

City Council Work Session May 6, 2024

Present were: Mayor Cone, Councilors Higbee, Grenier, Korzen, Qualls, Theberge, Valerino and Morency. Councilor Berthiaume 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, SAU3 Superintendent Julie King, Lisa Connell, Berlin Sun and Members of the Public.

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

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

At 7:57 p.m., Mayor, Council and Staff came out of Non-Meeting.

Abatement Recommendation

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

Riverside Drive (Map 404 Lot 25), Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$39,100 to \$26,200.

Councilor Morency moved to approve the property abatement as recommended by Corcoran Consulting Associates. Councilor Valerino seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Gravel Tax Warrants

Mr. Warren presented two gravel tax warrants. The first one is for Thomas and Scott Dillon in the amount of \$1,480.68. The second one is for Four Wheeler Holdings, Inc. in the amount of \$417.28. Councilor Higbee moved to issue the gravel tax warrants as presented. Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Council Decision for Publishing Budget

Mr. Warren distributed two [worksheets](#). He reminded Council they had requested he reduce the FY25 budget by \$100,000. He directed Council to the second worksheet which displayed the reductions. These updates result in a \$1.01 increase of the tax rate. He commented he would normally ask Council to vote on an amount this evening, but this is just a worksheet and amounts are built behind this in formulas. One of the changes is a decrease in revenue of \$600,000. He is hoping Council moves that the budget that is presented this evening be advanced to the public hearing. This will allow to do all the computations and allows Holly to do only one copy for the budget hearing. Then all the amounts will be tied back to the announcement. This will also allow them to make headway during the time between now and the budget hearing if items are found that can or need to be adjusted.

Councilor Morency commented there are still pending legislatures that could change the budget and monies coming back from departments that would adjust the overall budget. Mr. Warren advised there are moving pieces and the problem with monies from departments is he always says to not ask till June 30th. He could look at forecasted amounts, take the budget and divide by 12, but because of the aging and the process, it's not accurate. It's the same with monies coming back. The potential does exist that could move us where the \$1.01 tax rate increase is actually decreased. There are also other areas of the budget that could be looked at.

Councilor Theberge questioned Mr. Warren if he had a discussion with Police Chief Buteau regarding the severance. Mr. Warren responded he sent an email today, but did not get a response back. Councilor Theberge commented the Public Works garage is an old building that needs upgrades and is wondering if

the \$10,000 reduction will impact these upgrades. Mr. Warren advised if he thought the reduction would put us in a position of a deteriorating facility, he wouldn't have done it. Councilor Grenier commented that per the City Charter a budget amount needs to be advertised prior to the public hearing. Mr. Warren confirmed an amount will appear after the calculations are finished. He just doesn't have the final amount this evening. The process will remain the same as previous years.

Councilor Korzen moved to advance the budget presented this evening to the public hearing of May 29th. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Other

Councilor Grenier moved to add item 1A to the agenda under new business for the approval of three collective bargaining agreements for the Berlin Schools. Councilor Qualls seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

At 8:08 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.