

## **CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, January 18, 2021**

### **Public Hearing**

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 7:28 pm for Resolution 2021-02 Berlin Airport Authority Grant. There were no public comments. Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 7:29 pm.

### **Regular Meeting**

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:29 p.m. via Zoom, pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3.

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

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

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

Absent: None

Also present: James Wheeler, Pamela Laflamme, Shelli Fortin, and Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun

**c.** Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to accept the minutes of the January 4, 2021 Regular Meeting and Work Session and the January 11, 2021 Work Session.. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

#### **Disbursements:**

Disbursement Summary Draft #1879 start date 01/01//2021 end date 01/15/2021 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,237,882.17. 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, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

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

There were no Council Committee Reports.

#### **2. Resolution 2021-02 Berlin Airport Authority Grant (tabled 01/04/2021)**

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-One

**A RESOLUTION** authorizing the Berlin Airport Authority to apply for and accept a grant for \$261,993.35 from the Federal Aviation Administration for “Apron & Stub Taxiway Pavement Maintenance, Overlay, Markings and Area Lighting Improvements” at the Berlin Regional Airport

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

Whereas, funding for the project is available through the Federal Aviation Administration, and

Whereas, the project includes pavement preservation, with full depth crack repair and a 1 inch pavement overlay; pavement markings and area lighting improvements on the airport’s taxiway, and

Whereas, the Berlin Airport Authority reviewed the project and the options at their September 21, 2020 meeting; and

Whereas, the Berlin Regional Airport will be responsible for \$6,985.65 of the total project costs, which will be paid for by the Berlin Airport Capital Improvement Budget; and

Whereas, the grant from the FAA will pay \$261,993.35 and the Berlin Airport will be responsible for \$6,985.65 which is 3% of the project costs.

#### NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

That the Berlin Airport Authority is authorized to apply for and receive \$261,993.35 of grant funds from the Federal Aviation Administration for "Apron & Stub Taxiway Pavement Maintenance, Overlay, Markings and Area Lighting Improvements" at the Berlin Regional Airport and upon receipt, these funds are hereby appropriated to the Airport Fund.

Be it further resolved that the Chair of the Berlin Airport Authority, Paul Grenier, 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 Morgan, to remove this item from the table. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to read Resolution 2021-02 by short title for a second time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to read Resolution 2021-02 by short title for a third time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan that Resolution 2021-02 be passed. So moved, the motion passed by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### 3. City Manager's Report

1. Cross Excavation is moving on to 758 Second Avenue. They are scheduled to begin demolition tomorrow.
2. The Board of Tax and Land Appeals will continue its evidentiary hearing for Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. Anyone interested in accessing the hearing, should call the board's office prior to the hearing at (603) 271-2578.
3. Multiple City employee inboxes with were hit with a malicious email last week. Our IT contractor was contacted, we were able to respond and there appears to be no lasting interference.
4. The AV COVID-19 Community Working Group reviewed the BHS Gym and locker rooms as well as the Brown School building on Friday January 15<sup>th</sup> to assess their suitability as a High Throughput Site for vaccine administration to the public. After a walk-through of each building, the group decided that Brown School offered the best attributes for this purpose for several reasons, not the least of which is that the building is currently unoccupied and using Brown will not interfere with ongoing school operations. The

building is secure and can be dedicated to this all important effort. The Working Group is currently preparing the building and designing patient flow in, through and out of the building.

I want to emphasize that No Vaccine will be stored on site. Vaccine will be stored properly in the hospital pharmacy and will be delivered to Brown School on a daily bases as the vaccine is administered.

Attached to this report is a DHHS Health Alert which is titled: [Instructions for Healthcare Providers to Register Medically Vulnerable Patients](#) on the DHHS website. This document provides more detailed information regarding the Phase 1b Vaccine Allocation and would benefit the public as well as providers. Our Fixed Site and efforts will use these guidelines as we go forward. It is hoped that the site will be ready for vaccinations on January 26, 2021. Given recent reports about reduced Federal vaccine reserves, there may be some delays in this schedule. Hopefully any delay will be measured in days or weeks and not in months. In addition to the vaccine supply, the Working Group is also concerned about the method(s) of registering for a vaccine that will be required. Hopefully, these will be resolved soon as well.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee, to accept the City Manager's Report and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

#### 4. Mayor's Report

##### State of the City Address

With all of the geopolitical events occurring outside of our valley, I would have to say that our situation in Berlin today is cautiously guarded. As a nation, state, and to a lesser extent our community, we are struggling with a heightened degree of internal disagreement. There are many within our community who are hard at work improving our economic situation here after a long period of stagnation. The pandemic and the uncertain political climate will affect, however, the near term pace of economic recovery of many businesses still suffering. Now, more than ever, we should be supporting our local merchants and businesses.

