooner asked what impact this has on the City staff's time. Mr. Sawyer responded that it's not a lot of effort and is along the lines of a lot of the other neighborhood revitalization activities and falls in line with the things the City is already doing. **Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

9. Presentation of FY 19 Budget Proposal, City Manager and Administration Director.

Mr. Cloud noted three major drivers in this year's budget; the first is a proposed street crimes unit in the Police Department. Mr. Cloud explained that the Chief of Police believes the department has reached a tipping point with its efforts to reduce drug usage and related property crimes in the City and Town. Over the last five years, staff has stabilized the Police Department. This has been accomplished through many initiatives, including regionalization, salary parity and capital planning. The department still can't put the laser focus on street crimes that is necessary to drive the drugs out of the community. Mr. Cloud stated that the proposal asks for two more officers to serve exclusively as investigators in the new Street Crimes Unit. The Chief has approached the Town of St. Albans to provide 50% of the funding. The City's share would be \$110,000.

The second major driver in the budget is the creation of a Stormwater Utility in FY 19. Due to the City's designation as an MS-4 Community, it has incurred a series of obligations to fix the impaired streams. The EPA has given the City 5 years to come up with a plan and 20 years to fix the streams. The City is roughly half way through the 5-year planning period. Staff has long envisioned funding these planning requirements and public improvements by creating a stormwater utility. Like water and wastewater utilities, stormwater utilities are funded for providing a service and there are no exemptions to who would be charged a fee. Much of this work to date has been funded by the general fund. This budget proposes shifting some of those costs out of the Planning & Development Department and into the Stormwater Utility and increasing some of the funding flowing through the utility to catch up with some of the City's obligations.

The third major driver in the budget is continued implementation of the Neighborhood Sidewalk Bond. This budget increases the debt service capacity by \$55,000 to \$275,000 with the target being \$300,000. This is responsible for about 1% of the proposed tax increase.

Overall, the budget proposes a 3.6% increase in property taxes. 2.4% of that is due to the street crimes unit and 1.2% of that is due to the neighborhood sidewalks. Mr. Cloud noted that the cover page of the budget identifies the percent change of 3.6% from FY 18 and shows the impact of change to the City tax rate on homeowners with a median value of City residences at \$200,000. Mr. Leitz added that \$200,000 is a median average and comes out to an increase of \$63.76 per year to the average property owner.

Mr. Cloud noted that the next page of the budget identifies spending by major category. Under personnel, the change from 2018 is \$133,000 which is a 4% increase from last year. From 2014, however, that's only a 6% increase. There hasn't been a lot of growth since 2014 and the bulk of it is the staffing increase proposed for this year for the Police Department. Other trends are laid out for retirement. Mr. Leitz has done great work producing only a 0.1% increase in healthcare costs City wide. Worker's Comp is up by just under 6%. The debt service increase is driven by the neighborhood sidewalks proposed. Legal fees are down and there isn't a lot of action in county and regional functions. Streetscape maintenance has increased over time but has leveled out at about \$50,000/year. Mr. Cloud stated that page 3 of the budget breaks down spending by department instead of category. Page 4 shows the number of full-time employees per department. In 2019, the City is proposing 75.5 total

employees. Nearly 10 years ago, the City had 74 employees. Mr. Leitz added that RJC has gone from 2 to 9.5 employees, due to the merger with Court Diversion.

Mr. Cloud noted page 5 which is a summary of all revenues and expenditures. Property tax revenues are shown at a 4.1% increase due to a modest growth in the grand list.

Mr. Cloud proceeded to discuss the following highlights by department for the proposed FY 19 general fund budget:

Finance & Administration

- Line 38 – Budget stabilization fund has increased slightly over the last few years but remains level-funded from last year at \$13,000.
- Lines 43 & 44 – TIF transfer (expenditures) – last year, proposed to transfer \$162,000 and proposing to transfer \$147,000 this year. The bulk of that is the increment created by personal property tax and the increment that the City has been contributing to stabilize the TIF.
- Line 59 - Propose to cut legal expenses by \$12,000.
- Line 81 - Total expenditures proposed are just under \$1 million and down by 5%.

City Clerk

- Beginning to plan for a new City Clerk and some staff transition. The City Clerk functions are spread across the funds. Total expenditures proposed for FY 19 are \$20,897.

