

## **CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, March 15, 2021**

### **Regular Meeting**

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:10 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: Pamela Laflamme, Susan Tremblay, Danielle Rioux, Deputy Chief Daniel Buteau, Holly Larsen, Shelli Fortin, and Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun

**c.** Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Otis, to accept the minutes of the March 1, 2021 Regular Meeting and Work Session and March 4, 2021, March 8, 2021, and March 10, 2021 Work Sessions. 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 #1883 start date 03/02/2021 end date 03/15/2021 for a total cash disbursement of \$950,859.56. 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.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **3. Resolution 2021-06 DOJ Byrne JAG Grant (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 5, 2021. 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

#### **4. Resolution 2021-07 NH Fish & Game OHRV Patrols (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 5, 2021. 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

#### **5. Resolution 2021-08 Highway Safety Grants (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Berthiaume, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 5, 2021. 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. Resolution 2021-09 Homeland Security Liaison Officer (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for April 5, 2021. 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. Resolution 2021-10 Homeland Security LETPA Night Vision (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Berthiaume, to remove this item from the agenda per the request of Deputy Chief Buteau. 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

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to recess the regular order of business to enter into the Public Hearing for Resolution 2021-05. 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

**Public Hearing**

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 pm for Resolution 2021-05 CDBG Housing and Community Development Plan.

Mayor Grenier advised if anyone would like a handout, they are available and can be emailed to anyone who would like to review it.

Community Development Block Grant funds are available to municipalities through the NH Community Development Finance Authority. Up to \$500,000 annually is available for economic development projects, up to \$500,000 for public facility projects, up to \$500,000 for housing projects, up to \$500,000 for emergency activities, and up to \$25,000 is available per planning study grant. All CDBG projects must primarily benefit low and moderate income persons. The public hearing will hear public comment on the following.

Community Development Block Grant Planning Grant funds to assist the North Woods Learning Center find and assess the viability of a new childcare facility by looking at both buildings and sites, looking at existing structures, potentially preparing both preliminary plans and projecting budgets and costs of building/or renovation suitable for childcare in Berlin. North Woods Learning Center serves primarily low and moderate income persons. This was shared at the December 7, 2020 public hearing through Resolution 2020-28, in which we forgot to share that we had handouts available. We also needed to update our HCDP, which we will do tonight, as it is more than three years old.

This project will conform with the plan we are adopting tonight, Berlin's Housing and Community Development Plan's Goal of: Continued Development of Medical Center and other Non-Profit Service Agencies- Assist Non-Profit service agencies in expansion, consolidation and relocation efforts.

The public was asked for comments. There were no public comments.

Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 7:34 pm.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to reenter the regular order of business. 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

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**1. Council Committee Reports**

There were no Council Committee Reports.

**2. Resolution 2021-05 CDBG Housing & Community Development Plan Adoption (tabled 3/1/2021)**

A RESOLUTION adopting the Housing & Community Development Plan (HCDP) which is required to be updated every three years as part of the process for applying for Community Development Block Grants.

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

Whereas, the Housing & Community Development Plan is updated every three years; and

Whereas, it is required to be part of the application process for Community Development Block Grants; and

Whereas, the HCDP is made up of goals & priorities from several existing plans such as the City's Master Plan, Community Profile, and Economic Development & Marketing Strategy; and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved by the City Council of the City of Berlin as Follows:

That, the City Council adopts the attached Housing & Community Development Plan;

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

City of Berlin, New Hampshire

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

March 2021

General Strategy

The City of Berlin's Master Plan along with a short and long term action plans, which was adopted in March 2010 lays out strategies around housing and community & economic development. Also utilized is the City's Economic Development & Marketing Strategy alongside Berlin's Community Profile, both of which were completed in 2019. We also reference a plan prepared for the City which is the Berlin Housing Revitalization Strategy (1999, updated in 2004). This plan has been drawn upon for planning in the housing sector. The major goals of the City's general strategy for development stem from these studies and are as follows:

1. Short Term: To assist the City of Berlin in responding to the continuing change and evolution of the City's economic base alleviating and/or mitigating the impact of underemployment. To build working relationships with community participants and programs to address and implement plans for resolving these issues.
2. Long Term: To reverse long term economic deterioration through expansion and diversification of the economic base of the Berlin area. To select neighborhoods or zones for intensive rehabilitation after thoughtful planning and scrutiny.

It is the City's policy, that involuntary displacement of households from their neighborhoods shall be minimized when possible.

