

CITY OF BERLIN
New Hampshire

Minutes of Council School Budget Session of 3/20/2019
Council Conference Room
6:30 pm

Members:

Mayor Grenier
Councilor Morgan-Allain
Councilor Gentilli
Councilor Otis
Councilor Theberge
Councilor Remillard
Councilor Higbee
Councilor Nelson

City Staff:

James Wheeler, City Manager
Patricia Chase, Finance Director
Pam Laflamme, City Planner
Jon Goudreau, Superintendent of Pollution Control
Terry Letarte, Director of Recreation Department
Eric Grenier, Director of Public Works
Ron Lemoine, Public Works Employee
Bryan King, Public Works Employee
Donny Hood, Public Works Employee
Lise Barrette, Public Works Clerk
Lucien Couture, Public Works/Sewer Crew Supervisor
Andy Estrella, Public Works Supervisor
Mark Lapointe, Public Works Supervisor
Paul Blais, Public Works Supervisor

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor Grenier shared that he has been invited, by the Governor's Office, to attend a press conference in Concord on March 21. The Governor's budget includes a \$300,000 appropriation for the City to repair a section of Hutchins Street.

Recreation Department

Mayor Grenier invited Terry Letarte, Recreation Department Director, to review her FY20 Budget requests. Mrs. Letarte noted an increase in two salary line items and a decrease in another. These changes are due to changing staffing needs. Mrs. Letarte discussed the difficulty in filling and retaining staff in part time positions.

Mrs. Letarte is requesting \$1,000 to establish a Recreation Scholarship for a graduate that has been employed by the department. She also noted a requested increase in the Office Supplies/Equipment account for new filing cabinets. Mrs. Letarte is also requesting additional appropriations in the Building and Playground Supplies.

A discussion followed regarding the Summer Playground Meal Program that is budgeted for \$6,500. Mrs. Letarte explained that the reporting for the program to the USDA is cumbersome. Mayor Grenier noted that the offsetting revenue from the USDA should be factored into the budget.

Councilor Otis asked if there were any capital funds for leveling National League Field. Mr. Wheeler responded that there was no funding in the current plan and he would review the matter further.

Pollution Control

Mayor Grenier invited Jon Goudreau, Pollution Control Director, to present his FY20 budget.

Mr. Goudreau explained that Pollution Control is an Enterprise Fund that is self-funding. The FY20 Operating Budget is currently \$112,715 higher than FY19 which is a 6% increase.

The polymer expense account 60-432-465-2300 has a 71% increase. Mr. Goudreau explained that polymer is a petroleum based product and the price fluctuates in accordance with the cost per barrel of oil. There are two types: dry and liquid. Both types are higher in cost and the plant is using more of the product. The increase in use is partly due to an increase of solid waste entering the waste system. Also, an increase of ammonia in the waste system has been complicating the process which has resulted in a higher use of polymer.

Next, Mr. Goudreau reviewed the replacement part account 60-432-537-2300. The FY19 budgeted amount is \$10,000 and the amount expended in FY18 was approximately \$35,000. For the FY20 budget Mr. Goudreau is requesting \$36,000 due to the need to repair items such as pumps. A discussion followed regarding the life of pumps and the need to rotate pumps for rebuilding.

Councilor Higbee asked if polymer is a seasonal item noting that 40 percent has been used thus far this year. Mr. Goudreau explained that it is an inventory item. The plant has used the inventory on hand and is about to order more.

Mr. Goudreau went on to explain that there has been an increase in sludge. They have increased cleaning in the lift stations and have removed 41.28 tons of debris which consisted mostly of sand and broken bricks. Mr. Goudreau stressed the importance of removing this debris from the waste system and the importance of reducing entry into the pumps.

Councilor Theberge asked if the plant had any waste enter into the river system. There was a discussion around permitted discharges and reporting to the DES. Mr. Goudreau explained that

during the 2018 storm that damaged the Watson Street pump station waste did enter into the river and the measures taken greatly reduced any further damage to the station.

Mayor Grenier requested that Mr. Wheeler or Mr. Goudreau notify Council of any potential budget overruns.

Mr. Goudreau shared that last year the plant received 769.6 million gallons of waste. Of that amount, 76.16 million gallons came from the prisons and 36.03 million gallons from Burgess Bio Power. Mayor Grenier asked how much of this was billable with Mr. Goudreau responding that he would provide those numbers.