Planning & Development

- Line 42 – City Marketing Campaign – staff has done some work this year developing promotional material, primarily around the marketing of this building and done some work with Messenger Print & Design. Mr. Cloud stated that staff still hasn't quite hit its straw with marketing the City as a whole and believes there is a lot of potential to partner with large employers to campaign St. Albans as a whole and put St. Albans on the map.
- Line 27 – Stormwater MS-4 Planning – staff cut \$30,000 out of the budget for FY 19 and moved it over to the Stormwater Utility. As a result, net operations have decreased from \$337,061 to \$291,523.

Stormwater Utility 2019 Proposed Budget

- Line 46 - total proposed expenses of \$156,000.
- Proposed impact would be \$2.50 per month per equivalent residential unit (ERU) and is based on the amount of impervious surface. Mr. Cloud explained that generally speaking, it is a house and is not based on the size or value of the house, but based on the amount of impervious surface.
- Line 6 - The total expenses are made up of a small contribution to offset some of the stormwater costs borne by Public Works at \$10,000.
- Line 8 – Stormwater permit expenses represent \$4,000.
- Line 9 – Professional Services – Represents \$42,500 for all of the consultants hired by staff to prepare the flow reduction plans, review of some of the development proposals coming in and to perform some of the education requirements under the MS-4 program which will be done by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission.
- Line 18 – The City has a contract with the State for surface water monitoring for \$8,813.
- Line 28 - Maintenance of Stormwater Treatment - \$15,000 proposed and has to do with the perennial issue of who maintains the rain gardens after they are built and envision hiring one of the City's landscape contractors.

- Line 34 - CIP – There are various stormwater treatment projects around the City which need to advance to final design in order to obtain grant funding. The vision is to use some of these funds in the early stages to hire consultants to design the projects and then with voter approval, roll over to debt service capacity in future years.
- Lines 42 & 43 – Debt Service - \$10,000 is allocated for debt service on a street sweeper and \$25,000 in debt service reserves in light of future projects.

Mr. Leitz stated that if adopted, administratively, this would appear on the City water bills which is the most cost effective and efficient way. Mr. Spooner asked if it's correct that the \$2.50 per month impact isn't included in the increase that a property owner is going to see on a \$200,000 house. Mr. Cloud responded affirmatively and stated that it's not general fund and would show up on the water/sewer bills.

Mr. Hawkins stated that someone will need to make a determination as to what impervious surface exists and the fee that will be assessed by the City and appear on the water bill which will be across the board with no exemptions. Mr. Cloud responded affirmatively. Mr. Spooner asked if it's correct that property owners can still do projects to minimize that impact. Mr. Cloud responded affirmatively. Mr. Hawkins asked what the projection is based on the cost presented to council this year over the next 3 years and asked if that rate is likely to change. Mr. Cloud responded that he believes it's likely to go up from the \$2.50 and trends closer to \$5.00/month nationwide. He doesn't believe the City is very different from some of the other historic communities that have utilities. Mr. Cloud added that it can be very expensive to do some of the retrofits because of the lack of land. It's the design process that will be occurring over the next year or two which will form what those rates do and ultimately would come back to the voters for approval. Mr. Hawkins noted the mitigation factor of the property owner and asked how that will affect the expenses that the City is trying to recover by having the rate. He asked if one person has the ability to mitigate and others don't, will that property owner suffer by having to pay a higher rate. Mr. Cloud responded that it will depend on the character and constraints of the property. Mr. Sawyer stated that staff has been advised to come up with a credit manual which is the City's policy for looking at treatment that people install on their own property and figuring out to what extent that is credited toward their stormwater fee. The council can determine to what degree the City will reward property owners for treating on their own land and make policy decisions such as deciding whether or not to let someone credit their entire stormwater fee. Mr. Sawyer stated that staff will be able to bring all of those issues to council for consideration. Mr. Hawkins reiterated that the end result is that the City is trying to mitigate impervious surface runoff into the lake and is hopeful that the City will come up with measures to help people do those things. Mr. Sawyer responded that the credits are for two reasons; people are treating on their land and the City is trying to help the entire community meet its goals and if the City gives credits, it incentivizes people to do treatment on their land. Mayor Gamache asked what the risk is in terms of meeting MS-4 compliance if the City does not choose this route. Mr. Sawyer responded that there would be hefty penalties involved and the City wants to be able to say it's doing its part for the St. Albans Bay.

