



City of Winooski

Vermont's Opportunity City

27 West Allen Street
Winooski Vermont 05404
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winooski.vt.gov

Winooski City Council Meeting

Monday, November 6, 2023, at 6PM

Attend in person: Winooski City Hall ([27 W Allen St](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Winooski+City+Hall/@44.4711111,-72.6711111,15z))
Attend online: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84364849328>
Attend by phone: 1 646 558 8656
Webinar ID: 843 6484 9328

I Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

Members Present: Mayor Kristine Lott; Councilor Aurora Hurd; Deputy Mayor/Councilor Thomas Renner; Councilor Bryn Oakleaf; Councilor Charles Judge.

Officers Present: Elaine Wang, City Manager; John Audy Jr, Fire Chief; Eric Vorwald, Planning and Zoning Manager; Jon Rauscher, Public Works Director; Paul Sarne, Communications Director; Jesse Acri, Human Resources Director; Ray Coffey, Community Services Director; Angela Aldieri, Finance Director; Jazmine Hurley, Housing Initiative Director; Ryan Lambert, City Engineer; Jenny Willingham, City Clerk; Sarah Greenberg, Assistant City Clerk.

Others Present: Tom Buckley; Robert Millar; Michael Lacroix; Nicole Mace; Patrice Lumumba, WSD Wellness Coordinator; Cory Royer; Jason Burds; Felipe Hoyos; Mohamed Abdullahi; Mike O'Brien; Corali Cotrina, Winooski community outreach coordinator; Michael Arnold; Jessica; Connor Daley; Dave Patry; Amber Walsh; Jacob Budin; Sarah Van Ryckevorsel; Suzanne; Judith Williams Ehrlich; Tucker Spillane; Josh Olund, HNTB Project Manager; Bob Klinefelter, VTrans Project Manager; Britta Tonn, VHB Preservation Planner; Carolyn Cota, VTrans Structures Program Manager.

II Agenda Review

Minutes: Mayor Lott introduced a proposed agenda change from City Staff to include Approval as part of Agenda item D.

Motion: Motioned by Councilor Renner, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and approved 4-0.

III Public Comment

Minutes: Felipe Hoyos has been in conversation with Director of Public Works Jon Rauscher since early this year about the lights outside the library. Felipe notes these lights are unlike any other in the city, they are extremely bright, and they shine through their window. Felipe asks if they can be switched out for lights that are similar to other city lights, noting that they are a real nuisance. Jon responded that the city electrician had been reached out to about changing the lights after people going in and out of the O'Brien Community Center (OCC) had said they were too dim. The lights were switched out to LEDs

about a year ago. The electrician has been asked to retrofit some domes/guards onto those lights so their illumination footprint would be more downward facing. Jon will be reaching out to the electrician for a status update, noting that ideally the issue will be addressed before the snow sticks. Felipe notes that since the season has changed and the leaves have dropped the issue has indeed become more pronounced.

IV Consent Agenda

- A. Approval: City Council and Liquor Control Board Minutes of October 16, 2023
- B. Approval: Payroll Warrants October 1 - 14, October 15 - 2
- C. Approval: Accounts Payable November 2
- D. Approval: Main Street Revitalization Project – Interim Financing Updates - Jon Rauscher, Director of Public Works
- E. Approval: Main Street Revitalization Project – VHB Professional Services Amendment 2 Authorization - Jon Rauscher, Director of Public Works
- F. Approval: Working Communities Challenge Grant Extension Amendment - Elaine Wang, City Manager

Minutes: Councilor Oakleaf asked to move Agenda item E. to end of this City Council meeting, Councilor Hurd asked to do the same with Agenda item F.

Motion: A motion was made by Councilor Hurd to approve Agenda items A through D, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and passed 4-0.

V Council Reports

Councilor Bryn Oakleaf: Joint meeting with Infrastructure and Finance Commissions. At a broad level began the conversation about FY25 financing and capital expenditures. The next Finance Commission meeting is Tuesday Nov 14th, anyone is welcome to attend. Airport committee met last week. Councilor Oakleaf had asked that when the next meeting of the technical advisory committee for the noise exposure map is set that those scheduling details be posted on the BTV Sound website, and reiterates that if anyone has any questions or concerns related to the noise exposure map update to please reach out.