The above goals will be accomplished through the following key actions:

1. Attraction of New Industry (Short-term and Long-term goal).
  - A. Improve Berlin's image both internally & externally
  - B. Position the community to access new value adding investments from the Canadian forest products sector
  - C. Expand internal industrial development & manufacturing capability
  - D. Market available commercial buildings
  - E. Offer any available tax incentives to both new and existing businesses
  - F. Provide incubation or starter space
2. Stabilization of Existing Industry (Short-term and Long-term goal).
  - A. Support the Gorham paper mill and their economic position and retain, where possible, logging

- and paper related jobs
  - B. Support the corrections and healthcare industries in the area
  - C. Support the economic position of Berlin's smaller industries & entrepreneurs
3. Expansion of Small Commercial/Industrial Businesses (Short-term and Long-term goal).  
Create sites for commercial expansion
    - A. Provide technical assistance to small business through referral to small business counseling agencies
    - B. Encourage economic development activities to increase quality industrial and commercial development. Encourage the expansion and retention of employment opportunities for residents.
  4. Continued Development of Medical Center and Other Non-Profit Service Agencies (Short-term and Long-term goal).
    - A. Analyze the future needs of the medical community in the vicinity of the Androscoggin Valley Hospital.
    - B. Assist non-profit/service agencies in expansion, consolidation and relocation efforts.
  5. Development of Tourism Sector in Local Economy (Short-term and Long-term goal).
    - A. Enhance the area's tradition as a winter sport center.
    - B. Protect access to Androscoggin River Frontage.
    - C. Work with the Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce to promote tourism throughout the North Country including OHRV use in Berlin and throughout the county via the Ride the Wilds tourism initiative.
  6. Downtown Revitalization (Short-term and Long-term goal).
    - A. Optimize the City's unique river location.
    - B. Position substandard downtown structures for adaptive reuse.
    - C. Address parking concerns in the downtown.
    - D. Continue to provide tax incentives for new business in the downtown
    - E. Investigate restoring a program of facade restorations and streetscape improvements for downtown.
    - F. Improve and promote Berlin's image as a commercial center.
    - G. Work with the Berlin Main Street program to improve marketing techniques, expand choice of consumer goods and increase the retail aggregate dollar.
    - H. Rehabilitate existing buildings when practical.
    - I. Rehabilitate and enhance the transportation system in downtown
  7. Transportation Improvements (Short-term and Long-term goal).
    - A. Rehabilitate and enhance Main Street/NH Route 16 as the gateway to the City and downtown area
    - B. Complete East Side Arterial by realigning Hutchins Street from Pershing Avenue to the intersection with Bridge Street.
    - C. Support Regional Transportation Efforts.
    - D. Continue to upgrade existing bridges.
    - E. Continue Airport improvements.
    - F. Develop intermodal transportation opportunities.
  8. Other Municipal Improvements (Short-term and Long-term goal).
    - A. Implement Capital Improvement Plan projects.
    - B. Review and revise Master Plan recommendations as adopted in March 2010 with an updated Master Plan for 2021.
    - C. Explore extending sewer & water systems to other areas, especially the Route 110 area.
    - D. Insure that all homes and businesses which are within the sewered area of the City are connected to the sewer system.
  9. Housing and Neighborhood Development (Short-term and Long-term goal).
    - A. Expand HUD Section 8 Rent Assistance program when necessary.
    - B. Examine the need and utility of a revolving loan fund for subsidized home improvement loans to

- low and moderate income families.
  - C. Develop plans for improving handicapped accessibility of municipal structures and programs.
  - D. Continue with plans for razing abandoned buildings beyond their useful life expectancy.
  - E. Encourage a varied stock of safe, sanitary, decent and affordable housing for persons of all age and income groups.
  - F. Understand what housing options are lacking for our residents and work to make housing more universally available to everyone.
10. Water and Wastewater (Short-term and Long-term goal).
- A. Encourage municipal and private water and wastewater systems that are safe, sanitary and that meet DES regulations.
11. Human Resources (Short-term and Long-term goal).
- A. Encourage the implementation of OJT incentives for business which employ laid off area workers.
  - B. Encourage the NH Department of Employment Security to conduct a human resources needs inventory of the Berlin area and provide a training program to upgrade skills of displaced workers.
  - C. Continue to encourage and support physical and program expansion at White Mountains Community College.

These goals are consistent with Berlin's Master Plan and Ordinances.

Any federal CDBG grant funds awarded to address any of these goals shall be expended consistent with national objectives and shall, at a minimum, provide improved housing in accordance with Section 8 standards, be used for public facility projects, employment opportunities, or feasibility studies. All CDBG funded projects, shall primarily benefit low and moderate income persons or households, and shall not benefit moderate income persons to the exclusion of low income persons.