Assessing

- Staff has consolidated Assessing functions to an office of Property Services headed by David Southwick who is training for that new role.
- There is a modest change in net operations from \$31,000 to \$26,000 and beginning to save money for reappraisal reserves of \$10,000.

Debt Service

- Mr. Leitz noted that every year there are minor changes with Police and Public Works equipment. In FY 21, \$45,000 in debt will go away.
- Overall debt is up \$82,000, most of which is for the neighborhood sidewalks. The City has spent \$1.6 million in sidewalks so far and haven't borrowed that much. Mr. Leitz stated that what the City has borrowed has been short-term and low interest. This winter, he is converting the first tranche of that to longer-term debt and will reevaluate the same for next year. No point in borrowing if we don't need it.
- Line 18 - In the Police, there is a new utility vehicle budgeted which is designed to get to hard to reach places.
- Line 37 – In Public Works, there is a new sidewalk plow and street sweeper budgeted. The street sweeper has been purchased already and 80% funded by stormwater.

Mr. Spooner noted that the new snow cat is not in the budget. Mr. Leitz responded that it's money in, money out so it would not appear in debt service.

Fire Department

- Line 7 - No staffing or equipment changes but there are some new revenues. Mr. Cloud recalled that a second building inspector was added to staff a couple of years ago to begin doing commercial inspections. That steadily increased from \$17,000 in 2014 and now proposing \$65,000 in FY 19. We are ramping up that program. Mr. Cloud stated that Mr. Hawkins and the Finance Committee had a good idea for exploring a way to regionalize that service, similar to some of our other public safety services.
- Line 61 - Net operations in the Fire Department moved from \$345,000 in FY 18 to \$312,000 in FY 19.

Mr. Hawkins asked if staff is continuing to utilize its ability to work with the Town to consolidate and save wherever possible. Mr. Cloud responded that staff is continuing to explore that and operationally, it is already happening. He explained that it's taken a bit to address some of the administrative and transactional elements and how that impacts the planning for a new public safety facility. Some of it has gotten wrapped up in a desire for a water and wastewater agreement with the Town but still making a lot of progress on both ends. He added that he's not sure the City can save a lot more money by aligning but might begin to save more on the capital side.

Police

- Line 9 – The \$95,000 Federal money from the Byrne Grant is no longer available.
- Line 25 - Salaries – proposing an additional \$155,000 for FY 19 for a total of \$1,350,000. This is comparable to \$1,195,000 in FY 18. Mr. Cloud explained that the driver is the need for a stable, mature department where the City isn't constantly losing officers to other departments. The second driver for the increase is for the City's share of the two new investigators
- The utility vehicle was very strongly lobbied for by the department as an unmet need for many years now.

Dispatch/Operations

- The playing field for dispatch is improving. Mr. Cloud stated that over the last 2 years, the marketplace changed radically and recalled that there were smaller operations in Middlebury offering rock bottom prices. Similarly, the Chittenden County communities were offering discounted prices compared to what the City could offer. Ultimately, the City lost all of Grand Isle County and some other smaller operations. A couple of those have begun to come back and staff is hopeful that as Chittenden County fully regionalizes, Grand Isle will return to Franklin County.

- On the revenue side, the City had a high watermark in 2015 of almost \$700,000. Two years ago the City was down to \$542,000, last year was at \$473,000 and this year staff believes the City can get back to \$517,000. Mr. Cloud added that the Chief has done a lot of great work in picking up some small contracts.

Mayor Gamache asked what the reason is for municipalities that left and came back. Mr. Cloud responded that ultimately it is the service.

- Line 13 – Salaries - There is a small reduction in salaries over last year. The department is at a better funding level this year with salaries proposed for FY 19 in the amount of \$375,317.
- Line 47 - Net Operations were at \$243,587 last year and proposing \$217,384 this year.

Animal Control

- Line 21 - Not a lot of action. Net Operations proposed for FY 19 is \$17,192 compared to \$15,306 in FY 18. The department received a lot of complaints about response time and the quality of service. A new person is now on the job and a better arrangement is in place.

