

**St. Albans City Council  
Minutes of Meeting  
Monday, June 8, 2020  
City Hall, Council Chambers**

A regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, June 8, 2020, at 6:30 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

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

**Council Absent:** None absent.

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

**Visitors:** L. Beebe, Sarah Auer, Jan Appel, Dylan Woods, Zac Scheffler, Kate Larose, Derek Brouwer, Casey Robert, Angie Sturm, Marianne Hunkin, Reier Erickson, Tanner McCuin and Michelle Monroe.

1. Executive Session re: personnel matters and civil litigation.
  - a. The Council finds that premature disclosure of personnel matters and civil litigation would compromise the City or person involved (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Hawkins to find that premature disclosure of the above matters would compromise the City or person involved. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
  - b. The Council moves to enter Executive Session for purposes of discussing personnel matters and civil litigation 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 purposes of discussing personnel matters and civil litigation where premature disclosure could compromise the City or person involved. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**  
**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to exit Executive Session. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
2. Convene Open Session with Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm and led the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Sawyer
3. Public Comment.

Zac Scheffler expressed his concern about the local police department and is in support of the MRI review. He is eager to see the results from MRI.

Dylan Woods introduced himself and stated that he was born and lives in St. Albans. He stated that he has been harassed by secret society members in the town and sent several emails to the Police Chief who never responded. He stated that he hopes when the council does their vetting of a new Police Chief that they hire someone who does not have a history of discrimination and is less bias.

Kate Larose asked Council what their ideals are on police reform and citizen oversight engagement. Mayor Smith stated that he is not an expert which is why they hired a consultant, MRI. He is looking for their recommendations to begin with and will continue to speak to other communities. Mr. McCarthy stated that he wants people in the community to feel like the police are there to protect and serve them

regardless of age, race, sex and economic status. Mr. Pelkey stated that he agrees with Mr. McCarthy and believes the consultant will be very helpful. He wants to see community policing that enforces the law equally without discrimination. Ms. Bessette agreed with the other councilor's sentiments. She hopes the officers are trained to diffuse conflicts. Mr. Spooner stressed that the police department's purpose is to keep the community safe and agreed that the citizen's should be involved on some level. Mr. Hawkins responded that the evaluation study will guide council's decision and as long as there are experienced officers and a good evaluation report with timely evaluations, they will be able to make a sound decision. He noted that right now, it's too soon to say what the ideal police department is. Ms. Laddison expressed that she is looking for a police chief that leads with fairness, justice and establishes connections to the community.

Angie Sturm stated that she's glad to see so many community members attending. She cares deeply about the police department and the community and is hopeful that intersectionality of the profiles is considered and hopeful that things like race, gender and socioeconomic status are addressed. She hopes there are ways to examine and defund parts of the police department that are not serving the community.

Casey Robert stated that in looking at the budget for next year, the police capital is a 566% increase and asked why that is happening. Mayor Smith stated that a large part of that is the new police station. Mr. Cloud stated that voters approved the Congress & Main Redevelopment project which includes a portion for the new police station on South Main Street. The annual rent on the building is \$300,000 and there are also some fit up costs.

Marianne Hunkin stated that the budget resources should be moved away from policing. She stated that she would like to know what is under purview and what isn't. She would like to know if there are vacancies and if the funds for those vacancies could be moved to other resources. She would like to know when the MRI report will be available and what questions are being asked. She wants to know if the department is part of any militarization program. She noted that the data she requested is incomplete and should be readily accessible.

Reier Erickson stated that he has questions about a community oversight committee. Given the current climate and recent issues in St. Albans, he asked why there hasn't been more local output from the City and the current police department about what is happening nationally. He would like to see the police department defunded and used toward more viable resources.

Sarah Auer emphasized support of defunding the department. She asked how contracts between the schools and police are negotiated. Mr. Cloud responded that the school district reaches out to multiple providers. They go through a RFP process. The school pays \$100,000 for that service annually.

Jan Appel requested that the City make a statement about the national events that have happened over the last couple of weeks regarding antiracism and social injustice.

