

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, October 3, 2022

Public Hearing

An informational document was made available for the public.

Community Development Block Grant funds are available to municipalities through the NH Community Development Finance Authority. Up to \$500,000 annually is available on a competitive basis for Public Facility Projects, up to \$500,000 for Housing Projects, up to \$500,000 for Economic Development Projects, and up to \$350,000 for Emergency Activities that directly benefit low- and moderate-income persons. Up to \$25,000 per study is available for Planning Grants. The Public Hearings will comment on the following:

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 7:32 pm for the Progress of the Coös County Family Health Services Expansion CDBG Project.

The Coös County Family Health Services facility expansion at 133 Pleasant St in Berlin is approximately 20% complete. Work items include retaining wall improvements, replacement of the roof of the existing building, replacement of the HVAC system, and additions on the North and West sides of the building. Work completed to date includes: Replacement of retaining wall along the Dead River, Site preparation, Installation of utilities to service the addition, Installation of micropilings that anchor the building to the bedrock and Repairs to the existing roof of the main building.

Proposed additions are 2400 sq., ft. in the rear, and approximately 1500 square feet to the north side of the building.

The project is expected to be complete by June 2023.

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

Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 7:35 pm.

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 7:35 pm for the Presentation of the Northwoods Learning Center Planning CDBG Project.

A CDBG Planning Study was conducted for North Woods Learning Center to assess the feasibility of childcare center location. The building at 2227 Riverside Drive was inspected as a possible site for a childcare but the results determined that location was not feasible for this childcare center.

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

Mayor Grenier Closed the Public Hearing at 7:37 pm.

Regular Meeting

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:37 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

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

Absent: Councilor Higbee

Also present: City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Lori Korzen, Dylan Bridge, Richard Laflamme, Deborah Laflamme, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the minutes of the September 19, 2022 Regular Meeting and Work Session. So moved, the motion passed.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1922 start date 09/20/2022 end date 10/03/2022 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,402,089.98. Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second by Councilor Morency to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Richard Laflamme of 128 Jasper Street spoke concerning the need for trades programs, and especially the machine shop at BHS and WMCC. Mr. Laflamme advised that he spoke with Congressman Pappas about using machinery aboard decommissioned ships for the high school and community college. Mayor Grenier agreed and advised he has already spoke with WMCC about the program and the machine shops in Berlin about an apprenticeship, and stated that it is something that they will need to collaborate on to satisfy the need for skilled workers.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

Councilor Morency advised that the Traffic Safety Committee met this evening and they will have recommendations for the Council at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Appointment of Library Trustee

This was postponed until October 17, so that an additional interview can be conducted.

2. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the August 2022 Property Transfer list.
2. We had an IT failure early last week which affected all city hall systems, including motor vehicle transactions. A solution was identified and implemented and we were back in operation as of Wednesday morning. Further analysis is ongoing to prevent this from happening in the future.
3. A meeting was held with the Chamber regarding Riverfire and a solution was identified that is workable and ensures that the newly planted grass will not be damaged.
4. Riverwalk construction is winding down – items left include some finish paving, railings on the overlooks and “punch list” items.
5. RAISE (downtown improvements) grant – Pam attended a session regarding the grant and it was made clear that no funds shall be spent or reimbursed until a grant award is issued. On past reports it has been stated that the funds from this grant can only be spent on the purposes enumerated in the grant, and nothing else – this is being restated since there is some confusion brought to my attention that the funds should be used for “fixing streets,” “heating homes,” “tearing down blighted properties,” “assisting the schools,” – while these efforts are all worthy of funding this grant cannot be used for any of them. Simply put there are only 2 choices here – accept the grant with thanks, benefit from the improvements or return the grant funds and receive none of the benefits of the grant (as described in the grant application).
6. The state has announced a program to assist residents with increasing utility costs – information on that program is available at <https://www.energy.nh.gov/consumers/help-energy-and-utility-bills/state-nh-emergency-energy-assistance?fbclid=IwAR1-tMtZR5M2Yoj17vluDcc9GmoRp2UCqnku-dRmARITQaCEXAn3u-o4MqE> – this will be posted on the City website.
7. This office is working in concert with the Building department in addressing the code issues discussed at the last meeting – some homeowner discussions have taken place and with good results. Continued efforts will be concentrated on this issue. Next step will involve letters being sent to some properties regarding code matters.
8. An extension to the MS-1 filing was submitted and approved – the deadline for submission is now October 21. Utility values are still outstanding. This office will work with the Sansoucy firm to ensure that said utility values are received and entered allowing for completion of the MS-1 without an additional extension.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Roland Theberge, to accept the City Manager's Report and place it on file. So moved, the motion passed.

3. Mayor's Report

a. Thank You Letter from David McLoughlin

To whom it may concern,

Thank you very much for your monetary donation that helped me to go to the SkillsUSA Competition in Atlanta GA this past June. It was a week filled with many opportunities such as talking with company representatives about the different welding paths out there for employment, or learning about their particular journeys that they have experienced. In addition to the welding focus which brought me there, I got to see the hundreds of industry trades that the Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs collectively train and prepare for the workforce: Plumbing, masonry, health occupation, electrical and so much more! Each State started the week off by having a dinner gathering laying out the full week's activities and opportunities for professional achievement. This was a great way to meet each State finalist representing many of the trades that NH CTE programs offer. We then proceeded to go to the meetings specific to each of our trades in preparation for our competitions, which also included much encouragement and congratulations for having chosen our specific career paths. The remainder of the week included ceremonies at the State Farm Arena which were filled with thousands of recipients representing their trade and their State. The arena was packed and the energy level was through the roof. Guest speakers included Nicholas Pinchuk, CEO and President of Snap-on, and Dr. Miguel Cardona, Secretary of Education. They both had tons of advice and encouragement to give and their presence reminded everyone of the pride that we should feel in being a part of such an event, SkillsUSA! And of course, competition day; It was an 8-hour day of welding, with 5 projects to be judged. Thankfully, the competitions were held in the air-conditioned Atlanta World Congress Center as the average temperature outside was 100 degrees! It was amazing to see all the various projects/competitions going on at the same time such as mini houses being built, and decorative brick walls constructed by the masons, to name a few. While I did not win in my competition, I benefited a great deal in being a part of this prestigious event and could not have done this without your donation. It reinforced my interest in being a welder and instilled confidence and pride. I started at White Mountain Community College a few weeks ago for Advanced Welding and will go from there. Again, I thank you and hope that you will consider donating again to future recipients for the SkillsUSA Competitions chosen from Berlin High School.

Sincerely,

David McLoughlin

b. Thank you to Fire Chief

Mayor Grenier publicly thanked Fire Chief James Watkins for his hard work in looking for grants for the City. Mayor Grenier stated that he has obtained over \$300,000 in grants for equipment, such as SCBA equipment and turnout gear, along with \$600,000 for a new truck. Mayor Grenier noted that Chief Watkins plays a critical role in the emergency services in this community, and noted the effort he puts in on a daily basis to be sure his men and the citizens of the community are well served. Mayor Grenier stated that Chief Watkins has the respect of his employees, which is an accomplishment.

Councilor Morency also noted the work that Chief Watkins did as the coordinator during Covid, and what a big task that was.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the Mayor's written and oral report and place it on file. So moved, the motion passed.

4. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

5. Council Comments

There were no Council comments.

6. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Roland Theberge, seconded by Councilor Remillard, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 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.