Recreation

- Total revenues are \$450,000 and total expenses are \$550,000 and net operations are only down \$3,000 from the prior year. Ms. Viens is always growing the programs which requires more staffing.
- Line 11 – Runs & Races; the Glow Run and Sap Run have been combined under one line item.
- Line 10 – Day Camps – there is a \$15,000 increase proposed and staff believe it's totally justified.
- Line 18 – Town Reimbursement – Propose an increase of \$2,500 for FY 19 which staff believes to be relatively conservative.
- Line 24 - Pool – Level-funded on both sides. The big change is that the City hosted regional swim meets last year and because of that, sold more concessions.
- Line 84 – Day Camp (expenses) – There is a small increase in day camp expenditures.
- Line 95 – Salaries - Minimum wage has increased and the department has a lot of students that are hired at minimum wage.
- Line 136 - CIP – There is a small item of \$1000 for the Barlow furnace which has had ongoing issues and is an older heating system.
- Line 143 – Pool Capital Assessment - \$10,000 was budgeted for last year with an additional \$10,000 reserved for FY 19.
- Line 144 – Hard'ack Improvements/Services - Continued funding at \$10,000. Also put money in in the Public Works budget for maintenance.
- The net cost to tax is down by \$3,000 for Recreation, overall.

Public Works

- Line 10 – Debt Proceeds of \$25,000 are proposed for mini excavator which has proven to be an essential piece of equipment for the sidewalk work.
- Lines 31 & 32 – Tree Removal & Replacement – staff has balanced the tree removal and tree replacement program at \$15,000 each.
- Line 38 - Streetscape maintenance has tapered off at \$50,000.
- Line 87 – Hard'ack – There is an additional \$5,000 proposed for maintenance. Recreation has the programmatic piece and Public Works has the infrastructure piece.
- Line 110 – CIP - Annual paving program is level-funded at \$266,000.

Mr. Spooner noted that in years past, funds have been set aside for individual parks and didn't see it listed in the Public Works or Recreation. Mr. Cloud responded that it can be found in lines 84 – 86.

Parking Program

- Line 16 – Total revenues proposed for FY 19 are \$250,000. Revenues continue to climb.
- On the expense side, staff is reserving \$50,000 annually for future maintenance on the garage and still throwing off a \$25,000 surplus. Mr. Cloud reiterated that the TIF pays the debt and this represents the operating side. Consolidated all of our parking efforts.

Restorative Justice Center

- Historically in Administration, there has been a \$10,000 contribution to RJC that dates back to the days when it wasn't a City agency. Now that it is a City agency, the \$10,000 appears under net operations.
- The RJC grants are not growing so they've tried to grow other revenue sources. They now have a few minor contracts with school districts to teach their services to school administration and is proving to be a growing revenue source. Staff is working with RJC to make sure the services are priced appropriately.
- The agency in general is very successful in obtaining grants to pay for the apartment's downtown that they run and maintain and also gives them the ability to provide youth services.
- The agency's caseloads are growing and the net impact is \$10,000; same as last year.

Mr. Spooner asked if RJC works with truancy or anything more proactive. Mr. Leitz responded affirmatively.

a. Finance Chair Comments, Tim Hawkins.

Mr. Hawkins stated that there was a good review of the budget by the Finance Committee and the City is offering things that residents demand. He noted the \$50,000 for streetscape maintenance which is something that the City has not been able to reserve before. He commented that to come up with a budget like this 10 years ago would be unheard of. Mr. Hawkins noted the Budget to Actuals on page 3 and stated that staff is coming very close to budgeting actual use and gets closer every year. He credited good staffing and strong management practices and believes the citizens of St. Albans should be very proud of this budget. Mayor Gamache thanked Mr. Hawkins and the other members of the Finance Committee, Mr. Pelkey and Mr. McCarthy for their work as well as staff's analysis and great work. Mr. Hawkins added that council has always operated under the premise that if the City Manager can come in with a solid budget, there is no need to go into the weeds because staff has the expertise. He had questioned at the Finance Committee meeting whether or not the Chief needed to be present to provide the analysis. He believes this process fosters a good relationship between council and staff and the people utilizing the services.

b. Council Discussion.

Mr. Spooner noted the items coming off the budget in 2021 and asked what items the City can anticipate paying moving forward. He recalled discussions about the City pool and a new public safety building and asked if there are any other projects to anticipate. Mr. Cloud responded that the three big items coming down the pipe are the pool, public safety facility and Fonda. Staff doesn't have enough information yet to roll out a plan but is optimistic and the order each item will be addressed will probably be public safety, pool and then Fonda but added that that could change overnight. He added that cleanup costs at Fonda are now down to \$500,000 from \$2 million and staff has a redevelopment proposal for 100,000 square feet, 75-80 parking spaces, more water and wastewater allocation than you could ever use and an awful lot of BOD.

