

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, October 18, 2021

Regular Meeting

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:36 p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

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

Absent: Councilor Rozek

Also present: City Manager James Wheeler, Administrative Assistant Danielle Rioux, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Captain Jeff Lemoine, Chief Peter Morency, Deputy Chief Dan Buteau, DJ Johnson, Spencer Fortier, Jennifer Lazzaro, April Frechette, Kristy Letendre, Karen Collins, other members of the public, and William Carroll, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to accept the minutes of the October 4, 2021 Regular Meeting and Work Session, and the Work Session of October 11, 2021. So moved, the motion passed.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1898 start date 10/05/2021 end date 10/18/2021 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,437,772.95. Councilor Theberge moved with a second by Councilor Berthiaume to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Erica Hoyt of 290 Willard Street advised she is an employee of AVH and spoke concerning the City's response to the Covid outbreak. Hoyt asked why the City is waiting another week before they take action. Hoyt noted that she anticipates numbers will rise in 7-10 days after the RiverFire event this weekend.

Karen Collins of 820 Second Avenue spoke about the homeless situation in Berlin. Collins listed her credentials and provided a handout to the Council with resources available in the area. Collins noted that she is working at Serenity Steps and is hoping to bring a sober living facility to Berlin. Collins discussed the resources mentioned in the handout and noted that homelessness is described as not having a secure place to live. The Mayor thanked Ms. Collins and suggested collaboration with Tri-County CAP and other agencies in the area.

April Frechette of 590 Champlain Street advised that she has started a program called "Time to Heal" at the Berlin Recreation Center. Ms. Frechette stated that she has been trying to help the homeless that are currently living in the woods by bringing them meals twice per week. Ms. Frechette stated that she has had more than 200 people donate items to help these people. Ms. Frechette advised that there are currently no rooms available anywhere and that she has spoken with the Captain at the Salvation Army about possibly using their building to house people. Ms. Frechette stated that she has already had two of the 10 people that were homeless move in with family members, and has two others who have agreed to go to treatment. Mr. Frechette provided the City with a signed petition requesting use of one of the unused City buildings as a facility for the homeless community.

Kristy Letendre of 93 Prospect Street advised that she works for Tri-County CAP and listed the resources they have available to assist those in the homeless community. Ms. Letendre advised that they have two shelters, which currently do have rooms available. Ms. Letendre also advised that NH was awarded \$200 million in grants to assist with rent and utilities. Ms. Letendre noted that there are multiple resources available, but that people need to come together and talk with each other.

Jennifer Lazzaro of 89 York Street noted that it is important to have people with an education and experience to help the homeless, rather than just community members.

Spencer Fortier of 390 Church Street spoke in opposition to a mask mandate. Mr. Fortier advised that he supports the right to choose. Mr. Fortier also stated that masks are ineffective unless they are N95 masks, as virus particles are too small to be stopped by the mask.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

There were no Council committee reports.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Resolution 2021-21 Substance Abuse Reduction Initiative Grant (1st read)

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for November 1, 2021. So moved, the motion carried.

3. Resolution 2021-22 Accepting ARPA Funds from Coos County Delegation (1st read)

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for November 1, 2021. So moved, the motion carried.

4. Resolution 2021-23 Route 110 Urban Compact Line (1st read)

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for November 1, 2021. So moved, the motion carried. Berthiaume – abstain

5. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the property transfer list for September 2021.
2. Please see the attached **Thank You** from the BHS Backers to the City and the City Employees who helped with the annual Homecoming Parade.
3. The Mason St. Bridge was opened to traffic on Friday October 15th as planned.
4. A joint Berlin/Gorham Code Red message was sent out on Friday October 15th prior to the Gorham Homecoming and Berlin RiverFire events, encouraging best practices to avoid COVID transmission.
5. The next Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting is on 10/21 at 10:00 AM.
6. Due to the current levels of COVID transmission in the Valley, there are daily Zoom meetings of AV C-19 Workgroup at 4:00 PM. Either Chief Watkins, myself, or both of us have been attending most of these meetings.
7. I will be out of the office on Thursday and Friday of this week.

Mayor Grenier asked about the expansion joint on the East Mason Street bridge and City Manager Wheeler advised the seal has not been installed yet.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second from Councilor Otis, to accept the City Manager's Report and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

6. Mayor's Report

Mayor Grenier thanked the Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce for their work on RiverFire this weekend. Mayor Grenier advised that it was a difficult situation and they did what they could to mitigate exposure to Covid. Mayor Grenier noted that probably 85% of the people in attendance were not local. Councilor Eastman noted that many local people did not attend due to Covid.

7. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

8. Council Comments

Councilor Higbee responded to the comment by Mr. Fortier concerning masks allowing particles through. Councilor Higbee stated that the particles are attached to water droplets and the masks do stop these.

Councilor Remillard noted that there is a sign on the door requiring masks, and that it should be enforced. Councilor Remillard advised that she feels the mask mandate should be re-instated. Councilor Berthiaume advised she does not want to see a mandate without it being an agenda item, and Councilor Theberge agreed. It was requested that it be included on the October 25, 2021 agenda and a public hearing be publicized.

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Berthiaume, the Council voted by roll call vote to enter non-public session at 8:34 pm under RSA 91-A:3 II (b). Higbee – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Berthiaume, the Council voted by roll call vote to leave non-public session at 8:36. Higbee – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

9. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Theberge, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 pm. So moved, the motion carried.

A True Record, Attest:

Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

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