

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, April 1, 2024

Regular Meeting

Mayor Cone called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 8:17 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Cone, Councilors Mia Qualls, Higbee, Berthiaume, Morency, Valerino, Grenier, Korzen, and Theberge.

Absent: None

Also present: Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Police Chief Daniel Buteau, Sarah Mafera, Jamie Welch, Gina Welch, Thomas McCue, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, to accept the minutes of the March 18, 2024 Regular Meeting and Work Session, and March 25, 2024 Budget Work Session. So moved, the motion passed.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1958 with a start date of 03/19/2024 and an end date of 04/01/2024 for a total cash disbursement of \$893,144.80. Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, 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.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

There were no Council Committee Reports.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Assignments

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second by Councilor Morency, to assign to Councilor Grenier the committee positions left vacant by Councilor Morgan, including Berlin Airport Authority, Committee on Elections, and Planning Board Ex-Officio Member. So moved, the motion passed. Grenier - abstain

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Morency, to read the new Resolutions by short title only. So moved, the motion passed.

2. Resolution 2024-06 US Forest Service PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

3. Resolution 2024-07 Walmart PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

4. Resolution 2024-08 Homeland Liaison Officer PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

5. Resolution 2024-09 Byrne JAG DTF PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

6. Resolution 2024-10 NHFG OHRV PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

7. Resolution 2024-11 Highway Safety PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

8. Resolution 2024-12 Opioid Grant PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Berthiaume asked about the wording of "in the area of" \$30,000 on this Resolution and Chief Buteau advised it is up to \$30,000. Chief Buteau advised this grant is for extra drug enforcement.

9. Resolution 2024-13 Search and Rescue Equipment PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

10. Resolution 2024-14 Congressionally Directed Spending PD (1st read)

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 15, 2024. So moved, the motion carried.

11. Resolution 2024-15 Federal Homeland Security (1st read)

Chief Buteau requested that this Resolution be withdrawn from the agenda, as they found out they will not be getting this grant.

12. City Manager's Report

There was no City Manager's Report.

13. Mayor's Report

a. Planning Board and Zoning Board Appointments

Mayor Cone & City Council:

April is the month in which both Planning and Zoning Board memberships turn over. We are hoping you will consider making the following reappointments to each board.

- David Lavallee – Three-year term to run until April 30, 2027, regular board member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment – David currently serves as an alternate ZBA member.
- Thomas McCue – Three-year term to run until April 30, 2027, regular board member of the Planning Board
- Daniel Whittet - Three-year term to run until April 30, 2027, regular board member of the Planning Board

- Jeffrey Quackenbush - Three-year term to run until April 30, 2027, alternate board member of the Planning Board

There is one individual, Gregg Marrer, whose term is ending on the ZBA at the end of April who will not be re-upping for another term. He has served the City on the ZBA for the last ten years. We are deeply grateful for his service and dedication to the community and wish him well in his future endeavors.

We thank you all for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pamela Laflamme
Director of Strategic Initiatives

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, to approve the nominations of David Lavallee for a three-year term on the Zoning Board of Adjustment to expire April 30, 2027, Thomas McCue for a three-year term on the Planning Board to expire April 30, 2027, Daniel Whittet for a three-year term on the Planning Board to expire April 30, 2027, and Jeffrey Quackenbush for a three-year term as an alternate member of the Planning Board to expire April 30, 2027. So moved, the motion passed.

Councilor Grenier requested that plaques be presented to Gregg Marrer and Paul Poulin at the next Council meeting to recognize their service to the City.

b. Berlin Water Commission Appointment – R. Theberge

Honorable Mayer and City Council,

During the Board of Water Commissioners meeting on March 20, 2024, the Board voted unanimously to approve Roland “Lefty” Theberge to fill the vacant Water Commissioner seat currently held by Paul Poulin, whose term is about to expire and he does not wish to be re-appointed. We thank Paul for serving as Commissioner for 25 years; originally appointed in November 1999.

As such, the Board of Water Commissioners respectfully requests City Council approval of Roland’s nomination to serve on the Commission, with a term of office expiring May 1, 2028. Paul Poulin’s term expires on May 1, 2024 so we would greatly appreciate a vote of approval by the Mayor and Council no later than that date.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sean Brungot
Chairman of the Board

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to approve the nomination of Roland Theberge as a Water Commissioner with a term to expire May 1, 2028.

Councilor Grenier advised that the Conflict of Interest Ordinance does not prohibit an immediate family member serving on the Water Commission, as Roland Theberge’s brother is on the City Council.

So moved, the motion passed.

c. BiomonitoringNH Program – Request for Letter of Support

From: DHHS: BiomonitoringNH <BiomonitoringNH@dhhs.nh.gov>

Sent: Monday, March 18, 2024 11:21 AM

To: Shelli Fortin <safortin@berlinnh.gov>

Cc: Chatterjee, Madhumita <Madhumita.Chatterjee@dhhs.nh.gov>; Gao, Fengxiang

<Fengxiang.Gao@dhhs.nh.gov>; Josefiak, Melissa <Melissa.S.Josefiak@dhhs.nh.gov>

Subject: NH DHHS BiomonitoringNH Program: request for Berlin's support

Good morning Shelli,

Thank you for speaking with me last week. Your sharing of this email with Mayor Robert Cone is most appreciated. Our contact information for any questions is BiomonitoringNH@dhhs.nh.gov or 603-271-4611.

