

**St. Albans City Council  
Minutes of Meeting  
Monday, October 9, 2017  
City Hall, Council Chambers**

A regular meeting of the St. Albans City Council was held on Monday, October 9, 2017, at 6:30 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

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

**Council Absent:** Aldermen James Pelkey & Tim Hawkins.

**Staff Present:** Dominic Cloud, City Manager and Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development.

**Visitors:** See attached sign-in sheet.

1. 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.
2. Public Comment.  
David Lavallee of Spruce Street introduced himself. He stated that he saw the article written in the Messenger regarding the decision on Spruce Street and wanted to know if it had been finalized. He spoke with Councilor Bessette and was dismayed at the recommendation that the south end of Spruce Street remain two way while the rest of the street remain a one way street. He stated that he would assume the reason it was made one way to begin with is the fact that the street is rather narrow and doesn't facilitate two way traffic safely. Mayor Gamache stated that there is an agenda item for a second reading on the Spruce Street ordinance later in the meeting and asked Mr. Lavallee if he could wait until that item is discussed.
3. Mayor's Report.
  - a. Discussion of Climate Action Pledge for Governor's Climate Action Commission.  
Mayor Gamache stated that she wanted to make council aware that the Governor has asked municipalities and organizations throughout the State to participate together to voluntarily make climate action pledges and is looking to have those collected by November 8<sup>th</sup>. She would like to have council give some consideration to that request. Recently, the State and Energy Action Network came out with a tool that can be used to locate and track pledges. Mayor Gamache stated that unless council feels it's not worth exploring tonight, she would like to ask if any other council members are interested in exploring this with her and talk to staff about what might be feasible and bring it back to a future council meeting. Mayor Gamache explained that since the November 8<sup>th</sup> deadline for pledges is before the next regular council meeting, she would like to hold a special meeting to discuss further and also use the meeting as a chance to hold a discussion and get public comment around the Clerk's position being elected v. appointed. Council agreed.  
  
Mayor Gamache explained that the Governor's Climate Action Commission is an appointed commission that will be meeting over the course of the year to review and make recommendations to the Governor about how to meet Vermont's energy goals and how it can impact energy and economy at the same time. She stated that there was a forum hosted at City Hall last week and 70 – 80 or so people showed up.

b. Button Up Campaign.

Mayor Gamache explained that every year for the last several years, energy committees and various energy organizations and agencies have promoted the Button Up Campaign. It comes this time of the year because the design is to help businesses and residents to take steps to button up homes or buildings to be more weather tight for the winter months. They have asked communities to join in on the Button Up Campaign. Mayor Gamache explained that if the City were to sign up as a participant, it would agree to have two events and would recommend inviting Efficiency Vermont to do a button up workshop for community members and posting tips that they've already prepared on the City website. Mayor Gamache stated that if this is amenable, she would sign the City up and take on the organization for the workshop. She believes it coincides well with the council objective to improve the quality of housing in the City.

4. Request for Extra-Territorial Water and Wastewater Allocation (D&V).

a. Fieldstone Land Consultants, PLLC

**Alderman Spooner recuse d himself because his father and brother work at St. Albans Glass.**

Mr. Cloud stated that the request is straight forward and all of the relevant answers have been answered in the application.

**A motion was made by Alderwoman Bessette; seconded by Alderwoman Laddison to approve extra-territorial water and wastewater allocation as presented for St. Albans Glass. Vote was unanimous, 4-0 with Alderman Spooner recused.**

5. Second Reading, amendments to ordinances re: Spruce St. travel direction and trucks, Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer explained that the ordinance amendment accomplishes two things; it would add the "no thru truck" sign rule to the ordinances that already exists on the street and would change the north bound one-way traffic rule based on input from some residents on Spruce Street to become two-way within the 120' span off of Lake Street. The purpose is to deter residents of the Lake Street apartment complex from traveling on Spruce Street to get to Lake Street.

