

CITY OF RUTLAND, VERMONT
Committee of the Whole Minutes
Thursday, May 25, 2016

Members Present: President Notte, Aldermen Humphrey, Etori, Allaire, Tommola, Larson, Donahue, DePoy, Davis and Alderwoman Robertson. Also Present, City Clerk Heck, and guest speakers Stacie Blake and Amila Merdzanovic. Alderman Bloomer was absent.

President Notte called the meeting to order at 5:42 PM. The meeting was held at the Godnick Center on Deer Street and was attended by over 100 people.

This meeting is the first for the Committee of the Whole on the Syrian Refugee re-settlement plan. The Board of Aldermen met to hear from Stacie Blake and Amila Merdzanovic, representatives from the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program in Vermont.

President Notte went over some ground rules as to the process of the meeting. Ms. Merdzanovic then presented a brief history of the program and defined what refugee meant. Ms. Merdzanovic explained how the 100 Syrian Refugees would be integrated into the community over the next twelve months. Upon the completion of the guest speakers introduction, President Notte asked every member of the Board if they had specific questions for the panel.

Starting with Aldermen Davis and Tommola the Board began a very in-depth, at times and other times, general questioning of the panel. Each member of the Board including Allaire, DePoy, Larson, Donahue, Humphrey, Etori, and Robertson asked from a couple questions to extensive in-depth questions. The general theme of the Board was the lack of involvement and transparency, and how the information was announced. At one point during Alderman Tommola's questioning, Stacie Blake apologized to the Board and community for the lack of transparency.

In all, the Board of Aldermen members asked about two and a half (2.5) hours of questions. President Notte requested a 10 minute recess upon the completion of the Board's questions.

Upon reconvening President Notte moved on to the audience and allowed questions from anyone present. Approximately twenty (20) people spoke and asked a question or more. Again the tone of the conversation and questions was dissatisfaction with the process and the divide amongst the community.

At the end of the meeting Alderman Etori moved to establish a Select Committee to work on the process and to be more involved with the re-settlement project. Alderman Larson stated that this particular meeting was to hear about the resettlement issues. President Notte disagreed and noted a motion was made. Alderman Larson vehemently disagreed and made a special request to the Clerk about his objection to the President's ruling be placed on the record. Alderwoman Robertson seconded the motion. There were several debates on the motion. President Notte called the motion to establish a new select committee. **Motion failed.**

At 9:42 PM a motion was made and seconded (Allaire, Robertson) to adjourn. **Motion passed.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Henry A. Heck
Rutland City Clerk