Tanner McCuin asked what the MRI evaluation actually includes. Mr. Cloud responded that MRI was hired to help the City with looking at the selection process for the police personnel. They will be looking at recruitment, retention and training and will help answer the question as to why the department is having behavioral problems. There haven't been incidences of racial disparity within the department. Mr. McCuin asked if the scope of the evaluation could be altered given what's now happening in the world. Mr. Cloud responded affirmatively but stated that he's not sure MRI is the best organization. He stated that it's hard to tell who the experts are right now and in Vermont, the training comes from the Vermont Police Academy and taking a close look at the use of force policy. He stated that the problem the City Police have is due to an excess of force.

4. Recess for Liquor Control.

**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner to recess for liquor control. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

5. Consider adoption of Local Emergency Management Plan, Chip Sawyer (D&V).

Mr. Sawyer stated that the City is supposed to publish the local emergency plan and file it with the local planning commission. It has a contact list of local officials and contacts dependent on different types of emergencies. Mr. Pelkey asked if the plan can be amended and noted that Chief Taylor is listed. Mr. Sawyer responded affirmatively. Mr. Spooner noted that the phone number listed for him is old and asked if the City Council needs to have Incident Command System training. Mr. Sawyer stated that he can look into that. Mr. Spooner noted that he and Kate have that training. Mr. Pelkey stated that at some point, daycares should be updated. Mr. Spooner asked Mr. Sawyer if he gets that info from DCF. Mr. Sawyer responded affirmatively. He stated that this is a living document and can be edited at any time based on changes.

**A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to adopt Local Emergency Management Plan. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

6. Consider naming of private road Ranimer Place, Chip Sawyer (D&V).

Mr. Sawyer stated that St. Albans City is a historical center. One of the things E-911 wants if there are multiple buildings on a driveway, is to have that driveway to have its own private street name. The Cadillac Motel has always had multiple buildings on the property with one street address. E-911 asked the City to create a private name for the driveway. He noted that the same thing was done with Mylan Drive a couple years ago.

**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve naming of private road Ranimer Place. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

7. Consider resolution to apply to the VT Sales Tax Reallocation Program for the Main/Congress/Maiden Lane project, Chip Sawyer (D&V).

Mr. Sawyer stated that this is a resolution to apply to the VT Sales Tax Reallocation Program for the Main, Congress and Maiden Lane project. The City previously went to the State for the Congress and Main project which was approved for a partial award. The City would like to request up to the maximum which can be done because the project isn't substantially complete yet. The Brownfield work and construction of the parking lot would be part of the public work.

**A motion was made by Alderwoman Laddison; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve resolution to apply to the VT Sales Tax Reallocation Program for the Main/Congress/Maiden Lane project. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

8. Consider adoption of water, wastewater and stormwater budgets, Tom Leitz (D&V).

Mr. Leitz stated that there is no increase in user fees across all of the funds. On the water side, the total increase in revenue is \$85,000 which is from the water plant filter. Looking at expenses, there is always staff reallocations which accounts for the changes. Line 25 shows small increases in the State pension costs. Line 35 under legal has been reduced since last year as there hasn't been a lot of action and staff believes it's a safe reduction. On line 52, there is \$10,000 budgeted in water and wastewater which would absorb user fees for credit card payments. It would also allow for better customer service. Line 63 shows that there is still \$100,000 budgeted for reserves in stabilization. On line 68, (CIP), staff is continuing to save allocation fees. There is a line item for a new Public Works vehicle. Line 78 represents year 4 of the radio replacement program which will be an ongoing process. Lines 88 & 89 represents the continuation of work for the water tank and includes grants for Kingman.

Mr. Leitz noted that debt is almost the same as the prior year. A portion of the salary of an employee in water was moved into the wastewater budget. Line 134 represents chemicals with a slight cut compared

to last year. There is no change proposed for electricity. Distribution includes the Public Works crew which has been reallocated across the funds. There is no increase, just a change in how it's budgeted. Water revenues are up 3.3% each.

Mr. Spooner asked if there are any MS-4 requirements that the City has to meet. He asked if there is any option for solar at Fairfax. Mr. Leitz responded that he believes there isn't 3 phased power close enough to Fairfax. Mr. Spooner asked if residents can do their own MXU replacement. Mr. Manahan responded negatively. Mr. Spooner stated that people who do not pay online will have to absorb the cost of the fee. Mr. Cloud stated that the fee is Municipay's fee and the question is whether or not the City wants to cover it.