Mr. Lavallee stated that he lives at the other end of Spruce Street and the notion of finding a way to keep people from coming in from LaSalle Street and traveling the wrong way down Spruce Street hasn't been addressed. He stated that he would imagine that the street being one-way to begin with is due to its narrowness and it wouldn't be safe to have two-way traffic. He presented satellite imagery of the street and stated that it's not any wider for the first 120' of the street near the entrance of the apartment building, and making that section two-way increases danger. He stated that the idea of making it two-way would benefit the Beverage Mart and the residents of the apartment building for convenience at the expense of safety which is his main concern. He would strongly urge council to reconsider the idea because the street is not wide enough for two-way traffic. Mr. Lavallee recalled an incident that occurred a few years ago when his wife was driving on Lake Street and signaled her directional to turn onto Spruce Street. A vehicle backed out of the parking lot at Beverage Mart and was in the middle of the street. The vehicle behind his wife's was not paying attention and hit their rear bumper. Mr. Lavallee stated that, had the vehicle coming out of Spruce Street followed the ordinance as it was intended and traveled in the correct direction, the accident would not have occurred.

Mr. McCarthy asked Mr. Sawyer how wide Spruce Street is compared to other streets. Mr. Sawyer responded that he believes it has the right of way for two vehicles but doesn't have any record of when Spruce was made one-way and could take a look at the width itself. He added that he doesn't see the City widening it and it may have been turned into a one-way street to allow for parking on one side of the street. Mr. Sawyer stated that he doesn't believe the street is all that narrow compared to others but could wait on this proposal and have staff look at the street before circling back to council.

Mr. Spooner stated that he believes the proposal will cause a lot of complaints because there are a lot of people that pull into Beverage Mart. Mr. Sawyer stated that he wondered if something could be done to the southern end of the street to codify the behavior in the ordinances to ensure that two-way traffic would be safe at that end. Mr. Spooner stated that he brought up a similar issue when pulling onto South Elm Street and Public Works painted double yellow lines near the middle of the street.

Ms. Bessette stated that when she spoke with Mr. Lavallee about his end of Spruce Street they discussed the idea of Public Works painting a line with right and left turn arrows and thought that might be a solution for that end of the street. On the other end of the street, Ms. Bessette recommended dividing the lanes of the street with painted lines so that if vehicles back out, they have to back out in the opposite lane.

Mr. Sawyer stated that he's hearing concerns about forcing traffic from Beverage Mart and the apartment complex to travel north but also hearing concerns about the end of the street being safe if it is two-way. He stated that staff can look into options to see if it can be made safer. Mr. Spooner stated that he definitely understands the safety concern Mr. Lavallee mentioned, especially in the winter when the snow bank is high.

Mr. Cloud asked Mr. Sawyer if there has been any discussion about making the street one-way, south. Mr. Sawyer responded that former councilor, Tammi DiFranco, had spoken with neighbors who preferred it stay one way, north. Mr. Lavallee stated that he lives at the corner of Spruce and Lasalle Street and finds it inconvenient, however, he is willing to sacrifice his convenience for safety.

6. Consider adoption of proposed amendments to City Ordinances (D&V).

**No motion was made.**

7. Second Reading, amendments to ordinances re: parking on Lake St., Chip Sawyer.

Mr. Sawyer stated that this ordinance amendment would allow parking on the southern side of Lake Street, west of Edward Street. He explained that this was the location where a bike lane was originally going to be placed but the City has since decided not to put it there.

8. Consider adoption of proposed amendments to City Ordinances (D&V).

**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderwoman Laddison to adopt City Ordinances as presented for parking on Lake Street. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**

9. Request to authorize borrowing up to \$70,000 for a groomer at Hard'ack, to be serviced by Hard'ack revenues, City Manager (D&V).

Mayor Gamache asked Mr. Cloud if he had anything to add. Mr. Cloud responded that it is self-explanatory in the packet. Mayor Gamache asked council if they had any questions. Mr. Spooner questioned the purchase of a \$70,000 groomer that would only be used for 5 hours a week. He asked if there was any way the City could contract out to VAST to groom the trails. Mr. Cloud responded that the Hard'ack Board's was not formerly able to purchase top of the line equipment because they could never qualify for a loan due to their business status. Now that they can qualify, they believe a more prudent use of funds would make sense instead of paying less for something that will need to be replaced every couple of years. Mr. Cloud commented that he believes that is exactly why the City formed this relationship with the Hard'ack Board. He explained that the board is raising the money and willing to work together and doesn't believe the City should be in the position to ask the same types of questions that it would ask a Department Head. He commented that this is a different type of relationship.