Councilor Hurd: Attended the 2023 Apiary for Movement Builders Conference put on by the Vermont Office for Racial Equity along with Chair Silver of the Inclusion and Belonging Commission on Oct 26th and 27th where they attended many valuable talks, and have a meeting scheduled with Manager Wang to review what they learned. Safe, Healthy, Connected People meets on Nov 14th. Inclusion and Belonging does not meet this month but ambassadors from that Commission will be attending other committee meetings and Councilor Hurd asks that they be made not only welcome but heard.

Mayor Lott: The Planning Commission has begun reviewing the impacts of the VT HOME Act on Winooski's local regulations.

Councilor Thomas Renner: Provided an update on the most recent Downtown Winooski meeting – discussion focused on grants and the upcoming bridge construction. Councilor Renner thanks pumpkin volunteers, noting that Winooski Halloween drew more people than last year. Blingo is back at Archives Nov 7th at 6 PM, and the Winooski Holiday pop-up shop has a date set – Nov 30th, 5-9 PM.

Councilor Charles Judge: Winooski Housing Commission met Oct 24th, Councilor Judge has a meeting with Housing Initiative Director Hurley to set an agenda for the next meeting which is on Nov 28th.

VI City Updates

Battle of the Badges Blood Drive: The Winooski Fire and Police Departments are hosting the 2023 Battle of the Badges Blood Drive at the Winooski Senior Center on Friday, November 17 from 12 – 5 PM! Community members are encouraged to schedule their donation appointment and support our public safety staff as they compete to see which department donates the most. Visit the news updates section of winooski.vt.gov for details.

Lafountain & Dion Scoping Study Presentation: Join us and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission for the Lafountain and Dion Street presentation on Wednesday, November 15 – 6:30 PM here at Winooski City Hall. This project is designed to explore potential street reconfigurations along Lafountain Street and Dion Street based on public feedback. The presentation will include an overview alternatives and comparisons of project's needs, costs, safety/mobility improvements, anticipated impacts, and permitting requirements. Community feedback is needed to make this project a success. For more information, please visit ccrvcvt.org.

Main Street Revitalization: The first official Main Street Revitalization project email update went out last week! Community members are encouraged to sign up for these updates via email by visiting winooski.vt.gov/mainstreet. If you're new to the project, be sure to check out the info page to learn more about the upcoming work to revitalize this important corridor of our city.

VII Regular Items

- A. Public Hearing: Amendments to the Unified Land Use and Development Regulations – Multiple Sections - Eric Vorwald, Planning and Zoning Manager

Minutes: Planning and Zoning Director Eric Vorwald gave an overview of the timeline leading up to this meeting, noting that tonight's focus is on public comment with the possibility of taking formal action tonight as a separate agenda item. Public comment ensued, including the following:

Nicole Mace: Winooski resident since 2009, serves on the Winooski Housing Authority Board, the Champlain Housing Trust Board, and the Winooski School Board of Trustees, but is not here representing any of those entities; is here to comment as a resident. Notes that in 2015 when Form Based Code was adopted and Mace was on the Winooski City Council they expressed concern that such development would lead to the loss of affordable housing, and that the incentives built into the Form Based Code would lead to the displacement of residents. Mace noted that there is now almost 10 years of data that shows these concerns were legitimate, and that those concerns in 2015 also did not predict the severity of the current housing crisis which has rapidly accelerated resident displacement. Mace notes that when affordable housing is not built and existing housing is replaced with options that are either too small, too expensive, or both, Winooski residents are forced to leave. Mace notes that this displacement is disproportionately affecting BIPOC immigrant Winooski residents. Mace notes that in 2022 the City Council commissioned an equity audit that framed Council's approach to housing as an "our hands are tied" mentality, a mentality that Mace notes is a source of trauma for BIPOC residents and students. Mace notes the City's awareness of housing issues and subsequent actions taken to remedy these issues have not been inclusive of BIPOC and new American's concerns, and have been insufficient to affect change. Mace applauds the Council for efforts undertaken to respond to some of the issues laid out in the equity audit (such as tenant education, resource connection, and addressing housing quality), but fears that these same responses may be a factor leading to the increase in landlords selling their properties or evicting