That said, there has been a dam break of great economic news here in Berlin and the surrounding communities. First of all, Bruce Luksza and his family have purchased two large tracts of land on Rt 110 north of AVRDD's transfer station, which previously sited a proposed campground. Mr. Luksza is in the process of building out and permitting through state and local boards a three phase build out, that when finished, will be a huge attraction to our city. With dry camping and RV stations, along with the enhancement of snowmobile trails on his property, his business will become a huge four season destination. We all know about the MOM's Jericho group's purchase of Absolute Motorsports in October, but the bigger news for Berlin is MOM's purchase of 1200+ acres of land near the wind towers in and around Jericho Mountain. The proposed motorized park will be world class with an amphitheater and amenities. It will be adjacent to Jericho Mt. State Park, so in essence the ATV/UTV activity, along with Mr. Luksza's development will more than triple the size of available acreage! The sky is the limit with this activity and it should surely hasten the future development of on premise lodging and entertainment on the site of the old Bass Shoe/Converse complex.

The next piece of great news is the recent sale of Gorham Paper and Tissue/White Mountain Tissue Company. The mill, one of the oldest paper mills in the country, was purchased by Behrens Investment Group. Purchased from a bankruptcy proceeding, the group headed by Evan Behrens nonetheless fulfilled their promise of paying back property taxes to the City of Berlin, Town of Gorham, and hope to finalize payment of delinquent waste tipping fees to Androscoggin Valley Regional Refuse Disposal District (AVRDD). I met with the Behrens team in late October where they laid out a very clear vision of their strategy of modernization, energy efficiency improvements, and longer term asset additions that would increase employment opportunities. This welcome news solidifies a huge piece of Berlin/Gorham's increasing economic diversity.

To cap off the "December to Remember", North Country Growers has finalized the purchase of land opposite of FCI-Berlin's entrance. BIDPA, an entity created by state statute decades ago and owns/operates property for economic development, negotiated a final selling price of \$645,000.00, which will be used to further develop projects within the city. Many thanks go to Board Chairman Mike Caron and the board who spent many hours finalizing this deal as we look forward to a spring groundbreaking

There is also great news coming from Milan as Richard Carrier and family have recently announced an \$11M expansion at Milan Lumber Company. Milan Lumber and the rest of the Carrier Group holdings have over the last 15 years become the major player in the manufacturing of construction materials on the East Coast and Canada. I continue to enjoy my conversations with Richard and his family. They are a very proud and focused business family, but can also be very lighthearted and fun to be around.

With hybrid and no in-house classroom time, many two income families have had to sacrifice work and stay home to take care of and help educate their children. Additionally, folks with compromised immune systems, close proximity to elderly family members and general fear of the highly contagious virus, participation in normal everyday activities have significantly curtailed. As a Berlin Youth Hockey volunteer coach, I see the impact of families who have made the difficult choice not to participate because of COVID impacts on health and income. Many businesses have either reduced hours or even days of operation or closed entirely because of the impacts. Once we get through the other side of this pandemic, it will be very important to financially support our business community to help them get back on their feet.

It appears that we will begin the process of replacing Berlin Fire Department's Ladder 1 truck. The current truck was purchased in 1994 and put into service in 1995. Then Chief Paul Fortier, department firefighters and various other city employees helped to develop the necessary specifications for this unit. We fully expect that this process will repeat itself as there is a long lead time from order to delivery. I was on the City Council for two years when we made the decision to purchase and the price then was in the \$600,000 range delivered. We estimate the price to be \$1M plus, though no decision has yet to be made. In the interim, the rear axle/shackle assembly will be repaired so we can buy the necessary time and we will lease a ladder truck to cover our needs for the estimated 8 weeks+-the truck is out of service.

My report would not be complete without informing you of the pending retirement of Sue Tremblay, currently the Administrative Assistant to City Manager Jim Wheeler. Then City Manager, Mitch Berkowitz hired Sue to be a part time secretary to BEDCO and then Development Director Dennis Cote way back in 1993. She was in her mid-30s then and seems not that long ago. Sue has a very unassuming personality but is fiercely loyal to Berlin's taxpayers and other staff members alike. Sue's clerical skillset is unmatched and has always made my job easier to perform. When the New Hampshire Legislature is in session, I have asked Sue to write up most of my testimony letters, giving her only my bullet points that I wanted to include. Please join me in congratulating Sue on her pending retirement and hope her and husband Marc enjoy life in the "slow" lane.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee, to accept the Mayor's State of the City Address and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

## **5. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

## **6. Council Comments**

There were no Council comments.

## **7. Adjournment**

On a motion by Councilor Rozek, seconded by Councilor Morgan, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 pm. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan– 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.