

**CITY OF BERLIN**

New Hampshire

**Minutes of Council School Budget Session of 3/28/2018**

**Council Conference Room**

**6:30 pm**

**Members:**

Mayor Grenier  
Councilor Theberge  
Councilor Nelson  
Councilor Remillard  
Councilor Morgan-Allain  
Councilor Higbee  
Councilor Gentili

**Police Commissioners:**

Gerry Nault  
Marc Tremblay

**City Staff:**

John Lacasse, Fire Chief  
Peter Morency, Police Chief  
Dan Buteau, Assistant Police Chief  
Lisa Arguin, PD Administrative Assistant  
Pauline Suiter, Police Department Dispatcher  
Jenn Cloutier, Police Department Dispatch Supervisor  
Elaine Riendeau, City Clerk  
Noah Halgren, Firefighter  
Brandon Bisson, Firefighter  
Michael Couch, Firefighter  
James Wheeler, City Manager  
Patricia Chase, Finance Director

Mayor Grenier called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Mayor Grenier invited Fire Chief John Lacasse to present the Berlin Fire Department Fiscal Year 2019 Budget. Chief Lacasse distributed a handout and shared that the Berlin Fire Department had responded to 835 calls for service last year. The Fire Department's personnel, in addition to regular duties, assisted with such tasks as the upkeep and maintenance of the building, apparatus maintenance and assisting with fire prevention duties. Fire prevention includes fire drills, safety demonstrations at schools and daycares and fire extinguisher training sessions.

Chief Lacasse went on to discuss the duties performed by the Assistant Fire Chief. These include inspections that enforce fire and life safety codes. Chief Lacasse expressed his department's interest in serving the City by providing future EMS services.

Chief Lacasse then reviewed the Fire Department budget. The proposed budget includes an increase of \$200,268.59 with most of that attributed to the expiration of the Safer Grant.

A statistical review of service calls followed with Chief Lacasse pointing out that the calls are increasing. He attributed a portion of the increase to the higher number of local events being held and to a rise in home improvements. During 2017 the Berlin Fire Department responded to 160 EMS calls and has responded to 35 calls this year.

Councilor Remillard asked for clarification on “Other Public Services” with Chief Lacasse responding that it would be for such services as lock outs and other rarely performed tasks. Chief Lacasse agreed to provide a breakdown.

Mayor Grenier inquired about the status of the grant application for turnout gear. Chief Lacasse replied that he was still waiting for a response. Mayor Grenier also asked about the filing of a grant for a fire truck with Chief Lacasse responding that it was filed on February 2, 2018.

Mayor Grenier requested that between the Fire and Police Departments a total reduction of \$400,000 be trimmed which would result in a \$1.00 reduction from the projected increase in the tax rate.

Councilor Theberge asked if the \$3,580 request in the radio line items was necessary. Chief Lacasse explained that the aging radios are in need of repair and replacement. Councilor Theberge also asked for clarification regarding the necessity of the Equipment Supplies expense line item.

Councilor Remillard asked about aircraft standby and a discussion followed about the potential elimination of that service if the landing pad was fenced in.

Mayor Grenier asked about the health insurance budget and how it was calculated. Mr. Wheeler explained that those with Health Trust would see a -6.6 percent decrease and the not to exceed rate with New Hampshire Interlocal Trust is approximately 7.2 percent.

A discussion followed concerning the repair that is necessary to one of the pumper trucks. There are two companies interested in the repair: Costal and Freightliner. The work will cost between \$36,400 and \$44,000. Mayor Grenier encouraged Chief Lacasse to initiate the repair as soon as prudently possible.

Councilor Nelson asked what expenses are paid from the Fire Prevention line item with Chief Lacasse replying that it is used for fire prevention giveaways.

Councilor Gentili asked if there is a mechanism in place that might allow for reimbursement for services rendered in responding to EMS calls. Chief Lacasse agreed to look into any possibility of obtaining revenue from that source.

Councilor Nelson asked if the Plectron Allowance is a contractual expense with Chief Lacasse responding that it is.

Mayor Grenier invited Police Chief Peter Morency to review the Berlin Police Department budget.

Chief Morency distributed a handout and entered into a thorough review of the department’s activity report. Total calls had increased by 12.78% between Calendar Year 2016 and Calendar Year 2017. There were 20,477 calls in 2016 and 23,094 in 2017. He also explained that the Milan calls are logged differently between the two years due to a change in the personnel responding to those calls.

Chief Morency also shared that he recently met with the Governor, Attorney General, Director of the Department of Safety and other members of state and local government to address the needs of the North

Country and its struggles in dealing with the opioid issues. He also explained that his department plans to host a public forum.

The operating budget request is \$2,243,060 which is a .5% increase from the previous year. This increase is \$11,833 more than the Fiscal Year 18 budget of \$2,231,357. The benefits portion of the budget is 1.2% less than the previous budget. The total budget request is \$3,229,510.

A discussion followed regarding the 633 dog complaints the department responded to last year. Chief Morency suggested that the City Ordinance might be reviewed and updated if necessary to better handle the calls and the current procedures in place.

Councilor Nelson asked why the calls to assist Berlin Ambulance seemed high. Chief Morency agreed to provide a breakdown between assists and backups.

Mayor Grenier asked for a complete list of all Police Department vehicles and mileage. Chief Morency explained that the department is currently down two vehicles. Mayor Grenier asked if all the cars are marked with the Chief responding that all patrol cars are marked and the detective cars are not.

A review of the capital budget began with Chief Morency requesting two vehicles which follows the rotation schedule the department has historically followed. The capital budget includes a request of \$4,700 for rifles and \$40,000 for dispatch desks. Chief Morency explained that Dalton Power Sports has loaned the Berlin Police Department a four seater UTV Canam with the option to purchase it at year end for \$17,000. Mayor Grenier asked if it could be purchased over two years and Chief Morency agreed to inquire.

There was further review of capital requests which include: \$8,400 for replacement windows for the first floor of the building, \$42,000 for a paved parking area and \$10,000 for cruiser laptops. There was discussion regarding a request of \$31,900 for the replacement of the building boiler. Chief Morency explained that currently there are two old boilers heating the Recreation and Police Department. The Chief would like to replace the two existing boilers with one. Councilor Remillard asked if anyone has been asked to provide an estimate with Chief Morency replying that one had been obtained.

There was further review of the remaining items requested in the capital budget.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Theberge and seconded by Councilor Higbee.

Adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Patricia A. Chase, Finance Director.