Mr. Spooner asked if City taxpayers would be on the hook for the groomer. Mr. Cloud responded that City taxpayers are ultimately on the hook but stated that the groomer could be sold if the Hard'ack Board couldn't service the debt. Mr. Spooner asked Mr. Cloud if he is confident that they will be able to service the debt. Mr. Cloud responded that there is no reason not to be confident and the relative level

of risk compared to the relative level of reward seems like it's a prudent decision. Mayor Gamache noted that this is not a brand new groomer and is used but in good condition. Mr. Spooner stated that there are a lot of aspirations at Hard'ack and wants to see everything done but doesn't want it to fall back on the City. Mr. Cloud stated that of all the things that gives him pause, this isn't one of them because worst case scenario, the City can sell the groomer or figure out other revenue options. He added that if the City is going to deliver the programs and the access to the resources that the public expects, he tends to agree with the Board's argument to finance a decent machine. Mr. Spooner asked Mr. Cloud if the new building would house the groomer. Mr. Cloud responded that he would find out.

**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to authorize borrowing up to \$70,000 for a groomer at Hard'ack, to be serviced by Hard'ack revenues. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**

10. Other Business

Mr. Spooner asked about the status of repairs on the Aldis Street tracks. Mr. Cloud responded that staff, the Co-op and the railroad are concerned but it's a \$300,000 repair and we are still working toward the finish line. He doesn't think it will get done before the snow flies but the consensus is that it's a problem.

Mr. Spooner asked if potholes are being filled before winter. He noted the south side of the railroad tracks, when traveling north on North Elm Street and explained that the asphalt is starting to go away and will create a giant pothole come spring. Mr. Cloud responded that he will have staff look into it. Mr. Spooner commended Dave Southwick in the Permitting office who was super helpful. He added that he believes it's kind of ridiculous that you have to wait for a 15 day appeal period before you can begin work if you are not making any changes and gave the example of someone replacing a black asphalt shingle roof with black asphalt shingles. Mr. Cloud responded that you don't have to wait. Mr. Spooner stated that someone could still appeal the work which could bring the construction to a halt. Mr. Spooner stated that he attended a DRB meeting and was sitting in the audience and noticed how blank the wall is at the front of the council room. Mr. Cloud stated that staff is working on a plan.

Mr. McCarthy thanked Allen Robtoy and Chip Sawyer for attending the Driscoll Drive meeting and stated that the residents appreciated the conversation regarding the greenspace in the middle of the loop. He asked if there was any progress and stated that there was consensus on how to address the lilacs and how to move forward. Mayor Gamache stated that it was a well-attended meeting with about 30 residents present. She stated that residents were in alignment about how much they wanted or didn't want to see and committed to bringing it forward to a council meeting to have it documented for the record. Mr. Sawyer added that he believes the one tree discussed came down and will be replaced in the spring. Mayor Gamache stated that the lilacs are not particularly healthy and the plan is to see something a little more robust to fill in that particular area. She thanked the neighbors for taking time out of their schedules to maintain the area and encouraged them to reach out if they need help.

Ms. Bessette stated that residents are still having problems with people parking on the greenspace on North Elm Street and asked if the police could increase patrol and enforcement efforts. Mr. Cloud asked her to take photos and to text or call him on his cell when she sees this occurring. She added that Allen Robtoy and his crew were very proactive in helping to get the grass to grow on the new greenspaces on her street and really appreciates the work he does. She noted that he came to her street on a Sunday with a bucket loader of dirt.

Mr. Spooner asked how close the City is to completing the sidewalk projects. Mr. Cloud responded that existing projects will be completed through November. Ms. Bessette asked if Stowell Street was done. Mr. Spooner responded that it was almost finished.

11. Consider approval of warrants: 9/22/17 and 10/6/17 (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderwoman Bessette to approve 9/22/17 warrants. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderwoman Laddison to approve 10/6/17 warrants. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**
12. Consider approval of mtg. minutes: Reg. mtg. 9/11/17 (D&V).  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to approve 9/11/17 regular meeting minutes. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**
13. Adjourn.  
**A motion was made by Alderman Spooner; seconded by Alderman McCarthy to adjourn meeting at 7:08 pm. Vote was unanimous, 5-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Smith  
Community Relations Coordinator

Approved