Mr. Goudreau reviewed other department services provided to the community. Last year the plant processed 78 Human Waste Drums from the AMC and treated 740,290 gallons of septage from local communities. Also, as a service campers have been allowed to dump free of charge. Discussion followed around the possibility to charge for certain services or to increase current rates.

Mr. Goudreau explained that Pollution Control has three top needs: Security Fencing, Sewage Ejector Station and Upgraded Control Panels.

The current fencing is forty years old and 650 feet of fencing is missing and 800 feet in need of repair. An estimated \$100,000 would replace all gates and fencing.

The Sewage Ejector Station is a lift station for the administration building which pumps waste to the headworks of the plant for treatment. The current pumps are worn out. If the current pumps failed it could cost \$1.2 million to replace the equipment. An Ejector Station could be installed for approximately \$100,000.

The Control Panels were installed in 2000 and need replacing. Modernizing the equipment would allow for ease in finding replacements, remote telemetry access, energy efficiency and additional operating information when troubleshooting.

Mayor Grenier asked how much upset to plant operations would occur if all three projects overlapped each other. Mr. Goudreau felt it would be manageable. Mayor Grenier noted that funding may be partly or fully covered in the capital cost reserve fund.

Mr. Goudreau noted that Pollution Control has completed the Blower Project which is operating as expected. Finally, the plant has acquired a new service truck and a new tractor.

Mayor Grenier thanked Mr. Goudreau for his presentation and then invited Mr. Eric Grenier to present his FY20 budget requests.

Public Works (Street Lighting)

Mr. Grenier stated that the streetlight conversion project is complete. There were 930 streetlights converted to energy efficient LEDs. The cost of the project was approximately \$219,000.

During FY18 the electricity expense for street lighting was \$141,765 and the anticipated FY19 expense will be approximately \$85,000-\$90,000. The GIS programming will allow for detailed data in electric usage.

Public Works

Mr. Grenier reviewed current staffing levels: 4 Supervisors and 26 Personnel in Public Works and 3 Personnel in Parks.

Some of the Public Works responsibilities include:

1. Roadway/Sidewalk maintenance.
2. Retaining Wall, guardrail and fence construction/repair.
3. Maintenance of vehicular fleet. There are 122 vehicles from various departments maintained by four PW mechanics. Mr. Grenier noted that 85% of one mechanic's time is dedicated to the Police Department's fleet. Councilor Morgan-Allain asked if the remainder of that mechanics time is used on other City vehicles with Mr. Grenier affirming that it is.
4. Winter maintenance involving plowing and snow removal. The PW department also maintains 154 sand barrels in place for winter use.
5. Responsible for maintaining cemeteries.
6. Maintain the storm water and sewer collection system.
7. Garbage and Recycling pick up.

Mr. Grenier went on to explain that with an aging fleet there has been an increase in vehicle maintenance. Mr. Grenier noted that the PW health insurance line item has gone up but that is due to changes in staffing.

Mr. Grenier would like to start investing in energy efficiency measures at the Public Works garage. He stated that the windows are old and in need of replacement.

Mr. Grenier shared a slide demonstrating the Operational Budget History between the Police/Fire/PW Departments noting that over the past ten years the PW budget has increased \$150,000 to \$200,000 with the Solid Waste budget decreasing approximately \$150,000. Mr. Grenier reviewed staffing levels and noted that in the 1970's staffing was as high as 62 and currently staffing is at 26. The department has been doing more with less with an aging fleet of vehicles. Improved equipment could compensate for the loss in staffing over the years.

Public Works (Sewer Crew/Pollution Control)

Mr. Grenier began his review of Pollution Control explaining that it is an Enterprise Fund which is self-supporting through the sewer user fees. The Sewer Crew consists of five employees and one supervisor and Pollution Control has five employees and one superintendent. Mr. Grenier explained that the Pollution Control department is currently in the process of filling a new position which will bring staffing to six. Mayor Grenier asked if a portion of Mr. Grenier's salary should be charged to Pollution Control with Mr. Wheeler explaining that it was within the

Administrative Fee charged by the City. Mr. Grenier also discussed future state funding that will allow for the demolition of flat roofed buildings which will result in a reduction in waste water entering the system.

Mr. Grenier then reviewed Fiscal Year water consumption data. During FY18 billed commercial water consumption was 112,155 hcf (hundred cubic feet) and billed water consumption 110,533 hcf. During this current year's analysis there is an increase in consumption. Mr. Grenier also noted that the federal and state prisons account for approximately 70% of billed commercial usage.

