

## **City Council Work Session**

### **March 21, 2022**

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Robert Theberge, Roland Theberge, Higbee, Eastman, Remillard, Morgan and Morency. Councilors Remillard and Berthiaume were absent.

Others present: Interim City Manager Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Library Director Ann Brungot, Library Trustees Member Denise Bergeron, Jennifer Lazzaro, Stuart Light and William Carroll, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

#### **Gravel Tax Warrant**

Ms. Laflamme requested to authorize the Finance Director to collect \$63.60 in gravel taxes on Map 404 Lot 9 owned by Arnold Drouin. Councilor Higbee moved to authorize the Tax Collector to send the gravel tax bill to Arnold Drouin in the amount of \$63.60, Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

#### **Budget:**

##### **Library**

Ms. Brungot shared a PDF presentation of the 2023 Budget which included: Services, Resources, On-site databases, remote databases, Patron Statistics (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021), Resource statistics, Book statistics, Budget request percentage changes, Kelley Park, capital improvement target areas and what's coming in FY2023. Ms. Brungot commented she has a brand-new line item in the budget for programs and events. The increase in the budget is mostly to salaries which are related to union contracts and/or the cost of items has gone up. Councilor Roland Theberge discussed the electricity line item and asked if there are grants out there for a solar power system and have the lights been switched to LED lights. Ms. Brungot responded she did not know of any grants related to solar power system and yes, all the lights have been switched to LED to be more energy efficient. Ms. Laflamme commented the library went through a thorough review by alba architects in 2019 and they came up with a whole slate of things that needed to be done first.

Ms. Brungot discussed some of the capital improvements items and stated after the building assessment was done back in 2019, the previous City Manager was confident our PWD could do some of the repairs/upgrades. Mayor Grenier asked what is the priority as far as capital improvements. Ms. Brungot stated the roof would be priority as a lot of the issues reported from alba stems from the roof itself. Ms. Laflamme commented that the alba report will need to be updated as prices have gone up. She also stated that the improvements that need to be done are eligible under the USDA grant program for community facilities or even the CDBG community facility grant. Both of those would take care of a good portion of what they consider priority items. Mayor Grenier requested to get an updated cost to repair everything. Ms. Laflamme advised Alba is finishing up at the Fire department and she will request an updated report. Mayor Grenier commented the County passed their budget today and part of the surplus of District 1 is not assigned yet and can only be spent for specific items. If the City applies for a CDBG grant and the additional funds for district 1 are made available, we could get most of the improvements done at the library. Councilor Higbee commented this would be the perfect opportunity to go after Rural Development funds. Ms. Laflamme commented she would look into funding. She commented that the library has been selected as a beneficiary of the Roderick Blackburn fund from the NH Charitable Foundation and will receive a perpetual amount each year.

**Housing**

Ms. Laflamme stated the housing budget is very similar to what it was last year. The biggest cost is for City owned properties which covers Brown School and tax deeded properties. We budgeted \$52,000 for this line item in the FY2023 budget. She is hopeful Brown School will be sold and will not have this cost in future budgets.

**HB 1033**

Mayor Grenier stated he asked this item be put on the agenda. He commented the City took a position on this bill in opposition to House Bill 1033. This was a bill that precluded the municipality from belonging to organizations who would lobby the legislature and we are members of the NH Municipal Association with annual dues of about \$7,000 and of that amount, they do trainings for municipal officials, provide legal advice and also keep track of nefarious bills that could have an extreme detriment to the communities. Mayor Grenier advised the bill was tabled but unfortunately Councilor Robert Theberge who is also a State Representative did not vote to table the bill. Mayor Grenier feels Council deserves an explanation as to why he voted not to table. Councilor Robert Theberge commented he did vote to table the bill and will have this corrected. Mayor Grenier requested a copy of the revised roll call once corrected.

**Other**

Councilor Eastman asked what the procedure is to get a reduced speed limit sign on Route 110 now that the City owns it and a flashing caution light on this side coming into the City before the entrance to Jericho park to get people to slow down coming into that corner. Ms. Laflamme commented she has yet received the official letter from Commissioner Sheehan, but will check with Bill Cass tomorrow. Ms. Laflamme commented the two requests should be sent to the Traffic & Safety committee. Mayor Grenier questioned if NH DOT could possibly install the flashing light on their side as a safety approach to slow down traffic. Ms. Laflamme stated she will discuss with Bill Cass. The items will be discussed at the next Traffic and Safety Committee meeting.

At 7:14pm, there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier recessed before moving on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Danielle Rioux  
Executive Assistant

\*Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the City Council by motion.