

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, May 4, 2020

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 8:22 p.m. via Zoom, pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3.

Public Hearing

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 8:25 pm for Resolution 2020-12 Accepting \$5,000 from Jericho Power and Appropriating to PD. There were no public comments. Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 8:25 pm.

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 8:26 pm for the Downtown Tax Incentive Application for 156 Main Street. There were no public comments. Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 8:26 pm.

Regular Meeting

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Remillard, Otis, Eastman, Higbee, Rozek, Berthiaume (8:35pm) and Theberge
Absent: Councilor Morgan

Also present: James Wheeler, Susan Tremblay, Pamela Laflamme, Shelli Fortin, Matthew Buteau, Ann Nolin, Matthew Lambert, Julie King, Anthony Mullins, Elaine Connary, Lisa Devost, Roland Simard, Louise Valliere, Marion Moore, Jamie Welch, and Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Otis moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to accept the minutes of the April 20, 2020 Regular Meeting and Work Session, and the April 27, 2020 Work Session. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1862 start date 04/18/2020 end date 05/01/2020 for a total cash disbursement of \$743,243.84. 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 carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jamie Welch of 102 Church Street in Berlin, president of the BEA, asked the Council that as we go into Teacher Appreciation Week, that they remember the dedication of Berlin's teachers. Welch advised that in the last year, the budget was cut, state funding was cut, they have been doing more with less and providing their own supplies, they spent weeks moving into new classrooms when Brown School closed, and now are doing remote learning. Welch advised that the BEA has made a shift of cost of healthcare to the members to reduce the cost for the City, and the City cannot continue to ask the teachers to take less without getting something in return. Welch asked for the support and thoughtfulness of the Council as they work together and move forward.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

There were no Council Committee Reports.

2. Resolution 2020-12 Accepting \$5,000 from Jericho Power and Appropriating to PD (tabled 4/20/2020)

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Twenty

A RESOLUTION accepting a Five Thousand Dollar (\$5,000.00) donation from Jericho Power, LLC for the Berlin Police Department for specialized law enforcement tools intended to assist in community policing purposes.

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

Whereas, Jericho Power, LLC wishes to make a \$5,000.00 donation to the Berlin Police Department; and

Whereas, the Berlin Police Department recognizes that the public's safety will be enhanced if these funds are used to acquire specialized tools intended for community policing purposes.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Berlin, NH that the Berlin Police Commission is authorized to accept a donation of \$5,000.00 from Jericho Power, LLC. Further, these funds are hereby appropriated to the Berlin Police Department's FY'2020 Budget in addition to all other previously-appropriated funds.

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

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to remove this item from the table. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to read Resolution 2020-12 by short title for a second time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to read Resolution 2020-12 by short title for a third time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, that Resolution 2020-12 be passed. So moved, the motion passed by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

3. Downtown Tax Incentive Application for 156 Main Street

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Remillard, that after a duly noticed public hearing, 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 the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, Item 6, in the amount of \$28,180.00 to Kendall & Lanetha Strahan, owners of a qualifying structure located at 156 Main Street (Map 119, Lot 9) for the rehabilitation activities that are to be completed at the existing structure on the condition that a covenant be signed by Mr. & Mrs. Strahan and the City Manager and then filed at the Coos County Registry of Deeds. The value set on this property is currently \$43,900.00. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

NEW BUSINESS

4. BEA Contract

Julie King read the cost items into the record.

FY21 \$41,606.75
FY22 \$68,933.14
Total \$110,539.89

The Year 1 salary increase is 3.9%, and BEA changed the health insurance plan to one significantly less robust at a significant cost savings to the City. There is no salary increase the second year. Mayor Grenier advised that the cost savings is \$650,000 on the cost of health insurance.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second from Councilor Theberge, to approve the cost items in the BEA contract as presented, for a total cost of \$110,539.89. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Mayor Grenier thanked BEA President Jamie Welch and Superintendent Julie King for their efforts.

Louise Valliere thanked the Council for their support.

5. City Manager's Report

1. We received bids for heating oil for the upcoming heating season. Prices last year were 2.059 for bulk and 2.189 for local delivery. CN Brown was the low bidder with a price of 1.249 for bulk and 1.369 for local. This is expected to reduce heating fuel cost in the School system by approximately \$144,000.
2. We are continuing to conduct City business despite the changes in the work environment.
 - The City Hall lobby remains closed; however citizens can make an appointment to register their vehicles. Payments for sewer bills and taxes can be mailed in or they can be paid on line via Invoice Cloud.
 - The City Clerk's office continues to register dogs and provide vital records by mail or by appointment when necessary. Appointments can also be made for things that must be done in person, such as marriage licenses and registering to vote.
 - The Recreation Department and Library remain closed to visitors.
 - Public Works is fully staffed but is starting work in staggered shifts to reduce employee interactivity.
 - In light of the Governor's Order #40 and Universal Guidelines for Employers and Employees we are looking at what the future of operations for the City looks like and expect, like others, we may make changes in the coming weeks. Most of what I have seen from other communities is that no one is rushing to relax current measures they have put in place. Rather, they want to monitor the next few weeks to see how limited "opening" goes.
3. During his press briefing today the Governor announced \$40M in funding that will be available to municipalities for COVID-19 expenses. He also announced \$300/week stipend for first responders including municipal first responders.
4. During next week's City Council Meeting, we expect to take up the issue of when the City streets should be opened to ATV's
5. An EMS Report is attached. BEMS reports that they have seen a drop in calls they are attributing to COVID-19.