tenants so they can rehab their properties and then charge market rate rent. Mace notes that this is happening all over the city. Over a year ago Mace addressed the Planning Commission to take action to address the lack of affordable family housing. In Mace's view the changes currently under consideration do not begin to respond to the magnitude of the housing crisis; to put it simply it has taken too long to do too little. Mace notes that if Winooski continues to lose affordable family housing the city will lose key aspects that make Winooski a unique and special place: its socio-economical, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Mace notes it will also be more costly – having built a school for over one thousand students based on demographic projections that predate 2015, in that the new education funding formula prioritizes funds to support multilingual learners, and that the more school-aged children Winooski loses the higher the education tax rate will become. Mace notes that there are more policy tools available to the council – their hands are not tied – and that in order to respond to the clear need to build affordable family housing, while there are tradeoffs to be considered, that the city cannot let analysis cause paralysis. Mace notes the identity and values of Winooski's community are at stake, and implores Council to address this issue with the urgency and seriousness this crisis requires.

Patrice Lumumba: Patrice is the Wellness Coordinator for the Winooski School District (WSD). Patrice has come to advocate for families and students in the WSD. Patrice notes that this year they have been able to launch a Housing Initiative because WSD families are struggling with housing. Patrice comes from this community and notes that families are struggling because they are having to live in far too compact spaces. Patrice hopes that the city can look into building more affordable housing for families. Patrice notes that just this year alone there are 16 families that they are working with (and are also working with Jenny Davis at Champlain Valley Union), and that every single Tuesday there is a family that comes to them to talk about how small their housing is, and how they are big families that can't go move about because their space is so small. They are struggling to move this family out to a bigger unit. Patrice notes that for instance there is a family of 11 people in a three-bedroom unit. They can't move elsewhere, and even when they to find a new place landlord doesn't want them to move into a four-bedroom unit because it's still too small for them. Patrice hopes that the city can look into ways to build bigger spaces for families because there are family units that are not only two people, but at least 11 members that want to make sure they have a space where their children feel safe. Patrice notes Winooski families' concerns of being able to safely evacuate if there is a fire. Patrice highly recommends that the city look into higher capacity affordable housing to better serve its residents in the long term.

Corali Cotrina: Corali is the co-founder is the Winooski Parent and Students Project (WPSP), a grassroots community organizing initiative led solely by immigrants and refugees from the many ethnic groups in Winooski: Somali, Nepali, Congolese, Burundi, Arabic, Latin American, Korean, Burmese, and many other communities. Corali speaks on a topic that is very emotional for them, noting that the project has lost hugely important leaders due to the housing crisis. Corali notes that even the other co-founder, the reason why WPSP exists, their camarada, who did outreach for free door to door with them is themselves no longer living in Winooski. Corali tells how his whole family adopted them, fed them while they were doing community organizing, literally sitting them down, putting food in front of them, and not letting them go until they were done eating. Corali is devastated this family has left but understands that they want the best for their kids and that the WSD did not meet their expectations for their children. Corali notes how it bothers them that the person responsible for starting the bus program for Winooski students is no longer here to see those buses running. Corali laments the loss of these strong community members who have left not only because the apartments in the city are too small, but also in terrible condition. Corali notes the landlords are not doing much and they don't understand why there isn't supervision or procedures to hold landlords accountable. Corali notes landlords are charging and getting paid every month while not having these apartments in good condition. Corali asks beyond just talking about number of rooms per unit that the units that currently are available are in appropriate condition to be safe for children and families, and says let's start from there. After this the process can be sped up to facilitate organizations building decent housing for low-income families. Corali notes that diversity is what makes Winooski great, and that this diversity is being lost at light speed. Corali notes it took Winooski so long to get here but that it's not going to take any time to be as white as any rural area

in Vermont. Corali notes that if nothing is done about this rapid loss of diversity now that Winooski's diversity will be quickly lost.

