

CITY OF RUTLAND, VERMONT
Board of Aldermen Minutes
Monday, October 18, 2021

Members present; President Whitcomb, Aldermen Gorruso, Franco, Savage, Neary, Talbott, Doenges, Gillam, Clifford, Depoy and Davis. Also present, Mayor Allaire, Attorney Bloomer and City Clerk Heck.

7:00 PM BOARD OF ALDERMEN MEETING

President Whitcomb called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS (October 4, 2021)

A motion was made and seconded (Davis, Gorruso) approving the minutes of the previous meeting.
Motion passed.

OUTSIDE THE RAIL

Jennifer Bagley thanked the Board for their leadership for supporting the declaration of inclusion and supporting the resettlement of Afghan refugees. Ms. Bagley also spoke of a performance at the Library recognizing refugee resettlement and sought public support.

Brennan Duffy; RRA Director wanted to publicly thank DPW and the Recreation Department for their help with opening backup Center Street.

Chris Etori spoke briefly about city owned property and maybe utilizing those properties for family transitional housing.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Allaire noted one item for the Board and spoke about the recent request for a TIF working group with a recommendation for a TIF district. The Mayor recommended White and Burke who responded to the RFP. A motion was made and seconded (Doenges, Gorruso) suspending the rules and taking action on the request. **Motion passed.** A motion was made and seconded (Doenges, Davis) approving the recommendation of White & Burke for the TIF District. Debate. An amendment was presented to include the Zamias Fund as the source and not to exceed a total cost of \$80,000. The maker and seconder approved. Debate. **Motion passed.**

ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Attorney Bloomer request for an executive session for labor relations agreement was moved to the end of the meeting, where the meeting will adjourn to a time certain. President Whitcomb then noted the additions of a Committee of the Whole, Public Works and Pension Committee reports. Those requests were so moved and seconded (Davis, Gorruso). **Motion passed.**

REPORTS AND LETTERS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS AND OFFICIALS

Andrew Strniste; Planning & Zoning Administrator, Request for Referral City-Owned Property

Planning & Zoning Administrator, Andrew Strniste was present to brief the Board on his request for referral to review city owned property and the process to which the city uses during this process. A motion was made and seconded (Davis, Gillam) to refer the issue to the General Committee. Debate. **Motion passed.**

Treasurer Markowski; Treasurer's & Pension Committee Reports

Treasurer Markowski gave a brief Treasurer's Report and was looking for a more thorough report on November 1, 2021. Treasurer Markowski noted the Pension report and the valuation of the fund, noting that information was available on our website.

Attorney Bloomer; Resolution Regarding Financing Documents for New Vector Truck Purchase

Attorney Bloomer noted the documents he had forwarded to the Board and noted the Vector Truck was ready to be purchased. Attorney Bloomer noted that Treasurer Markowski was working on funding options and sought a motion to adopt the resolution relating to a lease/purchase agreement with Signature Financial for a new VACTOR Truck. A motion was made and seconded (Clifford, Davis) suspending the rules and taking action on the request. **Motion passed.** Alderman Clifford moved to adopt the resolution relating to a lease/purchase agreement with Signature Financial for a new VACTOR Truck. Alderwoman Davis seconded. **Motion passed.**

Attorney Bloomer; Executive Session Request, Labor Relations Agreement

This request will be moved to a time certain at the end of the meeting.

President Whitcomb noted all of the standing committee reports and asked Alderman Talbott to go first.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Alderman Talbott; Community & Economic Development

Alderman Talbott read his committee report from October 12, 2021. The report contained four (4) items referred to this committee. Alderman Talbott noted the first request was a proposal from Philip and Marlene Allen who were proposing a solar array at the corner of routes 4 & 7. The Allen's shared their vision and related partnership with the City to make it a reality. There was no action requested and Alderman Talbott moved on to the next request from the Vermont Farmers Food Center (VFFC).

Alderman Talbott reported that Greg Cox, president of the VFFC presented a proposal to explore the feasibility of a multi-site expansion of the VFFC. Mr. Cox sought \$32,500 from the City of Rutland to fund services and a show of community support. Alderman Talbott noted a motion out of committee to fund the \$32,500 request from the Zamias fund. A motion was made and seconded (Gillam, Davis) to table the issue. **Motion passed.**

Alderman Talbott continued with a request from Colleen Wilcox to paint an image 10' X 15' on the west-facing side of city hall. The "image" depicts important Rutland City Locations and History, with the intent that the mural will become a popular photo opportunity. The associated cost of this mural was estimated to be \$3,750. Alderman Talbott noted interest from the Downtown Rutland Partnership and Mayor Allaire to work with Wilcox on logistics.

Alderman Talbott moved on to his committee's final request from Heartland Development. Representatives of Heartland were present to ask the committee to recommend the BOA open a environmental review and Community Development Block Grant application. RRA members, Brennan Duffy and Barbara Spaulding were present to help out line the process of the request. There was debate on the process and what commitment the city would have. A motion out of committee was to open the portal for the environmental review application pending conversion of the purchase and sale agreement to an option agreement. Alderwoman Davis seconded. Debate. **Motion passed.**

Alderman Gillam noted Elizabeth Kulas was present to speak on the Vermont Farmers Food Center and his reason for tabling the issue was to allow Elizabeth to speak on it. Ms. Kulas noted her prior work history dealing with the city and low-income housing development and presented her input on the VFFC request. Ms. Kulas noted a great opportunity to develop the VFFC and her insight on how that needed to be accomplished. Ms. Kulas asked the Board to approve the request for funding at \$32,500 but with several caveats. There was substantial debate. A motion was made and seconded (Doenges, Gorruso) to remove from the table the Vermont Farmers Food Center request. **Motion passed.**

President Whitcomb noted the original motion for \$32,500 from the Zamias Fund was on the floor. There was a great deal of debate. Alderman Gorruso called the question and requested a roll call vote. There was some confusion with the Board and calling the question. Alderman Gorruso withdrew his request to call the question. Alderman Doenges moved to amend the motion and noted the environmental study needs to be complete, the site control completed and that the RRA signs off on these items before any funds are released. Alderman Gorruso noted the dollar amount figure was needed. President Whitcomb reviewed all amendments including the fund request of \$32,500 from the Zamias Funds for the scope of work for the feasibility work, environmental study and site control completed. **Motion passed.**

Alderwoman Davis; Finance Committee, ARPA Report

Alderwoman Davis read her committee report from October 7, 2021 noting the topic of discussion was ARPA funds.

The Mayor reviewed his list that was presented to the board and stated this was a starting place for discussion.

City Clerk Clerk Heck began with his request to upgrade the IT infrastructure in the chambers, sound proofing the room and to digitalize land records.

DPW Commissioner Rotondo discussed his requests for \$2,500,000 for a water main replacement project, \$750,000 for additional digester upgrades at the WWTF, \$250,000 for Trunk Sewer Cleaning and or Sewer rehab/ replacement. Alderman Neary added to the list the underground utility work needed for Center Street.

Fire Department Chief Lovett discussed the need for a new radio system at 250,000. , SCBA equipment 201,600 and Thermal imaging at 43,000.

Police Department Chief Kilcullen discussed a Kiosk upgrade for parking, ADA compliant police station, upgrade the North parking lot and COVID pay for the department.

Treasurer's Office Treasurer Markowski discussed the water, sewer and parking meter funds that were in a negative balance. City website upgrade

Recreation Department Upgrades to Main Street Park Gazebo, Godnick Adult center safer outdoor path, and improvements to Meadow St, White's and Justin Memorial park.

The committee was given a cheat sheet regarding how these funds can be used. The committee decided to discuss the request from the departments' one at a time and determine the use of the ARPA funds for these projects or other funding sources.

Alderwoman Davis noted this report was for information only as the committee will begin discussing in greater detail the Clerk's requests next.

Alderwoman Davis then moved on to the Pension Deficit Committee report. Alderwoman Davis reported out following the Pension Committee meeting and gave a brief review of 2018, 2019 and 2020 and how the city was proceeding to move forward with the deficit. Alderwoman Davis reviewed charts and documents provided. There was brief debate with the Board and Q & A with the Chair.

Alderman Clifford; Public Works.

Alderman Clifford read his committee report from September 29, 2021. Alderman Clifford noted that his committee met to discuss the Routes 4 & 7 study/grants referred by Alderman Neary and Septage rates at the WWTP referred by Alderman DePoy. Alderman Clifford noted the request by Alderman Neary was regarding a Traffic Study for Routes 4 & 7 or other city streets, including crosswalks. The committee discussed cost and the 20% match associated. It was noted that the application was due at the end of November and the issue is to remain in committee to allow Alderman Neary and Commissioner Rotondo to work on the details and application.

