

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, December 19, 2022

Regular Meeting

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:16 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Higbee, Morgan, Robert Theberge, Remillard, Roland Theberge, and Morency

Absent: Councilors Eastman and Berthiaume

Also present: City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr, Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Lori Korzen, Maura Annette Chappelle, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the minutes of the December 5, 2022 Regular Meeting and Work Session and the December 12, 2022 Work Session. So moved, the motion passed.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1927 start date 12/06/2022 end date 12/19/2022 for a total cash disbursement of \$616,720.70. Councilor Roland Theberge moved with a second by Councilor Morgan to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

NEW BUSINESS

1. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the Fire Chief's November report, the Monthly Incident Report and the EMS call volume report.
2. The EPA, Georgia Pacific and others have entered into a consent decree for the cleanup and monitoring of the former Chlor Alkali site -- that agreement is located at https://www.berlinnh.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif2811/f/uploads/20221109_ca_final_consent_decree.pdf. It is a 244-page report. Activities are anticipated to start in the spring.
3. Tax bills were mailed last week, due date is January 18.
4. Snow removal – we are trying a different strategy as it relates to snow and ice control. In the past, the city exclusively used a 3 to 1 mix of sand and salt, we are now following NH DOT / DES guidelines for sand and salt application – in a storm such as we just had the application of sand on paved roads was not indicated. Furthermore, this process resulted in a reset of the spreaders to ensure that the proper amount of salt is applied. It is a work in progress. The goal is to ensure that streets are adequately clear of ice and snow while properly using resources.
5. The County Commissioners and County Delegation have voted to approve sending \$200,000 in ARPA funds for the construction of a new salt storage facility. It is the intention to begin construction in the spring. This project has been long put off and is needed for efficient operation, resource conservation and runoff control. Thanks to all who were involved in this!

City Manager Warren spoke to concerns about snow plowing and advised that this was a long storm, starting on Friday, with crews not going home until Sunday night. Mr. Warren advised that they got behind in a couple areas, which was partly due to an accident with one of the loaders, and also due to the fact that they are still waiting on delivery of two loaders which were supposed to come this fall but are now scheduled for February. Mr. Warren advised that they did use older equipment. Mr. Warren also advised that they tried to rotate the crews as much as possible. Mr. Warren noted that with one loader in a ward, it takes 6-8 hours to get through the streets, as opposed to the 3-6 with two. Mr. Warren advised that they will begin snow removal tonight, starting with the schools and then Main Street. Mr. Warren stated that the issue with the sidewalks was that there was too much snow for the sidewalk plows to push through, so it will be picked up during snow removal. Mr. Warren noted that there was no hardpack on the roads with the new snow and ice control policy, and gave a "hats off" to the crew for doing the best that they have

the capability to do. Mr. Warren noted that the employees have received the changes in a positive fashion. Mr. Warren noted that they will now move on to preparing for the rain on Friday. Mr. Warren stated that the accident with the loader resulted in the majority of the damage being cosmetic, however there was also damage to the plow system. It will be shipped to John Deere tomorrow to get it fixed and back to us.

Concerning the new salt storage facility, Mr. Warren advised that the old building will be used for cold storage, for things such as sewer pipes. Mayor Grenier thanked his fellow County Commissioners for disbursing the last of the County ARPA funds, and noted that Councilor Robert Theberge was instrumental in helping.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the City Manager's Report and place it on file.

Councilor Remillard asked about the employee who was involved in the loader accident. Mr. Warren advised he has returned to work.

Councilor Roland Theberge asked about the heavy rains and wind expected later this week, and Mr. Warren advised that they will be opening up the catch basins, monitoring conditions, and will address issues as they arise.

So moved, the motion passed.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to suspend the regular order of business to open the Public Hearing. So moved, the motion passed.

Public Hearing

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 pm for Downtown Tax Incentive Application.

Mayor Grenier advised the application was submitted by Aaron Throneberry-Perkins for a complete renovation of 121 Main Street. The current value of the building is \$226,700. The estimated cost of the renovation is \$1,250,000.00. The amount abated would be in increments of 20% over five years.