Mayor Gamache asked Mr. Cloud what can be expected next in terms of a timeline. Mr. Cloud asked if he could go over that after the Chief's discussion. Mayor Gamache asked if there was any public input.

Peter DesLauriers asked how many City employees drive around City vehicles, excluding plow trucks. Mr. Cloud responded that there is a Recreation vehicle shared by two staff members, a Public Works vehicle and a Parking Enforcement vehicle. He stated that there is a difference between vehicles assigned to Department Heads which allow some incidental personal use and the rest which are picked up when the employees get to work. Mr. DesLauriers congratulated council and staff for making things happen in the City and all of their hard work. He commented that staff and council should draw the line between wants and needs and questioned whether purchases for items such as vehicles should be made knowing there are some big expenditures coming up. He added that he believes the number one thing the citizens want is to get up in the morning and feel safe in their community and is in support Chief Taylor's proposal.

Mr. Hawkins stated that he agrees with Mr. DesLauriers assessment and noted that 7 or 8 years ago, the City started Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) which became the City's savings account. The City is now capable of saving for purchases 5 years down the road and has quite a nest egg with the CIP. Mr. Spooner added that when he goes to work now in Burlington and tells people he lives in St. Albans, they say how great it looks and is what is drawing people to want to live and purchase property here.

c. Public Comment.

No public comment was made.

10. Chief of Police Request for Street Crimes Unit Funding, Chief Taylor.

Chief Taylor explained that the department has worked very hard to determine what the capacity of the Police Department is and what is capable of being consolidated. Staff has done a tremendous amount of work on figuring out the department can best use its resources and have maximized that to the extent that there are 3 patrol officers on duty per shift. The department knows the locations where the drug activity is occurring and does its best to monitor that activity in between calls. He recalled the National Geographic segment done a couple years ago which highlighted the park and ride at route 36 and 104 and only made the problem worse by making it known to the whole world. Since the segment was aired, drug activity has increased at that location. Chief Taylor recalled the incident that occurred a year ago which started in that parking lot where a motor vehicle pursuit occurred, ending in the Holy Angels parking lot with a shooting between 8 and 12 minutes before the City School would have been released for the day. Chief Taylor stressed that officers between shifts and calls are driving down the road looking for speeders and inspection stickers and license plates, and looking for things that seem out of the ordinary and is difficult to then also focus on drug activity. He stated that there are at least 60 locations in the Town and City that the police are familiar with where drug activity is taking place and that doesn't even include the parking lots. As drug transactions take about 3 minutes or less, it's hit or miss for the department to try and do something about that in between calls. Chief Taylor explained that all of the officers play a second and third role in the organization as a member of the tactical unit and the in-house drug team. The department has reached a saturation point and it's difficult to get officers to volunteer to come in on their time off because they feel they're giving much more than they ever signed up for to begin with.

Chief Taylor stated that he is proposing a 3 person team; one team leader coming from within the rank and would be augmented by paying for 2 additional officers which would be shared equally by the Town and City. He stated that their only job within the organization would be to go after the locations where

there is drug activity. Chief Taylor explained that the department is going to use any legal, moral and ethical tools available to ensure that drug dealers and buyers find it extremely unpleasant to conduct their business in the community whether that means knocking on their door and speaking to them or simply being present taking pictures and running plates. Chief Taylor noted that he just came from the Town Selectboard meeting where he was met with overwhelming, unanimous support. This is one of the answers that is being utilized by law enforcement across the country and would give the City the unique advantage of having these resources available to target these individuals and if it doesn't work, it will stop being funded and will go away.

Mayor Gamache asked Chief Taylor if he could share some examples of how success would be measured. Chief Taylor responded that it would rely on data and he will know what doors are being knocked on, how many motor vehicle stops are being made, what streets they're on and how many drug-related arrests are made. He stated that he's already heard from another law enforcement leader in this county and stated that success breeds success. Mayor Gamache shared her thanks and appreciation of the officers and commented that she likes the targeted approach. She believes it's an idea that is absolutely worth trying and it will meet some of the concerns she's been hearing from the public. She agreed that if successful, it will be good for surrounding communities in Franklin County as well. Chief Taylor stated that he personally met with the US Attorney, the State's Attorney for Franklin County and the Deputy Chief of the Burlington Police Department who has a street crimes unit and it is his intention to be in continual communication, sharing knowledge and possibly resources with those parties.

