

March 14, 2016

City Council Work Session

Members present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Nelson, Theberge, Gentili, Otis, Morgan Allain, Remillard, and Rozek; Councilor Higbee was absent.

Others present included City Manager James Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, BIDPA Chair Mike Caron, Airport Manager Eric Kaminsky, City Clerk Debra Patrick, Assessing Supervisor Bryan Chevarie, Police Chief Peter Morency, Deputy Chief Dan Buteau, Lt. Kerry Therriault, Lt. Tim Godin, Lt. Jeff Lemoine, Police Commission Chair Gerry Nault, PD Administrative Assistant Lisa Arguin, Communications Manager Jen Cloutier, Northern Human Services Director Charlie Cotton, from AV Home Care Pauline Tibetts, Holiday Center Director Linda LeBlanc, Finance Director Patty Chase, Chamber of Commerce Chair Marc Belanger, and Barbara Tetreault from the Berlin Daily Sun

Budget Discussion - Airport

Mr. Kaminsky presented his budget proposal noting that the amounts requested for fuel are based on the historical average. CIP projects include the rehabilitation of the rotating beacon as well clearing of beacon lines. There is also a need to do crack sealing on existing pavement. Councilor Theberge confirmed that resurfacing was done in 2005 and it has a 20 year life. Councilor Rozek affirmed that equipment at the airport has been replaced and it will be six years before anything else needs to be replaced. Councilor Otis noted that it will take \$39,369 from the City to balance the airport's budget. Mr. Kaminsky indicated that there is a land sale that is pending. Mayor Grenier clarified that if the land sale is budgeted in this year, it will increase the amount the City has to put in. Ms. Chase indicated that the 5% needed for the rotating beacon project grant is not in the budget and needs to be added.

BIDPA

Mr. Caron reported that the BIDPA Budget is almost the same as last year. BIDPA has one piece of property by the Chalet Loop that they are working on developing. BIDPA has reserves of approximately \$650,000. Mayor Grenier acknowledged that BIDPA could be a significant player in a new development. Councilor Remillard confirmed the sale of 121 Main Street is complete and Ms. Laflamme added that BIDPA retained the right to first refusal if the property has not seen any development in one year.

Police

Pete Morency explained that he made an effort to keep the budget as flat as possible. Statistically the PD is not seeing a substantial increase in the number of calls; however there are more difficult crimes. There is an increase in burglaries directly related to drugs. Councilor Remillard asked if the percentages are similar to those in other communities our size and Chief Morency stated that they are.

The department lost three senior officers: Steve Arsenault, Brian Valerino and Richard Plourde. The operating budget is \$2,480 more than last year due to the change of personnel. There was an increase in benefits with younger employees on a family plan which added \$81,000 to the line item. Chief Morency commented that every effort is made to provide the officers with tools to increase their time on the street. Berlin has been very successful in recruiting trained officers saving \$80,000 of training by hiring officers that are fully certified.

Councilor Nelson asked about crossing guards and Chief Morency reported that the same budget was used to post a crossing guard at Brown School, 2 on Hillside Avenue and one on Route 110. The new configuration gives more incentive with step increases and still decreases the budget. Councilor Remillard asked for a better breakdown of equipment being requested.

Chief Morency stated that the initial request for Capital Improvement was \$279,000 and it was lowered to \$147,843. There is a monitoring system for \$15,000 that can also be removed. Lt Tim Godin explained that patrol rifles need to be replaced. There are 25 rifles that would be reconditioned by replacing the upper receiver to prevent malfunction at a cost of \$29,400. Councilor Rozek asked why not replace the entire rifle and Lt. Godin indicated that the cost would be over \$100,000 for 25 rifles. Mayor Grenier stated that he will be looking for improvements in the pd budget and perhaps the bathroom renovations can be put off.

Councilor Otis asked about the PD's rolling apparatus and how much is in inventory. Chief Morency replied that there are 12 cars and 2 emergency response vehicles. Mayor Grenier complimented the PD on the use of the emergency response vehicle for emergencies. He suggested a meeting with the press to report the use of the vehicle to the community. Councilor Theberge asked about the team that operates the emergency vehicle. Asst. Chief Buteau reported that there are operators suited up to issue high risk warrant searches; there are tactical dispatchers for the emergency; there is dispatcher for the operation; and a tactical medic for the operation. There is also a 3 member team of crisis negotiators ready to go and a mental health worker who comes on as needed. There are teams throughout the state and they back each

other up when there is an emergency. Councilor Gentili commented that it is important to stand in support of the PD. Mayor Grenier reasoned that it would make sense to adjust “outside overtime” expense and revenue to reflect the additional details that will occur with construction this summer.

