

CITY OF BERLIN
New Hampshire

Minutes of Council Budget Session of 3/10/2021
6:30 pm
Via Zoom

Members:

Councilor Remillard
Councilor Higbee
Councilor Otis
Councilor Rozek
Councilor Theberge
Councilor Morgan
Councilor Eastman

City Staff:

James Wheeler, City Manager
Holly Larsen, Finance Director/Tax Collector
Angela Martin-Giroux, Health and Welfare Director
Tara MacKillop, AV Home Care Services
Paula Kinney, Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce
Jeanne Robillard, Tri-County CAP
Amy Goyette, Tri-County CAP
Marianne Aldrich, North Country Home Health and Hospice
Tara from CASA of NH

At 6:30 p.m. Councilor Remillard opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 873 8683 5883;

Passcode 112202, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, www.berlinnh.gov.

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587 or e-mail at: plaflamme@berlinnh.gov

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Councilor Remillard invited NHMA to speak and City Manager Wheeler advised they do not typically participate in the meeting, but had a letter from Margaret Byrnes, Executive Director, and advised that the dues are just over \$7,000 for the year. Jim Wheeler advised that the City gets well more than \$7,000 worth of service from their membership. NHMA represents their interest in Concord and provides training opportunities.

City Manager Wheeler advised North Country Council is another agency linked to government that the City needs to belong to. Two projects are currently being planned with them, along with the 10-year plan transportation projects, which are funneled through NCC.

Councilor Remillard invited Paula Kinney to speak on behalf of the Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Kinney presented two requests, one for Jericho ATV Festival to help support advertising to bring people to the area. This request is for \$3,000. The money that was requested last year was returned to the City, since they did not hold the festival in 2020. The second request is just for the Chamber, \$1,500 for general support of marketing efforts. This money goes into the general fund to support the Chamber, and it is also used for matching grants. Councilor Eastman noted that the Chamber does a great job and thanked them for their work.

Councilor Remillard asked if anyone was present from Northern Human Services, and it was noted no letter was received this year.

Tara MacKillop spoke on behalf of AV Home Care Services. Ms. MacKillop advised they are requesting \$10,000 this year, as they have been level funded at \$8,000 for several years. Ms. MacKillop advised they have seen a large increase in clients, going from 141 clients last year in Berlin, to 175 this year. They provided 8,436 visits, and they serve a lot of low-income clients who are not able to pay their portion of their bill. They have also had a large demand for PPE. They employ 24 people who live in Berlin, and are proud that they have been able to stay open during the pandemic.

Community Action Chief Executive Officer, Jeanne Robillard, was invited to speak on behalf of Tri-County Community Action Program. Amy Goyette was also in attendance. Ms. Robillard advised that they did things differently this year for municipal requests, using a fair and equitable formula. The request did go up, from \$13,200 to \$25,125. However, they are asking for support for all of the programs offered in Berlin. Last year they provided services to 4266 residents of Berlin, almost 45%, with a value of \$2.5 million. Ms. Robillard advised that the request in coming years will be consistent based on the population. Amy Goyette advised the programs offered are energy assistance for heating and electrical, the weatherization program, the homeless program, guardianship, transportation, Head Start, RSVP, Senior Meals, ServiceLink, and the workforce programs. The Tamworth Dental Center is also available to residents of Berlin. Goyette also advised that there will be a huge increase in services for the rental program with Covid funds. Ms. Robillard advised the new rental assistance funds were not included in the numbers for this year. Ms. Robillard advised that care packages for seniors, and gift cards for Head Start families were given out this year, along with PPE and oral hygiene packets. Councilor Remillard noted that the community has benefited from their services. Ms. Robillard advised that municipal funding is important to them as a match for federal and state grants.

Councilor Remillard invited the Civil Air Patrol to speak, but nobody from the organization was in attendance.

Councilor Remillard noted there was a letter from the Berlin Main Street Program, which requests \$15,000 in funding this year. Councilor Eastman stated that the Main Street Program does a great job.

Marianne Aldrich was in attendance from North Country Home Health and Hospice, and advised they have a level-funded request of \$10,000 for the continued support of their program. They do request funds from 32 towns in Coos and Grafton counties. Last year they served 207 residents with 6,669 visits. Berlin residents make up 18% of their total clientele, and municipal funding helps to make up the difference in Medicaid and Medicare shortfalls. Ms. Aldrich advised that since the hospitals have limited patients, they are doing more home health visits. They are also offering a palliative care program. Councilor Eastman advised this program provides a way to keep people in their homes and he supports it.

Tara from CASA of NH was present to request \$500 in funding from the City for recruitment and outreach in the Berlin area.

North Country Veteran's Association did not have anyone in attendance. Their letter requested \$500 this year.

Councilor Higbee advised that Northern Human Services did not send in their letter this year. This is an important service and they should be included in the budget. City Manager Wheeler will call them.

Angela Martin-Giroux presented the 2022 budget for Health and Welfare to the Council. Martin-Giroux advised they are a self-inspecting city, and inspect complaints, provide routine license inspections, and random inspections. Inspections of the schools, foster care homes, and daycares are also provided, as well as inspections for health concerns such as hoarding, public nuisance issues, and dilapidated or unsafe structures. The Covid 19 pandemic has increased the work of the health officer portion of the position. Martin-Giroux advised that municipal welfare is required by NH RSA 165, and consideration is given to the needs of the applicant as well as the fiscal responsibility to the taxpayers. From July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, 400 people were interviewed and 221 vouchers were issued for assistance. Most of the funds were used for shelter and cremations. Almost \$41,000 of general assistance was provided last year. Martin-Giroux reviewed the line items in the budget. The total proposed Welfare budget is \$115,998. Martin-Giroux advised they are still hoping to hire a part-time clerk. Councilor Remillard asked about housing and costs for shelter. Martin-Giroux advised that shelters do ask for payment, and if the applicant does have income they are asked to pay part. Councilor Remillard asked about the Birch House, which was just housing for domestic violence, and will now be for women and children. Jeanne Robillard advised this was a domestic violence program, and due to the increase in homelessness, it will transition on April 1 to a homeless shelter for women and children. Councilor Eastman thanked Martin-Giroux for being a great steward of the taxpayer's money while also providing for needs.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Higbee and seconded by Councilor Rozek. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Shelli Fortin