

**St. Albans City Council
Minutes of Meeting
Monday, January 14, 2019
City Hall, Council Chambers**

A regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, January 14, 2019, at 6:30 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

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

Council Absent: None absent.

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

Visitors: See attached sign-in sheet.

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance.
Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and led the pledge of allegiance.
2. Public Comment on items not on agenda.
Jeff Bean, City resident, introduced himself. He owns property on Oak and Pearl Street. He stated that over the last several months, there has been a change in the noise level in that part of the City. It is stemming from one particular train engine that is sending a resonating sound across the neighborhood. The train is left running 24/7 and appears this particular unit is on a local run, departing at 10 am and returning at 4 pm. The volume of that resonation is going right through the structure. He noted that his dad's home is a manufactured home on a slab. Alderman Spooner visited the home and stated that the average noise decibel was 78 and it's not just the noise, but the vibration that is a nuisance. Mr. Bean stated that you can see ripples in a bowl of sitting water from the vibration. He also reached out to the Dispatch Center by phone and sent an email and never received a response. Mr. Pelkey asked if the station relocated the train to this area recently since Mr. Bean indicated this has been an issue for 3-4 months. Mr. Bean responded affirmatively. Mr. Spooner stated that if you go up to Federal Street, you can't hear it. Mr. Spooner stated that the train never moves and just sits idling. Mayor Smith noted that it was Alderman Spooner's suggestion during the goal setting session to form a better relationship with the railroad. Mr. Cloud stated that staff will look into it. Ms. Bessette asked Mr. Bean if it's the chip train that runs to Burlington Electric. Mr. Bean responded that he believes it is.
3. Continue Emergency Ordinance Re: Truck Traffic on Upper Welden Street (D&V).
Ms. Lemnah, Upper Welden Street resident introduced herself. She stated that the Prime tractor trailer trucks are now traveling up Fairfield Street. She noted that the traffic isn't as bad as it was but she did witness two trucks on Upper Welden today. She has been reporting it to the police department. Mayor Smith stated that the sign at the top of the street had failed. Ms. Lemnah added that the sign hasn't been staying lit. Mr. Manahan stated that it is solar powered and will need to recharge it. Mayor Smith stated that he's had conversations with Regional Planning and Police. They have been contacting the GPS companies and are hopeful that over time, the GPS program will change to keep the trucks on the interstate access road. He noted that the GPS directions are definitely part of the problem. He added that the police have been ticketing as well and glad to hear that there has been some reduction in truck traffic. Mayor Smith stated that they will continue the emergency ordinance in place until an ordinance

is in effect. Ms. Lemnah also noted that one occasion when she called the police department in the evening, a female dispatcher was rude to her.

A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to table agenda item # 3. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

4. Second Reading of amendments to Ordinances prohibiting through-trucks on Upper Welden Street, Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer stated that the second reading is identical to the first reading with the exception of Section 3 where deliveries to Barlow Street are permitted. Mr. Hawkins stated that that's not a big deal because Fairfax Street is wide enough for these trucks.

5. Consider adoption of amendments to Ordinances prohibiting through-trucks on Upper Welden Street (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to adopt Ordinance prohibiting through-trucks on Upper Welden Street. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

6. Public Hearing on VCDP grant application for Maiden Lane Housing Project, Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer stated that staff is going to resubmit its VCDP grant application. The grant application is for \$1 million so Champlain Housing Trust can purchase 30 new housing units where 10 Maiden Lane sits today. This would be done in concert with other Brownfield mitigation. The project would include the construction of 24 market rate housing units and the commercial building that's been in discussion on Main Street. This is a required public hearing.

Mr. Spooner asked Mr. Sawyer if there is any financial risk. Mr. Sawyer responded negatively. Mr. Cloud stated that this money actually comes back to us. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Cloud if it would go into a Redevelopment Loan Fund. Mr. Cloud responded that there is \$5.5 million in expenditures on the project and \$2.5 million is TIF. He stated that it can be discussed further as all of the development agreements are tried up. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Sawyer what the timeline is. Mr. Sawyer responded that staff has to reapply and should have a response in April.