Special Public Safety

There is no change to the budget.

Outside Agencies

NHMA annual dues

NCC annual dues

Chamber of Commerce - Mark Belanger President of the Chamber of Commerce thanked the Council for the support adding that opening the roads to ATV traffic was a critical component to increasing tourism.

Northern Human Services – Director Charlie Cotton reported that NHS serves 700 residents of Berlin and receives no funding from the state. They provide emergency services where someone’s life is in jeopardy.

They ask for \$1 per resident and are grateful for whatever the city gives. Mayor Grenier asked how much outside money can be leveraged with City funding and Mr. Cotton indicated that the city funds can leverage up to 4 times. These are dollars that are not allocated to anything in particular and they can be flexibly spent on the greatest need.

AV Home Care – Pauline Tibbets stated that the agency is looking at level funding. They serve 120 to 150 residents of Berlin and work to keep people in their homes. They are seeing more clients who have mental health challenges and cannot get through the day without help.

Tri County CAP – no one attended from CAP. Councilor Nelson asked to get a breakdown of where the budgeted amount of \$13,161 is going. Mr. Wheeler suggested that CAP come to a future meeting.

Holiday Center - Linda LeBlanc reported that the center has been in operation since 1969. They are a small organization with two full time and two part time employees. They are non- medical and are moving to be a licensed medical facility. They recently received funding for a feasibility study to see what building improvements would be needed to become a licensed facility.

ATV Festival – Councilor Nelson asked for a name change to Chamber Marketing Funds so that funding can be used to leverage other funds.

Main Street Program – Tom McCue sent an e-mail to Mayor Grenier saying that Main Street Program will continue downtown beautification and Moving Downtown Forward and they are requesting level funding for downtown.

Administration

Mr. Wheeler went through the Administration budget with the Council. Legal services was increased to reflect what is actually spent. The assessment contract with KRT is increased from \$25,000 to \$30,000; however utilities update is decreased from last year’s \$30,000 to \$18,000.

Councilor Rozek asked if the day will come to do our own assessment saying that may have an effect of keeping the assessments steady. Councilor Nelson asked about abatements and whether we pay extra. Mr. Wheeler indicated that they have to defend their values. Mayor Grenier asked Mr. Chevarie how KRT is to work with and he confirmed that it’s been very positive, and their response times are quick.

Elections

There are two elections for the upcoming budget year, the primary in September primary and the November general election

City Hall and Other Buildings has a small increase.

Property Liability Insurance Mr. Wheeler explained that the cost is split between the city and sewer fund. With the increased value of the new equipment at the treatment plant, more is being allocated to sewer and there is a small percentage paid for by the airport

County Tax was increased in the budget by \$50,000. Mayor Grenier stated that it may be reduced by as much as \$35,000.

Personnel Benefits PD severance is reduced by \$56,000. Ms. Chase clarified that the City puts aside funds yearly for the 53rd payroll.

Cemeteries Ms. Patrick confirmed that Custom Services does the cemetery mowing. They do a good job and it is a good learning experience for those involved.

IT - Ms. Laflamme reported some hardware was installed; though not everyone got new hardware. We were able to centralize the software, and we purchased assessing parcel software. A direct fiber line from the PD to SNS in Littleton was created and that links all departments with the exception of the public works garage. Mayor Grenier asked if this has made life easier and the City more secure. Ms. Laflamme stated that we will be working to limit access. Mr. Wheeler expressed that we did have a problem; however there was a rock solid back up. Councilor Rozek asked about the printer ink and Ms. Laflamme indicated that there is a lot of volume including the plotter that prints large scale maps.

Housing

We are going to go through the tax deed process. Ms. Chase stated that there are 125 fewer tax liens and \$250,000 less for receivables this year.

Mr. Wheeler stated that the Housing budget is unchanged. If the budget has to be reduced without affecting people, there is \$200,000 in demo in this account. There is a list of properties for demo that is unfunded estimated at \$477,000.

Councilor Nelson commented that there is \$83,000 in Housing related to salary. She added that it would be wise to combine the building inspector and housing coordinator. There being no further business, Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Nelson to adjourn. The meeting ended at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant