

## **CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, May 17, 2021**

### **Public Hearing**

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 7:49 pm for Resolution 2021-13 Night Vision 2022. Richard Laflamme of 128 Jasper Street began to speak about staffing at the Police Department. Mayor Grenier reminded Mr. Laflamme that the hearing was for just the Resolution and other comments would be heard during the Public Comment section of the agenda. Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 7:51 pm.

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 7:51 pm for Resolution 2021-14 Library Summer Learning Grant. There were no public comments. Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 7:51 pm.

### **Regular Meeting**

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:52 p.m.

#### **a. Pledge of Allegiance**

#### **b. Roll Call**

Present: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Remillard, Otis, Eastman, Higbee, Rozek, and Theberge

Absent: Councilors Berthiaume and Morgan

Also present: James Wheeler, Pamela Laflamme, Deputy Chief Daniel Buteau, Holly Larsen, Ann Brungot, Richard Laflamme, Henry Fortin, Jan Zicha, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun, and other members of the public.

c. Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to accept the minutes of the May 3, 2021 Regular Meeting and Work Session and May 10, 2021 Work Session. So moved, the motion passed.

#### **Disbursements:**

Disbursement Summary Draft #1887 start date 05/04/2021 end date 05/17/2021 for a total cash disbursement of \$788,298.09. Councilor Theberge moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Richard Laflamme of 128 Jasper Street suggested that instead of renovating the Fire Department building, the department should be moved to Brown School.

Jan Zicha of 255 Pleasant Street commented on the Council's responsibility of setting the tax rate and how it is not always advantageous to raise taxes as people could be taxed out of their residences and businesses.

Henry Fortin of 522 Rockingham Street asked why his sewer bill increased, as it went from \$184 last year to about \$300 this year. Fortin noted the out of town trucks that are dumping here and stated they should be charged more. Fortin also suggested that the Army Corps of Engineers be contacted about the Mason Street bridge.

Richard Laflamme of 128 Jasper Street noted that his water bill went up to \$485 and asked why it was so high. Laflamme noted that he has filed an abatement.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **1. Council Committee Reports**

There were no Council Committee Reports.

#### **2. Resolution 2021-13 Night Vision 2022**

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty One

**A RESOLUTION** authorizing the Berlin Police Commission to apply for and accept grant funds from the NH Department of Safety under the 2020 Homeland Security Grant Program - LETPA Night Vision and appropriating said funds to the Police Department for the purpose of the grant.

**Resolved by the City Council of the City of Berlin as Follows:**

WHEREAS Coos County encompasses 1,794 square miles, is comprised of many small towns and communities, has a population of approximately 32,000 people, and is home to several critical infrastructures, e.g., schools, prison(s), and hospital.

WHEREAS; night vision technology enhances screening, search, detection, threat assessment, and discontinuation of threat capabilities, which is essential in preventing threatened or actual acts of terrorism.

WHEREAS; night vision would provide the department with the ability to actively and passively surveil and search a scene or incident in all conditions, which without this technology is not possible; and

WHEREAS; the departments capability to perform the above necessary tasks, specifically, the important tasks of navigation, surveillance, observation, and the identification of threat and not-threat subjects in low light conditions they are required to operate in routinely; and

WHEREAS the department is called upon to enter areas of danger; and

WHEREAS night vision equipment is designed to assist in all of the aforementioned situations as well as; and

WHEREAS said equipment would render the department safely and effectively mission ready and better equipped to assisting their partner communities and the State of New Hampshire; and

WHEREAS use of such specialized equipment increases the ability of the department to safely resolve situations without injury or loss of life and will enhance agency interoperability, especially in response to a large-scale event or disaster; and

WHEREAS: night vision will help mitigate risk; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of Berlin, NH, that the Berlin Police Commission is authorized to apply for and accept funds from the NH Department of Safety for the 2020 Homeland Security Grant Program - LETPA Night Vision for the purchase of night vision equipment; to be appropriated to the Berlin Police Department FY 2022 Budget for the purpose of effectuating said grant.

This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after passage.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to remove this item from the table. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to read Resolution 2021-13 by short title for a second time. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to read Resolution 2021-13 by short title for a third time. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan that Resolution 2021-13 be passed. So moved, the motion passed.

**3.** Resolution 2021-14 Library Summer Learning Grant (tabled 5/3/2021)

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty One

**A RESOLUTION** authorizing an application to New Hampshire State Library Learning Grant Program for \$500 for projects in the area of Summer Learning and upon award, appropriating said funds to the Library Department.

**Resolved by the City Council of the City of Berlin as Follows:**

WHEREAS; children and teens who do not have access to quality learning opportunities during the summer months are at risk of losing reading and math skills acquired during the school year.

WHEREAS; Berlin Public Library strives to stem this summer learning loss through equitable and accessible programming and services implemented through the annual Summer Reading Program.

WHEREAS; Berlin Public Library intends to work with local schools to identify artistic youth interested in an opportunity to express and display their talents with the production of Face-In-Hole photo props to be used throughout the Summer Reading Program.

WHEREAS; Berlin Public Library will host No Two Tails Alike: An animal's tail can serve as a rudder when swimming, help with agility during flight, or function like an extra hand. Meet live native wildlife ambassadors as a naturalist from Squam Lakes Natural Science Center tell tales of the tails of some of New Hampshire's native wildlife.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** That the City Council of the City of Berlin accepts Five Hundred Dollars (\$500) from the New Hampshire State Library Learning Grant Program and that the funds are hereby appropriated to the Berlin Public Library for projects in the area of Summer Learning.

Be it further resolved that the City of Berlin accepts the terms of the grant and that the City Manager is authorized to do all things necessary to effectuate the grant.

This resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after passage.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge, to remove this item from the table. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge, to read Resolution 2021-14 by short title for a second time. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge, to read Resolution 2021-14 by short title for a third time. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge that Resolution 2021-14 be passed. So moved, the motion passed.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**4. Resolution 2021-15 BPD Distracted Driving Patrols (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for June 7, 2021. So moved, the motion carried.

**5. Union Contracts**

Councilor Remillard advised that AFSCME 3421 has agreed to change their current plan from NHIT to Healthtrust for a 3-year contract with a total cost for benefits and increases of \$153,163.65. The total savings after wage increases is \$85,919.11. However, changing the insurance from NHIT to Healthtrust will put the City in a large group versus a small group status, and will cost the City \$377,510 over the three years.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to accept the cost items in the 3-year contract with AFSCME Local 3421. So moved, the Council voted by roll call vote. Rozek – no, Eastman – no, Otis – no, Higbee – no, Theberge – no, Remillard – no, Grenier – no. The motion did not pass.

**6. City Manager's Report**

1. The private property transfers for the month of April are attached.

2. Per **Sec. 13-112. Operation of OHRV's** of the City's Ordinances:

"The Berlin OHRV Connector Trail and the City of Berlin's roadways will be closed to OHRV riders when the Bureau of Trails declares that the snow machine trails are no longer useable. The connector trail will re-open on May 23, or a reopen date set by the State Trails Bureau. Berlin's roadways will reopen accordingly. (Ord. 4/02/2012)(Ord. 5/04/2015)"

3. Over the last couple of weeks Angela Martin-Giroux, Health Office, Peter Donovan Ass.t Fire Chief and Michel Salek, Code Enforcement Office have been working on the health status of property at 40 Spring Street. Their work has culminated in an order for all persons to vacate the property and for the property to be secured (see attached order).

City Manager Wheeler thanked Angela Martin-Giroux, Peter Donovan, Michel Salek, and the Police Department for their work at 40 Spring Street.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee, to accept the City Manager's Report and place it on file.

Councilor Theberge mentioned that there were still too many OHRV operators that did not realize the roads were closed from when snowmobile season ends until May 23.

So moved, the motion carried.

**7. Mayor's Report**

**a. Letter from Jim Hewitt re: Education Funding**

Dear Mayor Grenier and City Councilors:

My name is Jim Hewitt and I live in Portsmouth NH. I want Berlin and other similar cities to have a more equitable share of the education funding pie. Here in Portsmouth we have the Pease Development Authority which the State of New Hampshire allows dozens of highly profitable corporations to be exempt from the school tax portion of their property tax bill. LONZA Biologics alone pockets over \$860,000.00 annually from unpaid school tax. That is money that should be going to Berlin and other cities in need. It is a blatant example of corporate welfare at its worse.

Tell the Governor, the Executive Council and your state senator these greedy corporations need to pay their fair share.

Regards,  
Jim Hewitt

Mayor Grenier advised that they have been in contact with Senator Hennessey, and there are things in the Senate budget that may address some issues. They are working on it, but the State wants a reduction in business taxes, which gets passed on to communities. Mayor Grenier advised that since 2009, Berlin has lost \$15 million in State aid.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Theberge, to approve the Mayor's report and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

**8. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**9. Council Comments**

Councilor Eastman asked what the status of the speed limit and urban compact on Route 110 is, since OHRV's will be allowed on the roadways on May 23. He was advised that nothing has changed with the urban compact. Pamela Laflamme advised they are hoping for an update tomorrow from Councilor Kenney on the speed limit, as he has been working on it.

**10. Adjournment**

On a motion by Councilor Rozek, seconded by Councilor Higbee, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 pm. So moved, the motion carried.

A True Record, Attest:

Shellie Fortin  
City Clerk

Note: Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the Council by motion.