Mr. McCarthy stated that he's never seen the kind of positive response to a proposal that would increase spending as he did to this one. He asked if other communities that have street crimes units have integrated with the police and other resources available like what is proposed for St. Albans. Chief Taylor responded that the intention would be that this would be a standalone group that would move around. He noted that there will be cases that will need to be referred to the DEA and US Attorney and the detectives should be able to work together with the Street Crimes Unit. He added that sometimes they will be in uniform, out of uniform, on foot, in marked cars and unmarked cars. Chief Taylor stated that in the last 3 years, every bank robbery, armed stick up and home invasion that has occurred has been related to drugs.

Ms. Bessette asked Chief Taylor if he thought two officers would be enough. Chief Taylor responded that he doesn't know but would like to try this and see what happens. He stated that it won't take him long to figure out if it's the right number or not.

Mr. Pelkey commented that he thinks this is a great proactive step and nothing angers him more than seeing messages on social media about what a drug problem St. Albans has.

Mr. Spooner asked Chief Taylor if he believes the new BAART facility is going to have a positive impact on the community. Chief Taylor responded that he knows good people who feel good about some of the work that is coming out of the BAART program because they have been affected by the opiate crisis first hand but has also heard from people who say it puts all of these people with drug issues in our community. Chief Taylor stated that he believes it has to be judged day to day and if 100 people go to BAART and it helps 10 people get clean, that's 10 fewer people in the community with an opiate addiction.

Mr. Spooner noted that sometimes line items are moved from one place in the budget to fund another line item within the budget and wants to make sure that does not happen with this program. Chief Taylor stated that the money budgeted is going to be spent on the Street Crimes Unit only and will be completely transparent.

Mayor Gamache opened the floor to public comment. A member of the public asked if there will be something in place for all of the addicts if the program is successful and the drug supply begins to decrease. Chief Taylor responded that the City has formed some pretty strong coalitions already. He envisions new partnerships as well as partnerships that have been stagnant becoming recharged.

David Barber asked what the resolution was to the incident that occurred where a guy went to the wrong house during a home invasion. Chief Taylor responded that he was arrested after a pursuit and is a career criminal. He contacted the US Attorney who said she would get in contact with the State's attorney. He anticipates having a first meeting with the US Attorney, State Attorney and the Burlington Police. Mr. Barber asked who owns the park and ride lot. Chief Taylor responded that it's owned by the State. He asked if Hawk's Nest would be willing to install surveillance cameras. Chief Taylor responded that he is not sure but has a call into them. Mr. Barber mentioned that other parking lots are likely candidates for this type of activity and asked if the property owners of those lots have been approached to participate in surveillance cameras. Chief Taylor responded that cameras are not the end all and if they are not monitored regularly, they just repeat. Mr. Barber noted that Rutland has had success with seizing properties involved in drug activity and selling them and asked if the City has had any experience with that. Chief Taylor responded affirmatively and stated that there is a property on Lower Gilman Street that was seized by US Marshals and is going through forfeiture. Mr. Cloud stated that he believed Rutland was using their own municipal power and didn't come out of a motion from the US Attorney. Chief Taylor responded that it does get adopted by the US Attorney's office first. He added that there are two types of seizures, one is criminal and one is civil and with real estate, there must be a trial for the property in question before any seizure can occur. Mr. Barber asked Chief Taylor what the first step is in notifying landlords when drug activity is taking place at their property. Chief Taylor responded that he is developing a workshop to work hand in hand with property owners and is hopeful that everyone will work together.

Frank Cioffi introduced himself. He complimented the City Manager and the City Council for all of their revitalization efforts in the City and expressed his support for Chief Taylor's proposal. He explained that he has personally been impacted by the drug activity and lost his daughter and has a nephew that is permanently disabled. He commented that if you drive down a street and the sidewalk is crumbling, it's something you notice. But something like the drug crisis is not as visible unless you are looking for it and you don't see it until it's too late. Mr. Cioffi stated that this is not a problem exclusive to St. Albans or Franklin County or even Vermont. He believes part of the solution is to invest in treatment, prevention and enforcement and stressed that the work needs to continue on in the State Attorney's office and through law enforcement throughout the County and the State.

