Council Minutes

June 15, 2026

A duly warned meeting of the Newport City council was held on Monday, June 15, 2026 in the council room in the Newport Municipal Building. President were Mayor Rick Ufford-Chase, Council President Carter Finegan, Council Members Sharon Pare', Andrew Touchette, City Clerk/Treasurer James Johnson, Zoning Administrator Frank Cheney, Financial and Office Administrator Kari Schulze, council member John Monette was absent.

Mayor Ufford-Chase called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

Additions/Deletions

Ms. Finegan moved to add permits for Kingdom Co-op and Eden Ice to the consent agenda. Seconded by Mr. Touchette, motion carried.

Consent Agenda, Minutes of 6/1/26, AP warrants 6/3/26, 6/12/26, PR Warrant 6/10/26, Liquor Licenses and Vendor Permits

Ms. Finegan moved to approve the consent agenda as presented and amended. Seconded by Mr. Touchette, motion carried.

Public Comment for Items not covered on the Agenda

Hilelia, commented on the charter, the budget and reductions to the Police Dept.

Announcement, Northern borders Regional Commission Grant

Mayor Ufford-Chase announced that the City has been awarded a grant from Northern Borders Regional Commission in the amount of $3,000,000 for upgrading the infrastructure on Main St, and Street scape. The total project is estimated to cost $3,750,000. The cities match for the project is $750,000.

Update From White and burke Consultant Stephanie Clarke

Stephanie Clarke updated the council on soliciting proposals for a marketing study and adding a communications director to the TIF team.

Executive Session as per 1 V.S.A. sec. 313(a)(2) for the Purpose of Receiving Sensitive Information from NDD and White and Burke Regarding Real Estate Matters Related to Potential Development in Downtown Newport

MR. Touchette moved to enter executive session and invite Dave LaForce, Brian Gray, and Stephanie Clerk into the session. Seconded by Ms. Finegan, motion carried.

Ms. Finegan moved to come out of executive session. Seconded by Mr. Touchette, motion carried.

No action.

Proposed Memorandum of Understanding between Newport Downtown Development and the City of Newport

Mr. Touchette moved to accept the one year renewal of the MOU between NDD and the City of Newport and authorize the Council President to sign the MOU. Seconded by Ms. Pare' motion carried.

Executive Session as per 1 V.S.A. sec. 313(a)(2)for the Purpose of Receiving Sensitive Information Regarding Real Estate Matters

Ms. Finegan moved to enter executive session and invite Brian Gray and City Clerk James Johnson into the executive session. Seconded by Ms. Pare', motion carried.

Mr. Touchette moved to come out of executive session. Seconded by Ms. Pare' motion carried.

No action.

Executive Session as per 1 V.S.A. 313(a) (3) Regarding Potential Part-Time Staff Hire for Zoning and Assessment Office.

Ms. Finegan moved to enter into executive session and invite Frank Cheney into the session. Seconded by Ms. Pare', motion carried.

Mr. Touchette moved to come out of executive session. Seconded by Ms. Pare' motion carried.

No action

Ms. Pare' moved to allow Frank Cheney to offer the part-time position of Asst. Director of Assessment effective July 1, 2026. Seconded by Ms. Finegan, motion carried.

Discussion and Probable Vote to from a Charter Task Force

Formation of the Task /force was discussed. The public had concerns about the criteria to be on the task force and whether or not nonresident business owners should be on the task force. Others felt the process was again too quick.

Mr. Touchette moved to move forward with the formation of a Charter Task force per the guidelines. Seconded by Ms. Finegan, motion carried.

Executive Session as per 1 V.S.A. sec. 313(a) (3) to Discuss Candidates for the Charter Task Force.

Mr. Touchette moved to enter executive session. Seconded by Ms. Pare' motion carried.

Ms. Pare' moved to come out of executive session. Seconded by Ms. Finegan, motion carried.

No action.

Probable Vote to Appoint Members of Charter Task Force

Mr. Touchette moved to appoint Denis Chenette, Lizzy Alexander, Dani Grant, Michael Marcotte, Charles Pronto , Travis Gaines and Sharon Pare' to the Charter Task force. Seconded by Ms. Finegan, motion carried.

Ms. Finegan moved to appoint Sharon Pare' Co-Chair of the Task Force and ask Charles Pronto to be Co-Chair of the Task force. Seconded by Mr. Touchette, motion carried.

Task Force Reports

Sewer/Water, no report

Financial Reporting and Fiscal Practices, Ms. Finegan thanked everyone who attended the meeting at the Gateway. She is continuing to tabulate the dots.

City Manager Search Committee, in the process of interviewing the first round of candidate

Fire Department Strategic Planning,

Received funding for the First Do data reporting program

New Business

Ms. Finegan noted the NEK Pride-Fest on Sunday, June 21 from noon to 4 pm

Old Business

Mayor Ufford-Chase noted he had watched the training on the new Vactor Truck.

Next Meeting Date

Ms. Finegan moved to set the next meeting for July 6, 2026. Seconded by Mr. Touchette, motion carried.

Adjournment

Ms. Finegan moved to adjourn at 9:15 pm. Seconded by Mr. Touchette, motion carried.

Attested James D. Johnson This 6th of July 2026

_____ Mayor

Memorandum of Understanding
Between Newport Downtown Development and the City of Newport
July 1, 2026

Newport Downtown Development (NDD) agrees to manage a collaborative process with the Mayor and City Council of Newport to assist the city in the execution of the 2024 Detailed Master Plan. NDD will facilitate coordination, communication, and provide strategic support to ensure the city is positioned for successful implementation. The items covered under this MOU will include:

- Management of contracts with White & Burke for submission to the Mayor and City Council for approval. If White & Burke is unavailable or deemed unsuitable, NDD, subject to approval by the Mayor and City Council, shall identify and present an alternative qualified firm.

  The scope of such contracts shall include, but not be limited to, the development of potential TIF districts, CHIP projects, and related developer agreements.

- Management of other contracts associated with the execution of the 2024 Detailed Master Plan for submission to the Mayor and City Council for approval. The scope of such contracts shall include, but not be limited to, infrastructure work, brownfield mitigation and data analysis for grant applications.

- Implementation of a comprehensive public education campaign to keep Newport residents informed throughout each phase of the 2024 Detailed Master Plan implementation process, including project renderings, timelines, and the funding sources necessary to achieve the plan's objectives. The campaign will also provide balanced information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of each potential funding source, as well as the overall benefits and challenges associated with the proposed development.

- Working closely with the Mayor and City Council to build relationships with potential developers and to develop initial agreements for Council review, ensuring that projects identified in the 2024 Detailed Master Plan can be advanced in a timely manner. This will include coordination with local, state, regional, and federal funding agencies to identify and secure appropriate funding sources to support private/public partnerships.

- Management and organization of all documentation related to contracts, grants, drawings, proposals, and other materials associated with the 2024 Master Plan, ensuring such documents can be readily retrieved upon request.

- Throughout the process, NDD shall provide quarterly reports to the City Council to ensure they are well informed and prepared to make decisions at each stage of implementation.

- Other items as requested by the Mayor and City Council.

Unless renewed, this agreement will expire on June 30, 2027.

Assumptions:

- NDD has the capacity to manage the administrative responsibilities of this project. NDD will not seek additional financial support from the City of Newport for these administrative functions beyond the $30,000 that was given in FY 2025/2026 and requested again by NDD for the FY 2026/2027.
    - NDD receives financial support from the State of Vermont Downtown Vibrancy Fund. Access to this funding is available to all designated downtown areas in Vermont, provided the municipality attests its support and maintains financial support for its local downtown organization at the same financial level or greater each year.
- NDD will work with the Mayor and City Council to support the City of Newport in identifying and pursuing appropriate grant funding when available to offset direct costs associated with approved service contracts with the intent of reimbursing and/or supplementing the Walmart Development Fund.
    - As previously approved by the City Council, the Walmart Development Fund — designated for direct costs associated with the broader 2024 Master Plan — shall be available to cover any expenses and/or contracts not funded through grant sources. All contracts associated with this fund will be submitted to the Mayor and City Council for approval.
- In signing this contract, NDD is not assuming responsibility for any contractual expenses or service contracts.
- NDD understands its role to be that of project manager in support of the City of Newport.
- NDD will make no substantive decisions in carrying out this effort without consultation with the Mayor and Council.
- NDD's offer to manage this project is possible because of three primary assets:
    - The continuing work of its Economic Develop Task Force and the Housing Committee, both of which are made up of community leaders in the business, public, and non-profit sectors.
    - NDD's chair of the Economic Development Task Force leading the effort to help shape and advance a proactive economic development strategy for and in collaboration with the City of Newport.
    - NDD's strong Board of Directors, that is committed to supporting the City of Newport in developing our downtown.