Mohamed Abdullahi: Mohamed emphasizes what everyone before them said. Mohamed wonders if the city has ever specifically talked to developers about building the type of housing that is being asked for. Mohamed notes that while there is a lot of new housing, it is not the type of housing that helps new Americans because they are comprised of large families. Mohamed notes that the new apartments are all one- or two- bedrooms which effectively segregates these community members from the rest of Winooski. Mohamed suggests city housing initiatives that make it easier for developers to build housing that supports large families. Mohamed notes that most of the people who live here can't live in only two- or one-bedroom apartments. Mohamed requests that when the city communicates with developers that the city considers the people who live here. Mohamed notes they came to Winooski in 2010, that Winooski is their second home, and because of this they will never forget this city. Mohamed asks Council to please help these residents because this is their home, they don't know where else to go, and most of them are scared to go out of Chittenden County at the risk of losing their community support networks, particularly when it comes to language barriers. Mohamed notes there are communities in which maybe 10% speak English and the lives of maybe 100 other people rely on these speakers. Mohamed notes people who have moved away and then called them back to tell them how nice their new cities are; they are easier to live in, cheaper, and everything is better than here. Mohamed notes people have spoken with them about cities with more considerate services and landlords that are not harassing them because those cities have codes and policies to protect renting residents. Mohamed notes that they know Winooski is small and does not have a lot of money, but that if it uses the little money there is well that these longtime problems can be addressed.

Felipe Hoyos: Felipe notes that in June 2023 Governor Phil Scott signed the HOME Act, a piece of tri-partisan supported landmark legislation, into law. Felipe notes that the intention of the HOME Act is to merely set the floor for housing requirements, but that this seems to have been lost on the City's Planning Commission. Felipe notes that the proposed amendments to the Unified Land Use/Development Regulations (ULDR) appear to try as hard as possible to abide by the bare minimum of requirements set by the HOME Act. Felipe notes this should be outrageous to all meeting attendees as nowhere in the state does it make more sense to increase density than in Winooski. Felipe notes there is no opportunity for expansion or undeveloped lands to build on, and that if the City wants to increase its tax base that it should increase the utilization of the WSD. Felipe states that to continue to be a home to a diversity of backgrounds and incomes that there is no choice but to build up. Felipe states that they are pro-density because they love their neighbors, want more of them, and that Winooski seems to be losing them. Felipe notes that local businesses deserve to thrive and grow, that it is better to walk and bike to places than to drive, and that the state is number two in homelessness in the entire country and that if Winooski does not lead the way, who will? Felipe notes that it is unfair to limit development of multi-unit housing to the downtown core and gateways, and that it should not be the case that if one wants an affordable place to live in Winooski that one must live in the busiest and loudest parts of the City. Felipe notes that this segregates neighborhoods. Felipe expresses their regret at a series of decisions and discussions that continually run counter to the agreed upon solution to the City's number one housing problem: insufficient homes in places where people want to live. Felipe understands the Planning Commission is somewhat exasperated by the amount of back and forth, but that the bare minimum is not enough. Felipe suggests eliminating minimum lot sizes and eliminating parking requirements. Felipe notes that the City can't build on its own and is relying on people with capital to access sites and build up. Felipe notes that if the City wants the kind of multi-family, multi-bedroom housing that residents have expressed a need for that the City needs to reduce barriers to cost and make it cheaper to build in more places in the City.

Tom Buckley: Tom has engaged in a number of volunteer activities for the city of Winooski but attended this meeting of the City Council as a representative of the Winooski Alliance for Active Transportation (WAAT) - a grassroots group that is trying to move forward the adoption of alternatives to fossil fuel transportation. Tom attended to support the changes to the parking ordinance, specifically bike parking. Tom notes that laced throughout the proposed ULDR amendments are several positive changes that will help to reduce fossil fuel use, or at least encourage the use of alternative transportation. Tom, on behalf of the WAAT, encourages the adoption of the ULDR amendments.

Mayor Lott then addressed all attending, asking if there was any further public comment. There was none, and the public hearing was closed.

- B. Discussion/Approval: Amendments to the Unified Land Use and Development Regulations – Multiple Sections - Eric Vorwald, Planning and Zoning Manager

Minutes: Council discussion addressing the comments heard during the public hearing ensued.

Motion: A motion to adopt the proposed amendments was made by Councilor Oakleaf, seconded by Councilor Renner. Voted and passed 3-1, with Councilor Judge as 1 Nay vote.

- C. Discussion/Approval: Policy Direction for HOME Act Impacts

Minutes: Chair of the Planning Commission Mike O'Brien and City Manager Elaine addressed the public comments, and further Council discussion ensued, with further comments from Nicole Mace, Patrice Lumumba, Felipe Hoyos, and Corali Cotrina.