Lori Korzen of 788 Kent Street spoke in favor of helping them out with the incentive, stating that it will be great for the City.

Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 7:33 pm.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

There were no Council committee reports.

2. Downtown Tax Incentive Application

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second from Councilor Remillard, that after a duly noticed public hearing this evening and a determination of eligibility of public benefit at the December 5, 2022 City Council meeting, the City Council of the City of Berlin grants an incentive for five years in accordance with the City of Berlin's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 19, Article II, Section 19-19, known as Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, Item 6, to Aaron Throneberry-Perkins, owner of a qualifying structure located at 121 Main Street (Map 119, Lot 51) for the rehabilitation activities in the approximate amount of \$1,250,000.00 that are to be completed at the existing structure on the condition that a covenant be signed by Mr. Throneberry-Perkins and the City Manager and filed at the Coos County Registry of Deeds. The value set on this property is currently \$226,700.00. So moved, the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Mayor's Report

- a. Letter from Donna Weiss re: Snowplowing

Dear Respected Mayor and Council,

I request that our city snow plow crew not pile huge snow piles immediately to either side of my driveway which runs along Howard Street. My home is located on the corner of Howard and Providence directly across the road from St. Vincent de Paul nursing/rehab center.

When we have large storms requiring plowing, the snow plow has been pushing the majority of the snow from the upper corner down the hill and immediately to the left of my driveway causing huge piles that I cannot see over when I try to exit. Last year I put up stakes to indicate not to pile snow in this location, but they were ignored, and I was unable to see the road to safely pull out when exiting. I have no problem with the plow pushing the snow on this side of the road, but I request they do it much further down so as not to block my view for a safe driveway exit.

In addition, I am requesting that snow not be pushed up against the curb right in front of my walkway on Providence St. This is the only safe and level walkway available for access and egress during winter. Every year, I keep the walkway and road areas clear during a storm, but then the plow pushes huge piles right up to, and in front of, the walkway. This is a safety issue not only for delivery drivers, but also in case of an emergency. My front walkway facing Howard Street is too steep and slippery for winter deliveries or should there every be a need for medical/fire emergency exit from the home. Again, I do not have a problem with the plow piling snow along Providence, but ask that they please do it further down the hill so that I, and others, have easy, safe, access in and out of the house. There is plenty of room well past my driveway on Howard and my walkway on Providence to pile snow that won't affect me or my neighbors adversely.

In BOTH cases, the snow could easily be piled on the opposite sides of the streets where there are no driveways or walkways affecting any homes or businesses. This would be the best solution overall.

Photos are attached displaying the areas in question and suggested piles. Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email with any questions. I hope that this can be easily resolved and relayed to the public works department to avoid unsafe conditions at my home.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donna Weiss

City Manager Warren advised that this issue has already been addressed. Mr. Warren advised they were tucking snow in an area that was not appropriate. Mr. Warren advised that he and Mark Lapointe went to look at the area, and the plow operators have been instructed to be more mindful of where they are tucking the snow, not only in this location but others as well. Mr. Warren advised that putting the snow across the street is not an easy solution, as the plow would be plowing against traffic. Mr. Warren shared a reminder that the placing of snow in the street by a private plow, snowblower, or a shovel is not allowed and they will be watching. Mr. Warren also noted that the plowing of snow onto sidewalks by private plows with no intention of removing it is a prohibited practice. Mr. Warren stated that Mr. Lapointe will be contacting Ms. Weiss to let her know that they have addressed her concerns.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morency, to enter the letter from Ms. Weiss into the record. So moved, the motion passed.

3. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

4. Council Comments

Councilor Remillard complimented the City Manager on his quick response to the emails that she sent this week, which were answered quickly and reasonably. Councilor Remillard also noted that although we were down a loader, she felt that the streets were well cleaned and that snow was packed on corners that were appropriate. City Manager Warren stated that the thanks go to the Public Works and Parks staff, and that everyone has been receptive to comments, changes, and recommendations.

5. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Morency, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 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.