Carter Finegan	Sarah Chadburn
President - City Council	President
Newport City	Newport Downtown Development (NDD)

Memo Regarding Formation of a Charter Review Task Force
From: Mayor Rick Ufford-Chase
To: Members of Newport City Council
Date: 6/12/2026

Council Members,

I am pleased to report that we have a good slate of potential candidates to serve on the Task Force.

I picture the following process on Monday night, June 15, to get the Task Force up and running:

1. Council takes action to create the Task Force, based on the understanding of its task and how it will operate which I have drafted for your review and edits (see below in this memo).
2. Council reviews the Task Force candidate nominations in Executive Session.
3. Council comes out of Executive Session and announces five to seven people (including at least one council member) who have been nominated.
4. Council takes action to appoint the members of the Charter Task Force and a chair or co-chairs of the Charter Task Force.

Following their appointment, members of the Task Force will meet to review their agenda, agree on a process for their initial deliberations, and set a meeting schedule for the summer (subject to change at their discretion so long as the changes are announced publicly at least 48 hours in advance of each meeting).

The role of the Charter Task Force is to examine all available documents that might help them to determine the best course of action for recommendations to City Council regarding potential edits to the Newport City Charter, as well as the most appropriate process and timeline for consideration of those recommendations by City Council, Community Residents, and (if so authorized by Newport Voters, the State Legislature.

The Task Force has the power only to make recommendations to the City Council. It has no power to act on any of its recommendations without specific authorization from the City Council.

The Task Force (and Community Residents who choose to attend meetings) will operate with the following understandings:

1. All meetings of the Task Force will be governed by the Open Meeting Laws set forth by the State of Vermont. Meeting times, location and agenda will be publicly warned on the City's website at least 48 hours in advance of the meetings. If three or more members of the Task Force are in conversation with one another regarding Task Force matters, it is considered a meeting of the Task Force. Communications between any two members of the Task Force are appropriate at any time.

2. The Charter Task Force will be facilitated by the Chair or Co-Chairs. If they need support, they will call on the Mayor, who has permission to attend meetings of the Task Force with voice but no vote at his discretion.
3. The Chair or Co-Chairs will be responsible for ensuring that there are minutes and a recording kept for each meeting.
4. Meetings of the Charter Task Force can be held in person, entirely on-line by video conference, or hybrid at the Chair/Co-Chair's discretion.
5. Any recommendations that the Task Force chooses to make for Council consideration must be written, with a record in the minutes of the vote count behind each recommendation. The reports to Council will be made by the Council Member who serves on the Charter Task Force or by that person's designee at Council Meetings.
6. The Charter Task Force may meet as often as it deems necessary.
7. Members of the Community are welcome to attend Task Force Meetings with the following rules in effect:
    a. Community members are observing a meeting of duly appointed Task Force members. They will be offered an opportunity to speak for one to two minutes to each topic or recommendation under consideration. Length of speaking times allowed may change meeting to meeting or even topic to topic, but they will be applied fairly and consistently to all those who would like to speak to the subject at hand. Allowable speaking times will be at the discretion of the Chair/Co-Chairs based on meeting efficiency as well as the number of specific changes being considered at that meeting).
    b. Community residents are welcome to offer written comments in advance of Task Force meetings by submitting those comments to the Chair/Co-Chairs for distribution to all members of the Task Force.
    c. Any comments that are deemed a personal attack on appointed members of the Task Force will be referred to the City Council to determine an appropriate course of action.
    d. Decisions regarding Community Resident participation will be made by the Charter Task Force Chair/Co-Chairs, with review by the Mayor as requested.