

July 5, 2016

City Council Work Session

Present were Mayor Grenier, Councilors Otis, Remillard, Gentili, Morgan-Allain, Higbee, Rozek, Nelson and Theberge

Others present included City Manager James Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Superintendent of Schools Corinne Cascadden, School Department Business Administrator Bryan Lamirande, Finance Director Patty Chase, Bertrand Bryant, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Barbara Tetreault from the *Berlin Daily Sun*

At a swearing in ceremony, Elaine Riendeau was sworn in as Berlin's City Clerk.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:38 p.m.

Sewer Abatement Committee

The Council considered an application for sewer abatement from Bertrand Bryant. His sewer bill this year was \$4,588.00 and his last year's bill was \$160.00

Mr. Wheeler stated that there was a leak in the line at a carriage house that is behind the main house which resulted in a high water bill and sewer bill. Mr. Bryant was asked to explain and he said that the line is 250 feet from the road; a compression nut cracked and water ran into the ground. The line is nowhere near the sewer. Councilor Theberge reported that Mr. Bryant hired a backhoe and did everything in his power to fix the problem. He proposed that the amount of last year's bill would be fair. Mayor Grenier stated that the faulty plumbing issue has long been denied by the Sewer Abatement Committee. He said that he is willing to abate some but not willing to go to \$160. Councilor Higbee moved to abate the bill to \$1,000; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion failed on a 5/4 vote.

Councilor Nelson stated that this is different than other requests such as pool charges. Councilor Remillard moved to abate the charges to the same charge as last year, \$160.00; Councilor Nelson seconded. In discussion Councilor Higbee confirmed that there is no way to know what the actual water usage was. Councilor Morgan Allain confirmed that Mr. Bryant was in Florida for the same amount of time as last year. In the vote that followed, the motion carried with Councilor Otis and Mayor Grenier voting against and the remaining Councilors voting affirmatively. Mr. Bryant left the meeting at this time.

Middle School Gym Floor Replacement

Bryan Lamirande explained that work is being done at the Middle School to replace the gym floor funded with capital improvement monies. The old floor was removed by the custodians and it was discovered that the concrete slab under the floor was heaving. HEB was contacted for possible solutions to the problem.

In addition, a sink hole has developed at the exterior of the building, there is a deteriorated cast iron pipe under the floor and drainage from outside is sloped toward the building. Engineers are proposing digging up and repairing the sink hole, running under drainage; replacing the cast iron drainage pipe and sloping drainage so that it goes away from the building.

The additional work will increase the project's cost by \$145,000. Councilor Rozek affirmed that the hard wood floor cost was \$78,000 and it would be foolish to complete the floor without doing the additional work. Mr. Lamirande indicated that the concrete work will be put out to bid. Mayor Grenier stated that a resolution with 2/3 majority vote will need to pass to approve funding the project. In a straw poll, there were no objections to the proposal.

Bond Sale Results

Mr. Wheeler reported that the USDA bond that was refinanced originally projected at \$25,000 in savings per year actually achieved a better rate and will save about \$35,000 per year.

Gorham Fire Chief Update

Mr. Wheeler stated that the Town of Gorham has decided to go ahead with a full time fire chief. Chief Trull met with Gorham's Chief Eichler and reviewed their operation to see what could be done by a part time chief. Mr. Wheeler commented that it was a worthwhile exercise and he commended the Town Manager and Gorham Selectmen for reviewing.

NH Tax Shift Plan

Mr. Wheeler acknowledged a letter addressed to Mayor Grenier from Paul Henley, a State Representative from Concord. He is proposing legislation to replace the current tax system with an income tax. Mayor Grenier stated that he has not taken a position. The proposal would lower the business profits tax, lower property taxes and add a 3.7% tax on personal income. A portion of the state contribution to the Retirement Plan would also be reinstated. He asked if the Council wants to take a position. Councilor Remillard stated that she needs to review further before deciding on whether to take a position. Councilor Rozek cautioned that a personal income tax could come about and everything else will stay the same. He agreed that further review is necessary.

Councilor Theberge moved to add Team Rubicon to the agenda; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried with all voting in favor.

Team Rubicon

Councilor Rozek explained that Rick Treiss is the NH Planning Coordinator for Team Rubicon which is an international non-profit disaster response organization that unites military veterans with disaster response teams. Mr. Treiss is proposing to demolish a single family home in Berlin. Councilor Rozek noted that, if needed, his company would be prepared to fill the cellar hole provided the City furnishes the material. Councilor Remillard mentioned that asbestos will have to be abated. Mayor Grenier suggested that the City Manager meet with Mr. Treiss to work out the details.

Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to go into non-meeting per RSA 91-A:2, 1 b) Collective Bargaining. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant