

Board of Aldermen Committee Minutes

Date: 9/13/16 Chair: Davis Convened: 5:30 Adjourned: 6:45

Committee	☐ Charter & Ordinance	☐ Marketing
	☒ Community Development	☐ Pension Deficit
	☐ Finance	☐ Public Safety
	☐ General	☐ Public Works
	☐ Human Resources	☐ Recreation
	☐ Intermunicipal	☐ Special Liquor

Committee	☒ Dave Allaire	☒ Vanessa Robertson
Members	☒ Chris Etori	☒ Ed Larson
Present	☐ Gary Donahue	☐ William Notte
	☒ Sharon Davis	☐ Scott Tommola
	☐ Tom Depoy	☐ Matt Bloomer
	☐ Melinda Humphrey	

Others	☐ Dave Allaire	☒ Gary Donahue	☒ Mayor Louras
Present	☒ Chris Etori	☒ William Notte	☐ Treasurer Wilton
	☐ Sharon Davis	☐ Ed Larson	☐ Attorney Romeo
	☒ Tom DePoy	☐ Matt Bloomer	☐ Other _____
	☒ Melinda Humphrey	☐ Scott Tommola	☐ Other _____
	☐ Vanessa Robertson		☐ Other _____

Motions/Discussion

Letter - Refugee Resettlement Concerns.

*Letter Authored by Aldermen Tammola -
Read and debated -*

*Concerns: Mayor Louras - Charter Violation
Other "State Holders" letter of support.*

Role of Board in this issue - debated

No Motion out of Committee - will address Monday

Next 9/19/16 in Executive Session -

*What information needs to be given to Board - addressed
City attorney to create letter - to whom*

S. Davis Chair

September 13, 2016

Rutland City Board of Aldermen
PO Box 969
Rutland VT 05702-0969

Ms. Anne C. Richard
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW #5805
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Request to disregard Mayor Louras' letter of support endorsing refugee resettlement in Rutland, Vermont

Dear Ms. Richard:

We write to supplement our July 5, 2016 letter regarding a refugee resettlement program proposed for our city. You will recall that at that time we expressed to you our considered opinion that due to a lack of information we believed we were not in a position to provide you with a letter of support for the project. Unfortunately, we remain of that opinion today and, as the governing entity of the City of Rutland, respectfully request of you and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to disregard any and all letters, including Mayor Louras', that make any representations or claims in regard to Rutland's capacity to resettle refugees for the following reasons:

This Board has never been provided, by any entity, a data-driven explanation to support the hypothesis that the City of Rutland has the capacity purported by the application, its abstract, and any attached letters of support claiming 'capacity,' to reasonably conclude that our city of just under 17,000 residents can successfully meet and sustain the needs of 100 refugees arriving annually.

Despite our diligent good faith efforts, informally and through FOIA requests, to obtain a complete copy of the application prepared for your consideration by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) and the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP), the withholding of critical information we need to appropriately consider this proposal in a manner consistent with our sworn responsibilities as elected officials continues. The only documentation we have received consists of a three-page abstract, which fails to explain how its numbers were derived.

If the Department of State utilizes metrics or formulas to substantiate the number of refugees that USCRI/VRRP and their local stakeholders decided Rutland is

able to support, this methodology must be immediately released for this Board's review and consideration prior to any decision being made by the Department of State. Continued lack of transparency regarding how capacity of resettlement communities is determined suggests that the number of refugees bound for Rutland is either arbitrarily determined based on unsubstantiated speculation, or perhaps worse, determined based on the amount of federal funding USCRI/VRRP requires to meet the goals of their business plan.

As stated in our previous letter of July 5, Rutland is and always has been a giving and welcoming community. While the humanitarian efforts of USCRI, VRRP, and Mayor Louras should be lauded, it appears that the federal government and its contractors are not willing to justify their actions to the very communities that will be impacted.

Therefore, as the governing entity of the City of Rutland, this Board urges you to disregard any letters as previously described, including Mayor Louras', disclose to us the full application, including the complete statement of rationale, as well as disclose a complete description of the methodology used when determining the number of refugees to resettle in a particular community. Until these simple requests can be met, this Board shall not offer their support for refugee resettlement in Rutland.

Sincerely,

The City of Rutland Board of Aldermen

William Notte, Board President

David Allaire

Christopher Etori

George J Gides, Jr

Melinda Humprey

Sharon Davis

Edward Larson

Tom DePoy

Vanessa Robertson

Gary Donahue

Scott Tommola

Comm Dec.

September 6, 2016

Rutland City Board of Aldermen
PO Box 969
Rutland VT 05702-0969

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Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW #5805
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Re: Request to disregard Mayor Louras' letter of support endorsing refugee resettlement in Rutland, Vermont

Dear Ms. Richard:

We write to supplement our July 5, 2016 letter regarding a refugee resettlement program proposed for our city. You will recall that at that time we expressed to you our considered opinion that due to a lack of information we believed we were not in a position to provide you with a letter of support for the project. Unfortunately, we remain of that opinion today and, as the governing entity of the City of Rutland, respectfully request of you and the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to disregard any and all previous letters of support, including Mayor Louras', as well as any representations made by any individual or entity, written or otherwise, regarding Rutland's capacity to resettle refugees for the following reasons:

This Board has never been provided, by any entity, a data-driven explanation to support the hypothesis that the City of Rutland has the capacity purported by the application, its abstract, and attached letters of support, to reasonably conclude that our city of just under 17,000 residents can successfully meet and sustain the needs of 100 refugees arriving annually.

Despite our diligent good faith efforts, informally and through FOIA requests, to obtain a complete copy of the application prepared for your consideration by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) and the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program (VRRP), the withholding of critical information we need to appropriately consider this proposal in a manner consistent with our sworn responsibilities as elected officials continues. The only documentation we have received consists of a three-page abstract, which fails to explain how its numbers were derived.

If the Department of State utilizes metrics or formulas to substantiate the number of refugees that USCRI/VRRP and their local stakeholders decided Rutland can support, this methodology must be immediately released for this Board's review

and consideration prior to any decision being made by the Department of State. Continued lack of transparency regarding how capacity of resettlement communities is determined suggests that the number of refugees bound for Rutland is either arbitrarily determined based on unsubstantiated speculation, or perhaps worse, determined based on the amount of federal funding USCRI/VRRP requires to meet the goals of their business plan.

Finally, Mayor Louras' letter of support endorsing refugee resettlement in Rutland should be disregarded until it is determined if his actions violated City Charter, which is State law.

As stated in our previous letter of July 5, Rutland is and always has been a giving and welcoming community. While the humanitarian efforts of USCRI, VRRP, and Mayor Louras should be lauded, it appears that the federal government and its contractors are not willing to justify their actions to the very communities that will be impacted.

Therefore, as the governing entity of the City of Rutland, this Board urges you to disregard Mayor Louras' letter of support, disclose to us the full application, including the complete statement of rationale, as well as disclose a complete description of the methodology used when determining the number of refugees to resettle in a particular community. Until these simple requests can be met, this Board shall not offer their support for refugee resettlement in Rutland.

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