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

Mayor Grenier asked if the Council needed to take any action on the fuel bids and City Manager Wheeler advised they did not.

So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

6. Mayor's Report

Mayor Grenier thanked the BEA and advised that the City does appreciate the teachers and noted what a superb job they are doing under trying conditions.

Mayor Grenier advised that he noticed a lot of communities printing signs for their seniors and asked what Berlin is planning to do. Julie King advised that she has been in contact with City Manager Wheeler and they are planning a surprise for the seniors, which the parents are aware of. City Manager Wheeler will inform the Council of the plans as the date gets closer. King advised that they are also planning something for the championship teams. King stated that there will be an article in the paper about the valedictorian, salutatorian, and CTE student, as well as the usual senior spread.

Mayor Grenier asked the community to consider donating to a local food pantry, as the help would be greatly appreciated.

a. Letter from K. Ann Campbell

Hello Mr. Wheeler:

Attached are two images showing long line in front of Dunkin's drive-thru blocking ramp/road in front of Eagles Club.

Pedestrian safety issue

A crosswalk extends from bank park to almost exactly where that drive-thru line spills into the road. Not really sure why a cross walk was painted there - but pedestrians often have to wave vehicles to back up because road and crosswalk are usually blocked. Many drivers are unwilling to move forcing pedestrians to wait until that drive-thru line is completely gone. As pedestrians cross from sidewalk in front of Eagles Club toward the bank park, they must stand directly in front of vehicles with running engines waiting in line. Some drivers shift their vehicles into "park" while waiting in road but others simply put their foot on the brake which creates very dangerous conditions for pedestrians who must walk around their vehicle to access the crosswalk. Meanwhile, other vehicles are approaching that same crosswalk from Main St. to get to intersection on Pleasant Street adjacent to Dunkins on the other side of the median. Few drivers stop for pedestrians, but speed on through - many do not even look to see whether anyone is on that crosswalk. Stunning to witness the recklessness. That means pedestrians must wait at median in center of road/crosswalk until the speeding ramp vehicles pass by. Most vehicles try to beat the yellow light and speed through intersection, nearly running down whoever is standing on that crosswalk. Potentially deadly situation. I know. Cars have come very close to hitting me many times in that spot. There is no other path for pedestrians because barriers in front of the old movie theater remain in place - unless one walks completely around an entire block up Main Street or crosses more dangerous intersections on Pleasant St.. COVID-19 drive-thru policy may be making Dunkin's drive-thru line even longer, therefore city should address this problem and find a safer solution for drivers and pedestrians.

Solutions

I believe you should assemble an exploratory committee to study traffic pattern in that location or any other in Berlin to make them safer - which falls within the duty of a city manager. My request is proactive. I simply do not want anyone to be hit by a vehicle in that area - but the potential for that is high. Summer is short in this area. I have raised this issue to you on several occasions, without improvements. Pedestrians should be able to safely enjoy the nice weather on downtown sidewalks to access local retail stores, also, without fear of being hit by vehicles. Additionally - many of the sidewalks in downtown Berlin are uneven creating trip hazards. Since many communities around the state and country have easily addressed problems like this by investing time and allocated funding to make major improvements to sidewalk conditions for pedestrians of all ages in a timely manner, I am asking for city-wide sidewalk repair that can be completed in a professional and efficient manner before summer season begins in earnest. Why not also install heating vents which have been mentioned on numerous occasions, as well, to reduce ice and snow in winter. [Further, some concrete and

asphalt mixtures incorporate cork to help absorb noise. Last year, I introduced NH DOT to cork mix paving solutions which substantially reduce heavy traffic and sidewalk noise, and are widely used out West]. Plant more trees downtown as we did in Rochester in 1976 when revitalizing downtown for the bicentennial. Trees provide more oxygen and shade for walkers. Add soothing low lighting along the sidewalk path for late afternoon and early morning strolls, and additional benches. [Why not also plan a city-wide bike lane - it's overdue]. Population is aging. Pedestrians matter. Imagine how much more pleasant Pleasant and Main Streets would be if local patrons and residents had high quality, even, and wider sidewalk surfaces to enjoy throughout the year. Remove the eyesores. Invest in Berlin's people. It can be done. Just requires willingness and dedication.

Thank you.

Regards.

K. Ann Campbell, LLM, JD, JSM, BS, AAS

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second by Councilor Remillard, to accept the correspondence from K. Ann Campbell and forward the letter to the Traffic Safety Committee for review, along with a copy to the Public Works Director and the Police Chief. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jamie Welch thanked the Council and Mayor for their support of the teachers.

Pamela Laflamme advised there were no other calls.

8. Council Comments

There were no Council comments.

9. Adjournment

At approximately 9:05 p.m. Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to adjourn the regular meeting. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

A True Record, Attest:

Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

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