

City Manager..... (802) 334-5136
City Clerk / Treasurer..... 334-2112
Public Works..... 334-2124
Zoning Adm. / Assessor..... 334-6992
Recreation / Parks..... 334-6345
Fax..... 334-5632



City of Newport
222 Main Street
Newport, Vermont 05855
www.newportvermont.org

Newport City Council Meeting
Regular Meeting Agenda
Monday, March 5, 2018, beginning at 6:30 p.m.
GATEWAY CENTER
Informational Meeting on the Annual Meeting Warning

City Council: Paul Monette, Mayor
John Wilson, President
Denis Chenette
James Merriam
Julie Raboin

Laura Dolgin, City Manager
James D. Johnson, City Clerk/Treasurer

1. Call the Regular Council Meeting to Order
2. Approve Minutes of the February 19, 2018 Regular Meeting & the February 22, 2018 Special Meeting.
3. Comments by Members of the Public
Public Comments will be generally limited to no more than two (2) minutes per person. All participants must sign in and clearly state their name and the topic of the comment. No action will be taken on items raised until a subsequent meeting (if warranted).
4. Informational Meeting about the Annual Meeting Warning
5. New Business
6. Old Business
7. Set next meeting: Annual Meeting to bring up any other business from the Annual Meeting
March 6, 2018 @ 8:00 p.m.; Centennial Planning Committee: March 14, 2018, at 5:00 - 7:00;
Next Regular Council Meeting scheduled for Monday, March 19, 2018.
8. Adjourn

Immediately after the Council meeting, the Newport City Centennial Committee
will host a Birthday Celebration Honoring the
City's 100th Anniversary of the City's Organization with Cake and Fireworks

Non-confidential materials pertaining to this agenda are available for inspection at the City Clerk's office commencing at 8:00 a.m., the morning of the meeting.

Newport City Council Meeting Participation Guidelines

Newport City Council meetings are for the purpose of allowing Council members to conduct City business. Distinct from public hearings or town meetings, City Council meetings are held in public, but are not meetings of the public. City Council meetings are the only time the City Council members have to discuss, deliberate and decide upon City matters. In an effort to conduct orderly and efficient meetings, the Mayor kindly requests your cooperation and compliance with the following guidelines per the policy adopted on December 21, 2015 and ratified on January 23, 2017:

1. Please be respectful of each other, Council members, city staff, and the public.
2. Please raise your hand to be recognized by the Mayor. Once recognized, please state your name and address or affiliation.
3. Please address only the Mayor and not members of the public, staff, or presenters.
4. Please abide by any time limits. Time limits will be used to insure everyone is heard and that there is sufficient time for the Council to complete their agenda within a reasonable timeframe.
5. The Mayor will make a reasonable effort to allow everyone to speak once before speakers address the Council a second time per the limits adopted on January 23, 2017.
6. Once public comment has been heard, discussion will be limited to the City Council members.
7. Please do not interrupt or mock other speakers or otherwise exhibit disruptive behavior during the City Council meeting.
8. Please do not repeat the points made by others, except to indicate agreement or disagreement with other views.
9. Please use the hallway for side conversation. It is difficult to hear speaker remarks when side conversations are occurring in the Council Chamber.
10. Presentations to the Council are not open to public comment. However, per the policy adopted on December 21, 2015, matters on the agenda requiring a vote are open to public comment immediately prior to the Council vote.
11. Individuals who do not abide by these procedures will be asked to leave the Council Chamber.

Council Minutes

February 19, 2018

A duly warned meeting of the Newport City Council was held on February 19, 2018 in the council room in the Newport Municipal Building. Present were Mayor Paul Monette, Council President John Wilson, Council Members Julie Raboin, Denis Chenette, James Merriam, City Manager Laura Dolgin, City Clerk/Treasurer James Johnson, Jessica Booth, Tom Bernier, Jamie LeClair, Karen Geraghty, Dave Snediker, Kevin Charboneau, Andrea Carbine, Vero Rancourt, members of the Press and Public.

Mayor Monette called the meeting to order at 6:50 PM immediately following a Public Informational Hearing on a proposed Community Facilities Grant for Vermont Land Trust regarding the Scott Farm.

Ms. Raboin requested to amend the agenda by having number 9B (Contracts), discussed in open session. She wondered if it met executive session criteria. Mayor Monette stated that it was in executive session as advised by the City Attorney. Ms. Raboin moved to have 9B placed under open session. There was no second to the motion.

Ms. Raboin requested to have number 9A (Corrective action against a Public Officer) discussed in open session since it pertained to her. After some discussion the council agreed to take up the issue in open session as per Ms. Raboin's request.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wilson moved to approve the minutes of February 5, 2018 with a correction. Seconded by Mr. Chenette, motion carried.

Comments by the Public

None

Wednesdays on the Waterfront Request (attached)

Mr. Wilson moved to support Wednesdays on the Waterfront with \$1,000 from this year's budget with funds left in Council Special Projects, and \$1,000 out of next year's council special projects budget. Seconded by Mr. Chenette.

Discussion; Mr. Chenette pointed out that this means there will be less for future projects.

DRAFT

Vermont Land Trust Presentation

Tracy Zschau updated the council on things happening at Bluffside Farm and the update can be found on Vermont Land Trusts Web-site.

Corrective Action against a Public Official

Mayor Monette read a memo from the City Attorney concerning allegations that Ms. Raboin had leaked confidential executive session material. As alerted to him by the attorney for the North Country Federal Credit Union. Mayor Monette stressed that this is a serious matter. Ms. Raboin denied the allegations. Ms. Raboin asked that the City Attorney investigate the matter further. The council agreed to this request.