Curtis Brusoe, landlord and owner of Curt's Automotive, introduced himself. He expressed how difficult it is to find good tenants and said that he has documented over 400 drug deals that have occurred. He explained that people involved in drug activity are couch surfing and jumping from one apartment to another and the Police Department classifies those people as tenants if they stay in an apartment for a period of two weeks. Mr. Brusoe stated that a landlord can do research and background checks on tenants and still end up with bad tenants. He expressed support of this proposal.

Tyler Stanislas, owner of a rental property on Kingman Street, introduced himself. He explained that he can't keep the drug dealers out of the apartments and as soon as he evicts one, another one takes their place. He stated that he had one tenant who did not appear to a single court date for the eviction process and it took him 13 months to have the tenant removed. He stressed that it is extremely hard to be a landlord right now and get quality tenants.

Mary Pickener of the Vermont Department of Health introduced herself. She stated that this is a problem which has been here for many years and won't be an easy problem to fix. She commented that

seizing properties sounds like a great solution but it will only reduce housing. Ms. Pickener explained that there is no treatment in jail, and other alternatives for treatment and prevention need to be considered. She noted that when you are dealing with people actively using substances, there is crime involved, however, there are folks that are living lives of crime and folks that are struggling with addiction who genuinely want help. She stated that it's those people that don't choose to the help that you will see over and over and over again in the criminal justice program. Ms. Pickener stressed that prevention and treatment works and is available. She explained that there are two parts to that; make life bearable for a user after removing the substance and creating a behavior change. She strongly believes that this community has been open in finding and supporting that change. People don't become substance users overnight but with opiates, it's much quicker and users can become addicted to opiates in a matter of weeks. She stated that council was gracious when they opened the Restorative Justice Center and stressed that the community needs to do this all together from every aspect in a thoughtful manner. Ms. Pickener explained that addiction affects everybody and it doesn't matter where you live or what your background is. There are a lot of proactive things going on in this community such as a prescription monitoring system and those types of changes started here in this community. Mayor Gamache thanked Ms. Pickener for pointing out that the key to fighting this problem starts with a compassionate community with enforcement, prevention, treatment, recovery and partnerships.

Tim Smith introduced himself and expressed his support of this proposal. He commented that it's amazing to see how the tide has shifted over the years and to see that the citizens realize the value of this proposal. He stated that he doesn't believe the City promotes its successes enough. He believes the majority of the citizens in the region have to hear about the successes to continue the support that the Police Department is seeking and would like to hear more in the future how Police can promote its successes. Chief Taylor responded that bragging or talking about successes oftentimes angers about 50% of the population and is certainly not his intention to stigmatize this community. He stated that he is open to ideas and tries to talk about successes.

11. Possible motions conveying sentiments of Council or directions to staff (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to approve FY 19 Budget Proposal as presented. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

Mr. Cloud stated that the warning needs to be adopted by the end of the month and can circle back to council with a date for a special meeting.

12. Consider approval of meeting minutes: Reg. mtg. 12/11/17 (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderwoman Laddison to approve 12/11/17 meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous, 6-0 with Alderman Pelkey abstaining.

13. Consider approval of warrants: 12/20/17 & 1/5/18 (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 12/20/17 warrant. Vote was unanimous, 6-0 with Alderman Spooner abstained.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 1/5/18 warrant. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

14. Other Business.

Mr. McCarthy has heard from a couple constituents about noise complaints related to modified exhausts on vehicles. He thanked Mr. Spooner for giving him some of his perspective and asked for an opportunity to discuss this issue at the next Public Safety Committee meeting.

Mr. Hawkins noted the light at the intersection of Main and Lower Newton Street isn't working. Mr. Cloud responded that the parts have been ordered. Mr. Spooner stated that the light at Lower Welden

Street doesn't seem to be detecting if vehicles are present or not. Mr. Sawyer responded that he can check the vehicle detection on that light. Mr. Spooner thanked Public Works for their work during the snow storm.

Mr. Pelkey stated that he would like to publicly recognize the officers that were involved in the incident that occurred on Lincoln Street.

15. Adjourn.

A motion was made by Alderwoman Bessette; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to adjourn meeting at 8:43 pm. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith
Community Relations Coordinator

Approved