7. Consider adopting resolution for VCDP grant application for Maiden Lane Housing Project, Chip Sawyer (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to adopt resolution for VCDP grant application for Maiden Lane Housing Project. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

8. Consider discussion of planning for Taylor Park walkways and lighting, Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer stated that the Master Plan process for Taylor Park went really well and staff got some great ideas for improvements to the Park. Mr. Sawyer stated that the first step is to come up with a grading plan that would include the basic fundamental pieces; the walkways and lights. As the City decides to build any pieces of the Master Plan, it will know where Phase A ends and Phase B begins. Mr. Sawyer stated that in the spirit of making sure everyone is fully informed, staff is doing one more check in with council. He added that staff doesn't know what the costs will be until it engages in the next phase of engineering. Staff is seeking council's blessing before seeking proposals for the next step.

Tom Koldys, Parks Commission Chair agreed with Mr. Sawyer's sentiments and agreed some decisions need to be made now so the phasing is comprehensive and seamless.

Mr. Sawyer stated that a motion is not needed. Council unanimously agreed with the proposal. Mr. Pelkey stated that he's not committing to anything but open to looking at more engineering.

Mayor Smith asked Mr. Koldys if he has any updates on the other park. Mr. Koldys responded that a group who does edible landscaping will be presenting to the commission in February. They also have some different ideas for the back corner of Barlow.

9. Consider adoption of 2019 Goals and Objectives, Dominic Cloud (D&V).

Mr. Cloud stated that he has tried to capture everything discussed in the goal setting session. Mr. Pelkey stated that it looks complete.

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderwoman Bessette to adopt 2019 Goals and Objectives. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Cloud what the plan is for moving forward. Mr. Cloud responded that depending on the agenda, there will be check-ins every quarter or so. Mr. Cloud added that the list is also shared with Department Heads and there is an understanding that this is the marching order for the entire management team. **Vote was unanimous, 7-0.**

10. Continued discussion of FY 20 General Fund Budget.

a. City Manager Overview.

Mr. Cloud stated that there are a couple of new items since the last discussion. He stated that the wrong non-profit was listed and has been changed to Martha's Kitchen. The second new item is a request that came in this morning from the Veteran's. They agreed to raise \$50,000 for the hospitals capital campaign and would start out and continue to operate the Veteran's Valet Service. They have approached both the City and Town for a onetime \$2,000 toward that \$50,000 goal.

The budget proposal requires a 2.2 percent increase in the tax rate, which is equal to the CPI for the last 12 months in the Northeast. The typical homeowner would see a \$44.39 increase. Mr. Cloud highlighted the following notable features of the proposal:

- The City anticipates signing a dispatch service contract with Milton. This provides \$200,000 in new revenue, which is partially offset by two additional dispatchers.
- Staff included \$248,288 to create the capacity for the rent on the new police facility and help with fit-up costs in FY 20.
- Staff intends to continue its existing staffing structure in public works and have Marty continue to fulfill those duties as Director of Operations.
- The Public Works capital plan has been increased to provide for a pay loader, utility truck and backhoe.
- Both the tree removal and tree planting budgets have been increased by \$5,000.
- \$33,000 in additional recreation funds have been included for a furnace at Barlow, Hard'ack and concluding the pool discussion.

Based on the feedback from the January 7th meeting, the following changes have been made:

- Added \$2,000 for the Samaritan House
- Added \$10,000 for crosswalk strobes
- Broken out City Hall rental revenues

Mr. Hawkins asked what the \$10,000 for the crosswalks strobes included. Mr. Cloud responded that there are four existing strobes on Lake Street, Federal Street and Main Street. Mr. Pelkey stated that he would like to see one at the crosswalk by the Town School. Mayor Smith added that pedestrian safety is in the council goals and objectives and well. Mr. Cloud stated that if that is the consensus, they would confer with traffic engineers and circle back to council.

Mayor Smith suggested making a motion for the Veteran's request since it came in after the rest of the budget proposal.

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to grant Veteran's request for \$2,000 to come out of the FY 19 budget. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

b. Council Discussion.