New Business

Mayor Monette thanked the Recreation Dept. and Jessica Booth for their work on a successful Father Daughter Dance.

Mayor Monette noted he saw on WCAX that reporter Eva McKerd learned how to drive a snowmobile from Roger Gosselin.

Mr. Wilson noted that Mr. Gosselin had met Mrs. Staniforth on the Bike Path and she indicated that the snowmobile trail down Broadview St. was working well.

Mr. Chenette asked who owns the R.R. bridge. Mr. Bernier stated that the R.R. owns the bridge, but the City owns the decking.

Mr. Chenette commended the Fire Dept. on their Annual Meeting Banquet.

Mr. Wilson noted that there are many pot-holes starting to show up.

Mr. Chenette also commended Jessica Booth on the Father Daughter Dance.

Mr. Chenette noted that there was no City Flag at the Fire Dept. He feels the City should have a flag.

Mr. Merriam thanked NEK-TV and WIKE for the candidate forum.

Old Business

Mr. Merriam moved to amend the coin drop calendar and approve the DAV's late Coin drop request for November 10, 2018. Seconded by Mr. Chenette, motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Chenette noted that Kingdom Games would be holding the 4th Annual Ice Swim

Mr. Merriam noted that there was a surprise Birthday Party for Benita Benson at the United Church last Sunday.

DRAFT

Set Next Meeting Dates

Centennial Planning Committee February 20, 2018, Council Meeting and Informational Meeting March 5th, 2018 at the Gateway, 100th Annual Meeting March 6th, 2018.

Executive session for contracts, 1 VSA sec 313(a)(1)

Mr. Merriam moved to enter executive session for contract's & pending litigation and that for the boards specific finding that premature general knowledge of the subjects of the anticipated executive session would clearly place the board and /or persons involved at a substantial disadvantage. Seconded by Mr. Wilson, motion carried. Wilson, Chenette, Merriam in favor, Raboin opposed.

In open session Mr. Chenette moved to approve the contract with North Country Federal Credit Union. Seconded by Mr. Wilson, motion carried.

Executive Session Real Estate, 1 V.S.A. sec. 313(a)(2)

Mr. Merriam moved to enter executive session to discuss a real estate matter, 1 V.S.A. sec. 313 (a)(2). Seconded by Mr. Chenette, motion carried.

No action.

Adjournment

Mr. Merriam moved to adjourn at 8:34 PM. Seconded by Mr. Chenette, motion carried.

Attested: _____ This _____ Day of _____ 2018

Mayor

Council Minutes

DRAFT

February 22, 2018

A duly warned meeting of the Newport City Council was held on Thursday, February 22, 2018 in the council room in the Newport Municipal Building. Present were Mayor Paul Monette, Council President John Wilson, Council Members Julie Raboin, James Merriam, City Manager Laura Dolgin, City Clerk/Treasurer James Johnson, Attorney David Rugh, members of the Press and Public.

Mayor Monette called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

Follow Up on Corrective Action Against a Public Official 1 V.S.A. sec. 313(4)

City Attorney David Rugh with the firm Stitzel, Page and Fletcher stated that after further research it became clear that allegation against Ms. Raboin that Ms. Raboin contacted the North Country Federal Credit Union was not true. The information given the credit unions attorney and then to him was from a less than reliable source and was third hand. Mr. Rugh felt the City was obligated to act on the issue based on the information they had received.

Both Mr. Rugh and Mayor Monette apologized to Ms. Raboin.

Adjournment

Mr. Wilson moved to adjourn at 5:23 PM. Seconded by Mr. Merriam, motion carried.

Attested _____ this _____ Day of _____ 2018

Mayor

Letter to Editor:

Re: Facts relating to Newport City Annual Meeting Warning Article 7

The Vermont Land Trust (VLT) would like voters to have the facts about property taxes on the former Scott Farm, which it purchased in 2015, before voting on Article 7 at the Annual Town Meeting on March 5, 2018. Article 7 reads: "Shall the City ask the City Assessor to reassess the property owned by Vermont Land Trust, parcel #107016, located at 171 Scott Farm Road?"

Vermont Land Trust did not petition to have this article added, nor were we consulted about it by the petitioner. Therefore, we cannot speak to the motivation behind the article. We do think it is important, however, to clarify the property tax situation as it stands right now in case there is confusion.

This article pertains to the former Scott Farm purchased by VLT in December 2015. There has been no reduction in municipal tax revenue due to VLT's ownership of the farm. VLT paid the back taxes owed on the property when it was purchased and has paid the tax bills in full for each of the last two years. The property was reassessed in 2017 and the assessment increased, as did many others in the City. VLT did not contest the assessment, nor do we plan to. VLT will continue to pay the property taxes, as assessed, while we own the property.

During VLT's ownership we have engaged the public in discussions on how the property can benefit Newport and have partnered with many local organizations and the City to increase public access, including hunting. We have also expanded agricultural use by collaborating with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps and North Country Hospital to grow vegetables. And we have partnered with North Country High School and Career Center to make the property available to students and teachers to expand educational opportunities. Currently we are developing a \$1 million infrastructure project, at no cost to Newport taxpayers, that will result in a 7-mile waterfront recreation trail connecting downtown Newport to the Canadian bike trail system.

We look forward to expanding and adding to these collaborations and are always interested in hearing from residents about their ideas and concerns. We invite residents of Newport to contact us directly. Please feel free to reach me at tracy@vlt.org or find more information online about the Vermont Land Trust, Bluffside Farm, and the public process to "re-imagine" the farm and its contributions to Newport at www.vlt.org/bluffside

Sincerely,
Tracy Zschau
Conservation Director
Vermont Land Trust