

Council Minutes

June 3, 2024

A duly warned meeting of the Newport City Council was held on Monday, June 3, 2024, in the council room in the Newport Municipal Building. Present were Mayor Linda Sullivan, Council President Chris Vachon, Council Members Kevin Charboneau, Rick Ufford-Chase, and Clark Curtis, City Manager Jonathan DeLaBruere, City Clerk/Treasurer James Johnson, Public Works Director Tom Bernier, City Attorney Beriah Smith, Dave LaForce, members of the Press and Public.

Mayor Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm.

Additions/Deletions to the Agenda

None

Consent Agenda

Mr. Vachon moved to approve the Consent Agenda including changes. Seconded by Mr. Ufford-Chase, motion carried.

Council Minutes May 20 & 28, 2024

Payroll Warrants May 16 & 30, 2024

Accts. Payable Warrants May 20, 27 & 31, 2024

Liquor Licenses, Vendor Permits, Special Event Permits

Audio/Visual Recording Policy

The council discussed the policy with the city attorney. The discussion centered around section 4-Secret Recording and Section 5-C Exceptions. Attorney Smith will work on the questions /comments and the policy will be on the next agenda.

3-Acre Permit

The council discussed the Storm Water run off on sites of three acres or more. The city has five sites that are more than three acres. Engineering Grants are available.

Proposal for Newport Master Plan Update

Dave LaForce updated the council on the Newport Master Plan. RFPs were sent out. One solid proposal was received from VHB. The proposed plan will be completed by September 30, 2024. Mr. LaForce would like approval tonight so they can get the project started. Mr. Vachon moved to approve the Master Plan as presented and authorize the mayor to sign the documents. If the Mayor is not available, the Council President may sign. Seconded by Mr. Curtis, motion carried.

Wastewater Treatment Facility

The council discussed the two recent leaks from the Sludge Press at the facility with Mr. Bernier. The possibility of installing an automatic alarm system and training for the plant employees was discussed. Mr. Bernier is running an overflow pipe from the press to an open tank as a safety measure.

Bike/Pedestrian Grant Application/Letter of Support

Mr. DeLaBruere stated that there are VTrans grants available to study adding additional routes or extending the Bike Path. The deadline for the grant is June 14, 2024. Mr. Curtis moved to authorize the City Manager to explore and proceed with the grant application and authorize the mayor to sign the letter of support for the study. Seconded by Mr. Vachon, motion carried.

Personnel Policy Discussion

Mr. DeLaBruere has talked with half of the non-union employees and found that there are two major points of contention, no grievance process and overtime after 8 hours vs after 40 hours. Mr. Charboneau noted that the last time we had spoken to the employees the grievance was in there when it was presented to the council it was not. He wondered why it was taken out and who authorized its removal. Mayor Sullivan will discuss this with the attorney.

City Assets Update

Mr. DeLaBruere noted that the Police chief, Fire Chief and the Public Works Director all have city vehicles for their own use. The Police Chief, Public Works Director and the City Manager all have city issued cell phones, and the Police Dept, Public Works and the City Manager have credit cards. Mayor Sullivan asked who is authorized to charge to a city account at businesses. Mr. DeLaBruere will get a list.

Fire Department Personnel Matters

Mr. Curtis moved to enter executive session for Fire Department personnel matters. 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1). Seconded by Mr. Ufford-Chase, motion carried.

No action.

Mr. Vachon moved to authorize the City Manager to explore personnel matters and take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the Fire Department. Seconded by Mr. Ufford-chase motion carried.

City Litigation

Mr. Vachon moved to enter executive session to discuss city litigation 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(1)(E). Seconded by Mr. Ufford-chase, motion carried.

No action.

Comments by the Public

Pam Ladds commented on the Water Quality insert in the last water bill.

Jennifer Bjurling commented on the Audio/Visual policy and the grievance section being removed from the Personnel policy.

New Business

Mr. Vachon noted how beautiful Memorial Day was and thanked the Recreation and Public works Departments.

Mr. Ufford-Chase noted the Newport Downtown Development Annual Meeting, June 19th from 5:30 to 7:30 at the Eastside Restaurant.

Mr. Curtis read a statement regarding Mr. Charboneau filing of a criminal complaint against him and accused Ms. Bjurling of collaborating with Mr. Charboneau. Mr. Charboneau stated he had filed the complaint and if there is nothing there, he will withdraw it. Ms. Bjurling stated she had nothing to do with it and that naming her is slander.

Old Business

Mr. Curtis stated that he and the mayor have filed a complaint against Ms. Bjurling law license.

Mr. Ufford-Chase would like to revisit the hiring of a Fire Chief.

Mayor Sullivan noted that the query about the missing head stone has been solved. Mr. Chenette found that it belongs in an old cemetery in Canada.

Next Meeting Date

Mr. Vachon moved that the next meeting date be June 17, 2024, at 6:00pm. Seconded by Mr. Ufford-Chase, motion carried.

Adjournment

Mr. Curtis moved to adjourn at 8:35 pm. Seconded by Mr. Ufford-Chase, motion carried.

Attested _____ This _____ Day of June 2024

_____ Mayor