Dear Mayor Robert Cone,

I am the Administrator of the [BiomonitoringNH Program](#) within the NH Public Health Laboratories (PHL), Division of Public Health Services at the Department of Health and Human Services. Copied on this email are Dr. Madhumita Chatterjee, the PHL Chemistry Program Manager and Principal Investigator of the current BiomonitoringNH grant and Dr. Fengxiang Gao, NH PHL Director. As background, Biomonitoring is measuring environmental chemicals in the human body (tissue and fluids) such as urine and blood. One example of biomonitoring is testing children's blood for lead to reduce childhood lead exposure. Biomonitoring is a public health tool that helps to identify which chemicals are getting into people's bodies and at what levels (how much) from environmental sources such as air, water, soil, food, and even everyday products. By informing people about how they may come into contact with chemicals, we are better able to reduce chemical exposures and protect the health of NH residents.

We are reaching out to you to request your support for our application to the 2024 CDC National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) number [CDC-RFA-EH-24-0043](#). As written in the NOFO, this three-years grant aims at "assessing disproportionate exposure to environmental chemicals among communities." For this application, we will be proposing two projects with specific focus on "communities unequally affected by exposure to possibly harmful chemicals." One project would focus solely on the population of Berlin, NH. **Your written letter of support (preferably by April 8, 2024) will help us put forward a competitive application to fund this important work:**

Project #1) Targeted investigation: As you are aware, Berlin has numerous high [SVI scores](#), environmental burden ([Environmental Justice Index Explorer](#)), an EPA Superfund site, mercury contamination of the Androscoggin River, older housing stock (risk of lead exposure), and a biomass facility. We believe citizens in this area are at increased risk for chemical exposure, which can be evaluated using biomonitoring. This investigation would include analyzing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs, found in air pollution), volatile organic compounds (VOCs, found in industrial pollution and things like paint and gasoline), per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances ([PFAS](#), commonly used in industrial work), metals, and cotinine (a breakdown product of nicotine). It may also include environmental testing, should the opportunity arise. Results from this testing would be compared to NH state levels and to national levels to better understand the differences in chemical exposures of Berlin residents. The target sample size is approximately 400 people, randomly recruited from the non-institutionalized population. The project also includes a comprehensive marketing campaign to inform Berlin residents and get buy-in prior to the launch of the investigation. BiomonitoringNH would work closely with your office, other town officials, and local leaders to ensure questions and concerns are continuously addressed.

Project #2) PFAS-focused surveillance investigation: New Hampshire has the highest number of PFAS contamination sites in the U.S., with 469 identified ([PubMed](#)). Additionally, there are 20 current and one proposed EPA Superfund sites in NH ([EPA](#)) and when considering NH's small population, this is about 14.5 sites per million people. Upon comparing to the rest of the U.S., NH ranks fourth highest by this measure. Numerous studies indicate that Superfund sites are often located in areas with vulnerable populations (such as lower income or minority groups) who are disproportionately impacted by chemical exposure from these sites. For these reasons, BiomonitoringNH plans to conduct a surveillance investigation across NH that oversamples people living near Superfund or PFAS contamination sites to identify their chemical exposures to see if their levels differ from NH and national averages. The investigation will include analyzing PAHs, VOCs, PFAS, metals, pesticides, and cotinine. It may also include environmental testing, should the opportunity arise.

We look forward to your support of this important work for the benefit of Berlin residents (**with letter of support greatly appreciated by April 8, 2024**). Please let us know if you have questions or if you need any additional information about how we can partner on either of these projects for this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Melissa Josefiak, MPH
BiomonitoringNH Program Administrator

Madhumita Chatterjee, PhD
NH PHL Chemistry Program Manager &
BiomonitoringNH Principal Investigator

Councilor Morency and Councilor Korzen both stated they would like to hear more about what this program means before making a decision.

Councilor Grenier noted that historically Berlin has had one of the highest cancer rates, possibly due to chemicals used in the paper making process.

The Council agreed that having someone come speak to the Council may bring more recognition to the issue and they will be better informed. Director of Special Initiatives Pamela Laflamme will contact the Program Administrator.

Councilor Grenier moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee, to accept the Mayor's Report and place it on file. So moved, the motion passed.

14. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

15. Council Comments

Councilor Grenier advised that the Police Department, Fire Department, and Corrections Officers were involved in a charity hockey game at the arena on Saturday night. Councilor Grenier advised that the arena donated the ice time. Councilor Grenier thanked those involved for the professionalism displayed that evening.

Councilor Korzen asked about the Chlor-Alkali clean up, and noted that might be tied together with the BiomonitoringNH project. Ms. Laflamme advised that she can update the Council on the Superfund site at a future meeting.

16. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Grenier, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 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.