Motion: A motion to approve directive language suggested by the Mayor and influenced by the public input during this discussion was made by Councilor Hurd, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and 3-0, with Councilor Oakleaf abstaining.

VIII RECESS

Minutes: A 5-minute recess was called. Council resumed at 7:48 PM.

IX Regular Items Continued

- D. Discussion/Approval: Introduction of Draft Updates to Municipal Ordinance Chapter 9 (Housing)

Minutes: Fire Chief John Audy addressed Council concerning the draft updates to the Municipal Ordinance Chapter 9. They summarized the proposed draft updates and Council discussion ensued.

Motion: A motion to set a public hearing for the December 4th meeting of Council was made by Councilor Renner, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and passed 4-0.

- E. Discussion/Approval: Non-Union Wage Plan Revision - Jesse Acri, Human Resources Director

Minutes: Human Resources Director Jesse Acri summarized the Non-Union Wage Plan Revision for Council, discussion ensued.

Motion: A motion to approve the revision was made by Councilor Renner, seconded by Councilor Hurd. Voted and 3-0, with Councilor Oakleaf abstaining.

- F. Discussion/Approval: Small Business Saturday Proclamation - Elaine Wang, City Manager

Minutes: City Manager Elaine Wang asked City Council to adopt a proclamation establishing November 25, 2023, as Small Business Saturday in Winooski. Councilor Renner proposed the addition of the text:

“Whereas the majority of businesses in Winooski are locally owned small businesses.”

Motion: A motion to approve the proclamation and proposed additional text was made by Councilor Judge, seconded by Councilor Renner. Voted and passed 4-0.

- G. Discussion: Winooski City Council 2024 Legislative Priorities - Mayor Kristine Lott

Minutes: Last year Council put together a letter to send to VT State Legislators outlining priorities the Council would like to see implemented in the next legislative session. Mayor Lott and Deputy Mayor Renner met with both Winooski local state representatives to update last year's version, removed items that had been accomplished, and then updated the priorities based on any new information. Council discussion ensued on the current draft, with the intention of finalizing the letter at the next Council meeting.

- H. Discussion: Burlington-Winooski Bridge Replacement Project: Update and Presentation - Jon Rauscher, Director of Public Works

Minutes: The VTrans team gave a presentation on the current status of the Burlington-Winooski bridge project.

- I. Discussion: Burlington-Winooski Bridge Replacement Project: VTrans Standard Finance and Maintenance Agreement for Federal-Aid Projects

Minutes: The VTrans team and council discussed the Finance and Maintenance Agreement for Federal-Aid Projects as it relates to the bridge project and the financial options and obligations for the City.

X EXECUTIVE SESSION - Pursuant to 1 V.S.A. §313 (2) – The negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options

Minutes: Mayor Lott asked for a motion to hold an executive session. Mayor Lott invited City Manager Elaine Wang, Public Works Director Jon Rauscher, and city engineer Ryan Lambert, and the VTrans team to attend the executive session.

Motion: A motion was made by Councilor Renner, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and passed 4-0.

Minutes: Executive session was entered at approximately 9:21 PM.

Motion: A motion was made by Councilor Renner to exit executive session, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and passed 4-0.

Minutes: Council exited executive session at approximately 10:07 PM.

XI Regular Items Continued

- J. Approval: Main Street Revitalization Project – VHB Professional Services Amendment 2 Authorization - Jon Rauscher, Director of Public Work

Minutes: VHB Professional services. Councilor Oakleaf voiced concerns about contract amendment procedures.

Motion: A motion was made by Councilor Judge, seconded by Councilor Hurd. Voted and passed 3-1, with Councilor Oakleaf as 1 Nay vote.

- K. Approval: Working Communities Challenge Grant Extension Amendment - Elaine Wang, City Manager

Minutes: Working Communities amendment. Councilor Hurd noted that the delay in the project may not have occurred if the City had an equity director or an equity initiatives director.

Motion: A motion was made by Councilor Renner, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and 4-0.

XII Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Oakleaf, seconded by Councilor Judge. Voted and passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Attest: _____
Sarah Greenberg, Assistant City Clerk