

City Council Work Session

June 6, 2022

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

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Lt. Donald Gendron, Lori Korzen, Micah Bachner, Amber Bachner, Kurt Melanson, Laura Boucher, Ben Belanger, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

Penalty fees waive request

Mr. Warren presented the penalty waive request received from Tyrone Hubbard who works for Kroll LLC, the tax agents for United States Cellular / C/O Duff & Phelps. He is requesting penalty fees, due to late payments, be waived on two invoices. He states the failure to pay on time was accidental. Councilor Berthiaume moved to deny the penalty fees waive request. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

JAG Program presentation – Kurt Melanson

Mayor Grenier invited Kurt Melanson, JAG Specialist at the Berlin High School, to present his students ideas on the mural painting request discussed during the May 23rd Council Work Session. Mr. Melanson advised it was discovered the wall he is requesting to paint a mural on is the property of the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad. Mayor Grenier did contact the railroad company and got authorization to move forward with the mural. Mr. Melanson presented some of the students' ideas which included, flags, boom piers, paper mills, ski jump, hockey and more. All items representing the history of Berlin. He commented he has ten students who are great artists and are looking forward to doing this. Mayor Grenier commented he loved the ideas and feels the Council should leave it up to the JAG students to create their own art.

Guy Lopez Memorial

Mr. Ben Belanger, President of the White Mountain Rotary Club and Ms. Laura Boucher of United Granite Way provided Council with an update in regards to the Guy Lopez memorial and are seeking final approval of the project. The plans include placing a memorial bench dedicated to Guy Lopez in the PSNH park next to Maureen's Boutique on Main Street. They have tentatively planned a dedication for June 24th at 5pm at that location. Ms. Boucher passed a sketch around for Council to visualize the plans. The plans include a memorial bench, a bird bath and flowers. Mayor Grenier commented the plans are tastefully simple and represent Mr. Lopez well as the caring human being he was. Councilor Berthiaume moved to approve the Guy Lopez Memorial project and donate \$1500 from Council contingency. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by all in favor. Councilor Berthiaume questioned if the City owns the property where the bench will be placed. Mayor Grenier responded it is owned by PSNH which already approved the use of the park as long as the wall is not defaced.

CDBG Administration Consultant Selection

Ms. Laflamme provided a memo to Council stating two proposals were received for the CDBG Administrator for the Brown School CDBG project. This was advertised statewide and direct solicitations were sent to CDBG consultants. Consultants Donna Lane and Andrea Muller each submitted proposals for the work. Donna Lane has extensive experience with the City and CDBG administration and also submitted the lowest bid for the work in the amount of \$17,500 compared to Andrea Muller's in the amount of \$25,000. She is recommending to the Mayor and Council that the City hire Donna Lane to administer the project for the City for the cost of \$17,500. Councilor Higbee moved to hire Donna Lane to administer the Brown School CDBG Rehabilitation

project Community Block Grant for a sum not to exceed \$17,500. Councilor Roland Theberge seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Downtown Tax Incentive Application

Ms. Laflamme presented to Council an application for a new downtown tax relief incentive for property at 206 Main Street owned by Ryan Charest and Ellen Mikesch. She commented the amount of the renovations are estimated at \$140,000.00. The value of their building is \$42,100.00 which meets threshold of our criteria, which the rehabilitation exceeds 15% of the pre-rehabilitation assessed valuation. The plans for the building are to start a grab and go food service business as well as provide living quarters onsite for owners. Ms. Laflamme advised the next steps is for Council to review the application and checklist. If the Council finds the application meets the criteria for the incentive, a public hearing will need to be scheduled and then a vote held to approve the request. Ms. Laflamme read the checklist for Council and it was determined the application meets the criteria for the incentive. Councilor Remillard moved to add the proposed rehabilitation that enhances the economic vitality of downtown as part of a community revitalization tax relief incentive, with a public hearing scheduled for June 20, 2022. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Land Sale – Tax Map 131 Lots 26 & 27

Mayor Grenier advised this was discussed during non-public session on May 23rd. The City was approached by Steve and Lisa Vien to purchase Tax Map 131 Lots 26 & 27. These two lots are surrounded on all sides by property owned by Mr. & Mrs. Vien. The City acquired these two lots through tax deed in 2019. Ms. Laflamme advised she did some research on the two parcels and none of the deeds mention paper streets or right of way. The tax maps also indicate that the paper streets in this area are part of the property that is owned by Mr. & Mrs. Vien. Councilor Roland Theberge moved to sell the two parcels to Steve and Lisa Vien Tax Map 131 lots 26 & 27 in the amount of \$3,000. Councilor Robert Theberge seconded and the motion carried by all in favor. Councilor Remillard moved to authorize the City Manager to sell Tax Map 131 Lots 26 & 27 by quit claim deed in the amount of \$3,000. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Other

Councilor Robert Theberge commented that all bills related to additional funds for the City and Schools passed. Mayor Grenier commented the City should be receiving approximately \$700,000 which is relative to payment by the state to political subdivisions of an amount equal to a portion of retirement system contributions of political subdivision employers. The bridge aid bill also passed eliminating the 20% City Share. The bridge aid funding can be used for road and bridge repairs. Mayor Grenier commented in two weeks from tonight, Council will be passing the FY23 budget. At that time, the budget should reflect anticipated funding.

At 7:13p.m., 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.