

City Council Work Session

April 15, 2024

Present were: Mayor Cone, Councilors Higbee, Grenier, Korzen, Berthiaume, Theberge, Valerino and Morency. Councilor Qualls was absent.

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Dir. Of Strat. Initiatives and Asst. City Mgr. Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Water Works Superintendent Steve Lefebvre, Representative Corinne Cascadden, Jeffrey Quackenbush, Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

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

Presentation of Plaques to Gregg Marrer and Paul Poulin

Mayor Cone read a [recognition letter](#) to Gregg Marrer and presented him with a plaque for his years of service as a Zoning Board Member.

Berlin Water Works Superintendent Steve Lefebvre shared remarks thanking Paul Poulin for his years of service and dedication to the Berlin Water Commission Board. He presented him with a plaque.

Non-Meeting per RSA 91-A:2, I. (c) Legal Consultation

Councilor Berthiaume moved to go into non-meeting per RSA 91-A:2 I. (c) Legal Consultation; Councilor Grenier seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

At 7:32 p.m., Mayor, Council and Staff came out of Non-Meeting.

Letter from Karl Scott re: Handicap Accessibility

Mr. Warren read the letter received from Mr. Scott which included facts, suggestions and personal information related to handicap accessibility. Mr. Warren commented that the present chairlift was in poor condition and has been removed. There are funds set aside to replace it. He disagrees with Mr. Scott's listed fact stating that the chairlift does not meet the needs of wheelchairs or even walkers. The chairlift as it's designed does meet the needs because it couldn't be installed if it didn't. The entrance door to the basement works as designed. It has a ramp, an opener on it and accommodates wheelchairs. Mr. Scott is correct when stating there is only one handicap parking space and suggested to arrange for several handicap parking spaces near City Hall which Mr. Warren advised it is something we could consider.

Mr. Warren stated there is no real space for an elevator without disrupting the structural integrity of the building. He commented he had applied for a waiver on the way the lift comes up because the head space is restricted. The waiver was denied, but he's working on another way to address this issue. He suggested sending a communication to Mr. Scott explaining all this. Councilor Berthiaume suggested sending the handicap parking space issue to the Traffic and Safety Committee. Councilor Korzen suggested offering public education on ways to access the areas.

Electricity Aggregation Program

Mr. Warren distributed new copies to Council as the original plan linked to the agenda was changed. The change was non-material and basically affirms the history of how we got here. The change came through assistance from CPCNH. Mr. Warren reminded Council that Mr. Quackenbush is asking to form a local energy committee. He is recommending not having more than five members. Mr. Quackenbush advised that in order to submit this plan to the PUC, an energy committee needs to be formed. Councilor Grenier recommended a subcommittee of the Planning Board be part of the Electric

Aggregation Committee. There are currently four members of the Planning Board who have extensive working knowledge of this plan. Mr. Quackenbush responded he would have to confirm with CPCNH that this would be OK with the PUC. Mr. Warren suggested asking the Planning Board to create the committee, send the recommendation to Council which would then make the appointments. Councilor Korzen asked what the roles and responsibilities be for this committee. Mr. Quackenbush said his suggestion for this committee to start is submitting the plan and developing a cost sharing plan. There are other energy issues the committee could start addressing for instance, energy efficiency items, grants and more. Ms. Laflamme said she reached out to Nashua, Lebanon and Keene asking them about the roles and responsibilities they assigned their committees. They pretty much all have a different focus and tackle different issues but mainly all along the lines of what Mr. Quackenbush mentioned. Mr. Warren questioned Mr. Quackenbush as to what is needed this evening. Mr. Quackenbush stated the plan needs approval from Council this evening and he will ask more questions in regards to forming the committee. He will give the information to Mr. Warren who will present to Council. A motion to approve the plan was made and rescinded by Councilor Berthiaume after Council was advised the vote needed to take place during regular meeting.

Abatement Recommendations

Mr. Warren discussed the following abatement recommendations received from Ms. Monica Hurley of Corcoran Consulting Associates;

2227 Riverside Drive (Map 404 Lot 10), Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$473,400 to \$425,200.

Councilor Berthiaume moved to approve the property abatements as recommended by Corcoran Consulting Associates. Councilor Grenier seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Riverside Drive (Map 404 Lot 25), Mr. Warren deferred this item to the next meeting as he needs more clarification.

Tax Deferral Applications

Mr. Warren presented a tax deferral application for Laura MacPherson, 286 Church Street (Map 120 Lot 342). He recommends that Council accept the tax deferral as presented. Councilor Grenier moved to approve the tax deferral as presented. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Mr. Warren presented a tax deferral application for Richard Belanger, 479 Burgess Street (Map 130 Lot 295). He recommends that Council accept the tax deferral as presented. Councilor Higbee moved to approve the tax deferral as presented. Councilor Valerino seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Gravel Tax Warrant

Mr. Warren presented a gravel tax levy for Albert & Mary Guay in the amount of \$310.52. Councilor Berthiaume moved to issue the gravel tax levy as presented. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Council Works on Proposed Budget

Mr. Warren asked Council for one more week to prepare the budget for discussion. All agreed.

Other

Councilor Grenier wanted to recognize that State Representative Corinne Cascadden is attending the meeting this evening.

Councilor Morency discussed the Helper Act which helps police, corrections, firefighters, EMT's, paramedics and teachers getting VA style loans with less down payment and interest. It's an opportunity to keep some of those specialties we have here. The Sheriffs Association highly supports this. He recommends sending a letter of support from the Council. Councilor Valerino commented he supports this as well. Councilor Valerino moved to send a letter of support on behalf of the Council. Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

At 7:56 p.m., there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Cone 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.