Public Works (Sold Waste)

Mr. Grenier explained that currently the City provides weekly curbside pickup and bi-weekly of recyclables. There are over 3,600 locations serviced. The City generates approximately 3,400 tons of MSW and 340 tons of recycling annually which approximates to a 10% recycling rate. The national average is between 25-30 %. Tipping fees would be reduced if there was an increase in recycling within the City.

Public Works (Parks)

The Parks Department's responsibilities vary by season. Mr. Grenier reviewed some of the responsibilities which include:

Winter Season - Snow removal at Heritage Park, Police/Rec Center, City Hall and Bickford Place. It maintains five ice rinks at Green Street, River Street, Hutchins Park, Ramsey Street and Horne Field.

Spring Season - Spring cleanup of litter and debris and prepping of fields.

Summer Season – Grass mowing at all 32 City parks, ongoing field maintenance, supporting local events such as Drive in the 50's and Riverfire.

Mr. Grenier noted a slight increase in the Parks budget this year.

Mayor Grenier commended the Parks Department for the fine work they perform in maintaining the City's Fields.

Public Works (Capital Improvements)

Mr. Grenier reviewed some of the equipment currently in use. There are seven loaders with the oldest being nineteen years old. One is sixteen years old and five are fifteen years old. Of the seven, one is currently not in use. The oldest salt truck is forty one years old. Mr. Grenier explained that the equipment is aging and some frames are showing signs of rot. The aging fleet and high costs in repairing and maintaining them has been problematic for the department. Discussion ensued around the aging fleet and the need to begin replacing equipment. The initial Capital Improvement request was for \$160,000 for salt truck replacement. That amount was

reduced in the City Manager budget to \$80,000. The spare garbage packer/ body needs replacing with a new packer/body estimated at \$60,000. Mr. Grenier estimates \$250,000 is needed to replace equipment which does not include two additional loaders which would improve efficiency.

Mr. Grenier reviewed the Capital Improvement appropriations for the various departments since 2009-2010. He noted that some years there was nothing allocated for Public Works. Councilor Theberge asked how many complaints were received regarding snow removal with Mr. Grenier responding that there were 85 which did not include complaints about plowing.

A review of the City's Infrastructure followed with Mr. Grenier reporting that there are eleven municipally owned bridges. Of the eleven, the Mason Street Bridge (over Canal) is on the NHDOT Red list for having a structurally deficient substructure. There are over sixty miles of streets. The majority of the major thoroughfares are in good condition with plans to repair a section of Glen Avenue from the town line to Exchange Street which is in the ten year plan. A section of Hutchins Street (East Mason to Napert Village) needs mill/overlay work. There are 15,000 linear feet of retaining walls.

Mr. Grenier reported that the City has an aging drainage system with portions of the system being over 100 years old. In addition, Mr. Grenier explained that the paving on city streets is failing. Going forward, Mr. Grenier would like to follow a preventative maintenance schedule. In order to do so, equipment needs to be replaced. A discussion followed regarding street maintenance and repair using new equipment such as a hotbox asphalt recycler.

Mr. Grenier would like to replace a snow blower. The main blower is 20 years old and the spare is 13 years old. The Department has experience a significant amount of down time due to mechanical issues and a replacement would cost approximately \$150,000.

The current sand/salt shed is deteriorating and Mr. Grenier has safety concerns. A replacement would cost approximately \$175, 000 to \$250,000 depending on the structure. A new structure would improve storage capacity and improve efficiency.

Mr. Grenier also reported that the City's tennis courts are in need of attention. The cost would be \$225,000 to \$250,000.

Mr. Grenier is gathering information on a "Pay As You Throw" program. There are forty communities in NH who have adopted a form of PAYT. There was discussion around tax exempt properties that the City is servicing and the need to look into making changes. The PAYT program would likely reduce the tipping fees at the landfill and increase recycling. Mr. Grenier is still gathering information but the expectation is that it would lower solid waste expenses considerably if changes are made.

Councilor Gentilli expressed his support initiating a schedule to replace Public Works equipment. Councilor Higbee asked if a priority list existed with Mr. Grenier responding that the salt trucks and loaders are priorities. Mayor Grenier asked about refurbishing. Mr. Lapointe,

Supervisor PW, explained that there isn't a program to refurbish the loaders we own. He also discussed the safety issues and that a representative from Nortrax will be inspecting them.

Mayor Grenier thanked Mr. Grenier for his presentation.

Motion to Adjourn by Councilor Higbee
Seconded by Councilor Theberge

Adjourned at: 9:05
Respectfully submitted by Patricia A. Chase