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, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to read Resolution 2021-05 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 Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to read Resolution 2021-05 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 Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee that Resolution 2021-05 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 (Continued)**

### **8. Resolution 2021-11 NHDOT TAP Funds for Hutchins St Sidewalk (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for March 17, 2021. 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

### **9. Resolution 2021-12 Authorizing USDA RBDG Broadband Feasibility Grant (1<sup>st</sup> read)**

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Berthiaume, to table the Resolution and schedule a public hearing for March 17, 2021. 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

## **10. City Manager's Report**

There was no City Manager's Report Pamela Laflamme shared that BIDPA voted to move forward with ADG Solutions to start phase 2 of work for the TIF district. BIDPA also entered into a contract with the Melan Hotel Group, which is the hotel consulting group that brought a hotel to Rumford. Ms. Laflamme also noted that tonight was Susan Tremblay's last City Council meeting after working for the City of Berlin for 29 years. Ms. Laflamme thanked Ms. Tremblay for all her work. It is also the first meeting for her replacement, Danielle Rioux.

## **11. Mayor's Report**

### **a. Appointment to Board of Assessors – Robert Goddard**

Dear Honorable Mayor Grenier and Distinguished Members of Council:

Please accept this letter as my official notice of request, effective this day and date, 15 March, year 2021.

My current term of service as a member of the Berlin Board of Assessors will be fulfilled as of, 31 March, year 2021. Simply stated, my term of service will expire at the end of this month.

As such, I have considered my current and future business scheduling as well as personal/family obligations, and accordingly, I feel that I am able and willing to serve another term as a member of the Berlin Board of Assessors.

Henceforth, please accept this letter as my request for re-appointment to the City of Berlin's Board of Assessors. If re-appointed, I would thus continue to actively serve as a member of the board.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. Goddard

Councilor Theberge moved to table the nomination of Robert Goddard until the results of the hearing with the BTLA and the Board of Assessors is known. There was no second to the motion.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Remillard, to approve the Mayor's nomination of Robert Goddard as a member of the Board of Assessors with a term to expire March 31, 2024. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Rozek – yes, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – no, Remillard – yes, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

### **b. Appointment to Planning Board – Daniel Whittet**

Dear Mayor Grenier and the City Council,

I would like to be considered for appointment to a position of alternate to the City of Berlin Planning Board. This year I was fortunate to purchase an older house in Berlin and now reside here full time. It has always been a tradition in my family to contribute to the community and I feel this might be that kind of opportunity. I enjoy the area very much.

After many years as a contractor in Maine, I took a second career working for an Engineering firm in Massachusetts, AHA Consulting Engineers. My work in Energy and Sustainability department involves analyzing buildings for their efficiency opportunities as well as environmental impacts. I am able to work full time from my home on Prospect Street, occasionally visiting projects in other areas.

I am currently a member of the Friends of Big Nansen, The Historical Society, and the growing Androscoggin food Co-op. as well as being involved with several of the area outdoor organizations. I am a member of the AMC, Randolph Mountain Club, Northern Forest Canoe Trail and the Granite Backcountry Alliance, among others. I feel like these organizations support one of the great aspects of Berlin, our proximity to the rugged natural environment.

Last month while volunteering at a ski event at the Mount Washington Auto Road I was reminded that my father climbed there ninety years ago, coming to New Hampshire by train. I have been familiar with the White Mountains since I was five.

My work has led me to become well versed in code applications and the kind of long-term commitments to capital improvements that reduce impact and make communities stronger. I am a long standing member of the High Performance Building Standard (189.1) that supports the International Green Construction Code, IGCC. I consider the renewable energy efforts in Berlin to be exemplary. For a person with my background the combination of renewables being used in Berlin seems very forward thinking indeed.

In Maine, where I had a contracting business, I was involved with the national Association of Homebuilders and the Rockport, Maine building committee. My parents were very active in the community there. I have worked on remote islands and remote mountain locations a lot, especially with off grid projects.

This, and my lifelong connection to Northern New England was why I chose to make Berlin my home. I believe the city is a unique area with history, a serious hard-working tradition, excellent outdoor recreation opportunities and great people who are passionate about the community. It is my hope that I can bring support to the cultural and economic restoration of the area.

The pandemic required zoom meetings have allowed me to attend several of the city council and planning board meetings and introduce myself. It is a great group of people I look forward to knowing better.

I realize I will be considered a newcomer, and I accept that and will try to learn more about the community and listen more than speak out. That being said, I also note with interest that to bring prosperity back to Berlin a few new residents might not be so bad. I hope you will accept my application and give me the chance to participate and contribute where I can.

Thank you,

Daniel Whittet

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee, to approve the Mayor's nomination of Daniel Whittet as an alternate member of the Planning Board with a term to expire April 30, 2024. 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

## **12. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

## **13. Council Comments**

Councilor Eastman noted that there are several new families that have decided to make Berlin their home, which is very encouraging.

## **14. Adjournment**

On a motion by Councilor Rozek, seconded by Councilor Higbee, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 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

Mayor Grenier reminded the Council of the meeting on Wednesday, March 17, at 6:30 pm.

A True Record, Attest:

Shelli Fortin  
City Clerk

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