

## **City Council Work Session**

### **January 2, 2024**

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

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Dir. Of Strat. Initiatives and Asst. City Mgr. Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Finance Director Holly Larsen, Mayor-Elect Robert Cone, Councilor-Elect Steven Korzen, Councilor-Elect Mia Qualls, Jamie Welch, Sarah Mafera and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

### **Capital Improvement Plan**

Mr. Warren reminded Council of past discussions in regards to creating separate expendable funds for the Capital Improvement Plan in the future. In researching this process, he realized that to do this for a City is extremely cumbersome and close to impossible. Another issue with this process is because you place the money in segregated funds, it will adversely affect the cash flow. The benefit of having balance today would be eroded if you created those accounts as they have to be segregated per NH Law. He commented that instead of doing it with the specific funds, there is an accounting method he can use when presenting the Capital Improvement Plan. It would show items by discipline, show the segregated fund in the capital improvement accounts as a funding source which would show a true five-year picture of what is available for funding. The benefit of this is it provides flexibility which would not be present if using the expendable funds method. It requires more discipline on the Council's part because the funds aren't locked in, but provides flexibility and avoids cash flow problems.

He commented there are large CIP projects especially in the School Department that could possibly be combined and financed if the Council chooses to do so. This would avoid significant spikes. He can present it this way and make recommendations. He is looking for feedback from Council as to how they would prefer it be presented. Mayor Grenier commented the FY2025 budget is approaching and in FY2026 is the last payment of the major bond issue which will free up about \$570,000. He doesn't feel financing at an increased rate would be beneficial especially when there is light at the end of the tunnel on a major bond issue. Mr. Warren informed Council that the City received grant contracts, which are pending G&C's approval, to replace engine 4 at the Fire Department and a recycling truck for the PWD. He advised Council there will be a first read of the Resolution for this at the next City Council meeting. He discussed CIP's from different departments and thanked Council for the feedback.

### **Other**

Mr. Warren advised there were no items under other. Mayor Grenier asked Mr. Warren to update Council on the Watson Street pump station. Mr. Warren advised that the day of the rain storm a leak was discovered at the Watson Street pump station. Because the ground water table was so high, the rain was ongoing and the flows were high, we kept the pump running. The flow meters were indicating that between the Watson Street side and the pollution control side there was about 100 to 500 gallon per minute difference which is instrumentation. They kept going as is, made it through the storm and next day, but still showing a leak. The only way to troubleshoot it was to completely stop the flow going into the Watson Street pump station and allow it to flow out the CSO. We're permitted to use the outflow but not permitted when E. coli is detected in the river which it was. They did some troubleshooting and were able to get it working. They tried to uncover and work on the pipe but the

top of the pipe is down about 15-16ft and the pipe itself is 30" in diameter which is outside our capabilities. They contacted Cross Excavation out of Bethel, ME as they are experienced with this. They came out and were able to find the top of the pipe and keep going. They were on site today. They've exposed a lot of the pipe but had to stop as there was conduit that is part of the instrumentation that was conflicting with where they were digging. They had to get a different trench box system. The contractor had to establish some healthy sumps to dewater and keep up. He is hopeful that tomorrow they will be able to completely expose the pipe and see what is needed to fix it. He advised that EJ Prescott out of Portland, ME has the parts and are waiting on a phone call from us to bring the parts up.

There is also an issue with the CSO pipe coming out. There's a backflow preventer check valve that opens up under pressure. It didn't open up but yet the effluent is coming out into the river. They think something is going on with the pipe itself, but can't troubleshoot it. He is hopeful there will be some progress made by the end of this week. Once the pipe that goes across the river is taken care of, they will go to the CSO and make sure everything is good and install the valve. Mayor Grenier asked Mr. Warren to discuss requirements from NH DES and EPA and if fines will be issued to the City of Berlin. Mr. Warren responded that as soon as it was noticed effluent was going out, it was reported to DES and EPA. We've been sending them daily reports and following their recommendations. A press release was put out based on their direction. He is unsure if fines will be issued. Mayor Grenier suggested notifying Coos County delegation members. Mr. Warren commented that this situation also substantiates the City's need for funding to improve inflow and infiltration. Councilor Morency asked if this qualifies for emergency funding. Mr. Warren advised he had a phone call today with FEMA and this was the first event he discussed as it was the most significant. He also informed them of all the other events that resulted from the storm throughout the City.

At 7:15 p.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.