Mayor Smith stated that the budget seems fair. Mr. Hawkins noted that the obligations for the pension funds wasn't discussed by the Finance Committee. Mr. Cloud stated that the strategy is to ratchet it up slowly and use the market gains. Mr. Leitz stated that the pension plan is roughly 65% funded. The funds are managed by our own investment advisor that is invested through Prudential. The budget has \$215,000 included for the pension and if that amount is added long-term, the pension will be fully funded. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Leitz if it's correct that eventually the amount needed will fall off because it's a closed plan. Mr. Leitz responded affirmatively. Mr. Leitz stated that the City will have to level fund it for a while but does not foresee any situation where we will need to jump up to \$300,000 or \$350,000. Mr. Hawkins stated that staff and council came up with that number a while ago because it was underfunded and he recalls meeting with the City's investor several years ago who advised it would be a 3 year cap. Mayor Smith asked Mr. Leitz when the last pension was taken. Mr. Leitz responded that we have 6 or 8 employees in the plan who we know what their pay out will be and have strong analysis about what the projected benefit payments will be. Mr. Leitz stated that it goes out 40 or 50 years. The challenge will be finding someone to administer the plan, not funding it.

c. Public Comment.

No public comment was made.

d. Consider a motion to adopt the budget (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to approve FY 20 General Fund budget as amended and presented. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

11. Consider adoption of 2019 Town Meeting Warning (D&V).

Mr. Cloud presented the 2018 Town Meeting Warning.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to 2019 Town Meeting Warning. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

12. Consider proposed modification of invoice approval process, Tom Leitz (D&V).

Mr. Leitz stated that he's proposing to modify the invoice approval process due to the sheer volume of invoices so that reoccurring invoices do not have to go before council. He stated that Paul Giuliani agrees that this modification abides by the spirit and law of the charter. He added that the full expenses would still be listed on the full warrant. Mr. Hawkins stated that to see warrants where council is questioning the Public Works decision to buy chemicals or the Police Chief buying a new vest seems minute. He stated that this is a great opportunity to let the mechanism that is set up to run its course. Mr. McCarthy stated that he hopes people understand that council will have the opportunity to look at the spending but currently, two councilors have to approve even a \$5.00 invoice. Mr. Leitz stated that this will take approximately 2-3 weeks to roll out. Mr. Spooner stated that he usually catches several mundane mistakes when he approves invoices and just asked staff to keep their eye on it.

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to adopt proposed modification of invoice approval process. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

13. Consider approval of meeting minutes: Regular Meeting 12/10/18 & Special Meeting 1/7/19 (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to approve 12/10/18, regular meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous, 4-0 with Aldermen Hawkins, Spooner and Pelkey abstaining.

A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 1/7/19, special meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

14. Consider approval of warrants: Reg. mtg. 12/14/18, 12/26/18, 12/31/18, 1/7/19 & 1/11/19 (D&V).
A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 12/14/18, warrant. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.
- A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderwoman Bessette to approve 12/26/18, warrant. Vote was unanimous, 7-0**
- A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to approve 12/31/18, warrant. Vote was unanimous, 7-0**
- A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderwoman Bessette to approve 1/7/19, warrant. Vote was unanimous, 7-0**
- A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Pelkey to approve 1/11/19, warrant. Vote was unanimous, 7-0**

15. Mayor's Report.

Mayor Smith stated that he's not a big fan of re-interviewing folks who have already served on a board. All of the candidates mentioned in the memo would like to renew with the exception of Jackie DesLauriers.

- a. Consider Stan Bradeen, Amy Paradis and Luke Richter for appointment to the Planning Commission (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner to re-appoint Stan Bradeen, Amy Paradis and Luke Richter to the Planning Commission with a term expiring 12/31/21. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

- b. Consider Valdemar Garibay, Elizabeth Reed and Emily Richards for appointment to the Downtown Board (D&V).

Mr. Sawyer stated that the Downtown Board has passed a recommendation to appoint Valdemar, Elizabeth and Emily and there is still one vacant seat.

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderman Spooner appoint Valdemar Garibay, Elizabeth Reed and Emily Richards to the Downtown Board with terms expiring 12/31/21. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

Mayor Smith stated that he would like to firm up a plan for reappointing existing members. Mr. Pelkey stated that if there are recommendations made by the board, he supports making an appointment. Mr. Cloud stated that it's one of the most important functions of the council in making sure there are people on the board that align with council's vision. He is not sure the process we follow now necessarily does that. He stated that he believes it's more important to check in as candidates come up for renewal vs. when they initially apply. Mr. Hawkins agreed with taking the recommendation of the staff person as well. Mr. Cloud stated that he would recommend trying some different things to see what works. Mayor Smith stated that he believes coffee with a couple council members would be more crucial.

- c. Consider re-appointment of Deputy Town Health Officer, Gary Taylor (D&V).

A motion was made by Alderman Hawkins; seconded by Alderman Spooner re-appoint Deputy Town Health Officer, Gary Taylor. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

16. Other Business.

Mayor Smith stated that Mike Blouin, Sharon Holcomb and Katy Collins are all stepping down from the Downtown Board.

Mayor Smith stated that he would like to add something to the agenda that states "all times are approximate" so attendees don't miss their items on an agenda.

Mayor Smith stated that his experience with dispatch hasn't been a friendly interaction and would like to see some customer service improvements. Mr. Cloud stated that some of the issue is design driven and they don't see people entering the lobby and some of it is cultural. He will speak with the Chief to relay that they know customer service is part of their job.

Ms. Laddison stated that she also found that some dispatchers didn't know that the emergency ordinance on Upper Welden had moved forward and asked how they become aware. She stated that she is telling people on the streets to call dispatch and is difficult when they don't know what's going on. Mr. Cloud stated that he will discuss with the Chief.

Mr. Hawkins stated that he would like to take a pulse on getting rid of the winter plantings entirely. He stated that they are plowed in or tipped over and have no appeal. Mr. Pelkey agreed and stated that the sight lines are a problem as well. Mr. Cloud asked if the pots need to be pulled in the fall or just the greenery. Mr. Manahan responded that it is tough to maneuver around them while plowing and can remove them in the fall. Ms. Laddison asked if there was a way to make the decoration more sustainable. Mr. Cloud stated that the bump outs are all about the pedestrian and designed for pedestrian safety. He stated that staff will remove the shrubbery. Mr. Hawkins stated that he doesn't believe they are conducive to the snow and salt.

Mr. McCarthy stated that legislative sessions are underway and asked Mr. Smith if he would like senators to attend to give an update.

Mr. Pelkey stated that the Legislative Breakfast is on the 28th. Mr. McCarthy stated that it will be held at 8:00 am in Swanton. Mayor Smith stated that the intent for the Swanton meeting is to have a business agenda. Mr. Pelkey stated that the Legislative Breakfasts are a great opportunity to get all of your legislatures together in one spot. Mayor Smith stated that Franklin County has Mike McCarthy, Barbara Murphy and Brian Savage on the Transportation Committee. He stated that our border crossing is one of the only border crossings without a welcome center. If we can educate and start having a discussion to strategize what that might look like, it would be huge for Swanton and St. Albans. Mr. Cloud asked what the rationale was behind closing down the center in Highgate. Mr. McCarthy stated that the idea was to get rid of rest areas and the pitch that needs to be made is that there is a real commerce and tourism benefit. Mayor Smith agreed that they're not just rest areas and noted the centers in Guildhall and Chittenden County.

Ms. Laddison stated that the In Good Taste Event will be on Friday, February 1st and is a great event. Mayor Smith added that the Last Night event was a huge success with a great turnout. They are optimistic for another year.

Ms. Bessette asked if there has been a problem with the crosswalk lights at Mylan and Food City. Mr. Manahan responded affirmatively and parts have been ordered. Mayor Smith added that the push buttons on the top of Lake and Main also do not work. Mr. Manahan responded that parts have been ordered.

Mr. Pelkey stated that Judge Larry Bruce is retiring and Vaughn Comeau will be the new Probate Judge. Sherriff Norris has also retired and the new Sherriff will be Bob Langevin.

Mr. Spooner thanked Public Works for their snow removal during the recent storm. He noted that the salt shed has deteriorated. The trash can in front of the old Salvation Army does not have a can inside it. Mr. Manahan responded that it was emptied today and a new can was placed in it. Mr. Spooner asked for a list of PHSO properties. He stated that the Newton and Main lights still don't sense vehicles. Fire hydrants should also be considered for repainting. Mr. Spooner noted the north side of Houghton Park where there is a 6' chain link fence and have trees and vines overtaking it. He stated that morning

glories or clematis would provide a good barrier to replace the existing overgrowth. He noted there are 3 trash cans in Houghton Park that tip over constantly and wondered if more permanent receptacles like the ones out front of City Hall could be placed there as well as a recycling receptacle.

17. Adjourn.

A motion was made by Alderman Pelkey; seconded by Alderwoman Besette to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 pm. Vote was unanimous, 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith

Community Relations Coordinator

Approved