Moving on to wastewater, Mr. Leitz stated that they are not seeing an increase in usage. Salary changes again are related to staff reallocations. Line 66 represents \$10,500 allocated for the weed harvester. Budget stabilization fee remains at \$100,000 in line 63. There is nothing dramatic in the CIP and the allocation fees are still reserved. On line 110, the State has temporarily placed a stay on one of the City's debt service payments so for one year there is \$90,000 that the City does not have to pay. The total wastewater debt is \$1,058,000. Line 136 includes a \$45,000 increase for repair and maintenance related to the upgrade.

Mr. Sawyer stated that stormwater budget included a decrease in professional services. The focus this year is on rain gardens in Taylor Park and the stormwater upgrades on Main Street.

Mr. Cloud noted that there was input from the Finance Committee electronically. Mr. Hawkins stated that the finance committee opted to get the budgets from staff and then question them online if there were any questions. He stated that we now have our sea legs under us as far as the stormwater budget is concerned and wondered if a stabilization budget or capital reserve greater than what's being done now would be necessary. Mr. Cloud responded that in a non-Covid world, staff would have taken that direction but marching orders were to get to a 0% increase and stay there.

**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to adopt water, wastewater and stormwater budgets. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

9. Update on sidewalk project, Marty Manahan.

Mr. Manahan stated that they are in the process of finishing boring on Brainerd Street. The plan is to finish Bank Street curbs and then head to Ferris Street. They will be removing sidewalk on the north side and replacing just the curb and will then proceed to Rugg Street, Beverly Court, Burnell Terrace, Russell Street and a couple of other smaller sections. Mr. Manahan stated that he's not sure everything will be finished this year and the contractor is aware of that. The other issue is that the contractor who produces the curbs had to shut down due to Covid.

10. Mayor's Report.

Mayor Smith stated that Green Up Day was held on Saturday and had 80 people in attendance. The biggest complaint was that there was no trash. The National Guard and CCV participated. The neighborhood investment ad was in the Messenger. He stated that a lot of people would like to see curbs on their streets and in their neighborhoods. He asked Mr. McCarthy to provide a brief update on Local Option Tax. Mr. McCarthy responded that H943 passed. It was up for action last week but got bumped to the FY 21 1<sup>st</sup> quarter budget and anticipates a quick turnaround.

11. Councilor Reports.

Ms. Laddison expressed appreciation to the community members who showed up to tonight's meeting to voice their opinions.

Ms. Bessette stated that she's received complaints of fireworks and firecrackers that have been occurring every night. They seem to be coming from Spruce Street and the Colony Square area.

Mr. Pelkey stated that there was a discussion a year ago about doing a curb cut for one of his neighbors who is homebound and has trouble accessing the street.

Mr. Hawkins noted that the lights at Main Street don't operate properly and explained that he sat through the entire cycle with no cars around. He asked if anyone in the City who owns a restaurant requested seating outdoors in parking spaces that has been denied. Mr. Sawyer stated that staff put the word out and got no requests to use parking spaces or Taylor Park. Mr. Hawkins asked if there have been any complaints from storefronts that are not restaurants about the restaurants allowing outdoor seating in front of their stores. Mr. Manahan responded negatively. Mr. Pelkey stated that he noticed a restaurant on South Main is set up close to where pedestrians walk down the sidewalk and asked if social distancing is being addressed. Mr. Manahan responded that it comes down to enforcement and police has reached out to some establishments to educate them.

Mr. McCarthy thanked Mr. Manahan for his quick response to the sinkhole conversation on facebook at Lincoln Avenue. He wondered if a couple of the councilors could get together and draft a statement about what's going on in the world right now. He'd like to see council be a little more transparent and make a statement about what its values are and the principles they want to see for police forces. He believes a great place to start is making a statement of solidarity. Ms. Laddison and Mayor Smith expressed interest in working on a statement with Mr. McCarthy.

12. Consider approval of meeting minutes: Regular Meeting: 5/11/20 (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 5/11/20 regular meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
13. Consider approval of warrants: 5/15/20 & 5/31/20 (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 5/15/20 warrants. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**  
**A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 5/31/20 warrants. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**
14. Adjourn  
**A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to adjourn meeting at 8:30 pm. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith

Community Relations Coordinator