Alderman Clifford then moved on to the next referral from Alderman DePoy and septage rates. Alderman DePoy voiced concerns about the City's rates not being competitive and asked the committee to discuss this issue. Commissioner Rotondo and Chief Operator, Bob Protivansky reviewed rates and noted the last increase by the City for these services was in 2019. Commissioner Rotondo noted after their review, their desire to increase septic and sludge rates and to institute rates for brewery waste. Commissioner Rotondo suggested rate increases of .02 cents for both septic and sludge and setting a brewery waste rate at .015/gallon and explained how brewery waste was more expensive to remove. A motion out of committee was to increase the septage rate to .095/gallon and the sludge rate to .105/gallon and set brewery waste rate at .15/gallon, with the rate change to be effective December 1, 2021 and Alderman Clifford so moved. Alderman DePoy seconded. Debate. **Motion passed.**

Alderman Neary noted that he and Commissioner Rotondo were working on the application and looked forward to meeting again on the issue. Alderwoman Davis asked Alderman Neary which hat he was wearing in regards to the grant, his planning commission or Aldermen. Alderman Neary responded Alderman.

President Whitcomb; Committee of the Whole

President Whitcomb read the Committee of the Whole report from October 5, 2021. The Committee met to discuss a comprehensive review of the scope of work performed by the RRA over the past three years. This meeting lasted for two (2) hours with indepth reporting from Brennan Duffy the Director of the RRA. Mr. Duffy spoke on the history of the RRA and grant administration, job and grand-list development, BIAP program and blighted property. Several Members of the Board and Mayor Allaire spoke in support of the RRA. Other members questioned their results and noted the status quo is no longer good enough. At that meeting, Alderwoman Davis moved to refer the RRA contract to the Community and Economic Development Committee to discuss the focus of the contract going forward and President Whitcomb so moved to the full Board. Alderman DePoy seconded. There was no debate. **Motion passed.** President Whitcomb finished reading his report.

When President Whitcomb was finished with his report Alderwoman Davis noted that she would like to address the "elephant in the room" and sought to discuss inverter initiative meetings that have been happening with the Chamber. Alderwoman Davis shared her concerns about these meetings and how it did not support a good rapport with the Chair or other members of the Board and felt it needed to be addressed. Alderman Doenges, Lyle Jepson and Chris Etori spoke on this issue. Attorney Bloomer weighed in with open meeting law concerns. President Whitcomb shared his concerns upon learning of these meetings and sought immediate help from Attorney Bloomer, but noted he did not feel there was intent of wrong doing, but felt a learning opportunity had been gained. When the Board was finished with this discussion, President Whitcomb continued with the agenda.

REPORTS OF SELECT COMMITTEES

There were no select committee reports.

REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES

Alderwoman Savage; School Board

Alderwoman Savage report was for information only. A motion was made and seconded (Davis, Clifford) to receive and file. **Motion passed.**

PETITIONS, LETTERS, MISCELLANEOUS COMMUNICATION

There were no petitions, letters, or miscellaneous communications to come before the Board.

A motion was made and seconded (Davis, Clifford) to move into the Board of Control Commissioners. **Motion passed.**

BOARD OF CONTROL COMMISSIONERS

Liquor License Requests, First & Third Class, Charismata Corporation

President Whitcomb introduced the request. A motion was made and seconded (Gorruso, Neary) to circulate the application for signatures. **Motion passed.**

A motion was made and seconded (Davis, Talbott) to come out of the Board of Control Commissioners. **Motion passed.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Alderman Gillam wanted to announce that the RCSWD had a new website and it was a one stop shop for everything related to RCSWD and their Board.

Alderman Gorruso noted several issues with the installation of fiber optic by Consolidated and wanted to suspend their license/permit until they talk and fix complaints. Alderman Gorruso moved to suspend their permit until there is some kind of communication and resolution for concerns and moved to do so. Alderwoman Davis seconded for debate. Alderman DePoy asked to amend the motion to allow Consolidated to come to the table and then assess at their next meeting on November 1, 2021. The maker and seconder agreed to the amendment. **Motion passed.**

MISCELLANEOUS MOTIONS, RESOLUTIONS, NEW BUSINESS

President Whitcomb; Rutland City Lung Cancer Proclamation

President Whitcomb introduced a proclamation to adopt a resolution making November lung cancer awareness month. President Whitcomb read the resolution. President Whitcomb then asked for an adoption of that resolution. Alderman DePoy so moved and Alderwoman Davis seconded. There was brief debate. **Motion passed.**

Alderman DePoy noted the Rutland High School football team has been nominated three (3) times on the WCAX news three on three sports broadcast best plays.

President Whitcomb noted there was no other business for the Board and sought a motion to adjourn to a time certain of Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 5:30 PM. **Motion passed.**

Respectfully submitted,

Henry A Heck
Rutland City Clerk