

City Council Work Session

Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3

May 18, 2020

Present were: Mayor Grenier and Councilor Rozek at City Hall; via Zoom, Councilors Remillard, Otis, Higbee, Eastman, Theberge, and Morgan were present; Councilor Berthiaume was absent.

Others present: Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Finance Director Patty Chase, School Superintendent Julie King, Chair BOA Bob Goddard, BEMS Director Chris Dubey, School Business Administrator Marion Moore, Louise Valliere, Matt Buteau, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*, Jamie Welch, Public Works Director Ben Hall, Ted Bosen, Damon Frecker, Burgess Biomass, Ralph Collins and public

At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 872 5618 0113, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, www.berlinnh.gov.

- b) *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:*

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

- c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:*

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587 or e-mail at: plaflamme@berlinnh.gov

- d) *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting*

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Berlin Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Wheeler reported that there has been some discussion, in non public session, about moving EMS to the fire department. The Council has made it clear that they want EMS to remain a private entity. Mr. Dubey expressed that for 3.5 years, the company has been in a holding state. The EMS study, done a few years ago, demonstrated that there would be growth in revenue with the Fire Department takeover. The state of uncertainty makes it difficult to hire EMS personnel and paramedics. Mr. Dubey added that his ambulance service has a good reputation and it is well deserved. If he were to continue in the business, there are building improvements, and new equipment to consider. He expressed a willingness to work with the City.

Mayor Grenier noted that the catalyst for reviewing EMS was that Medicare and Medicaid were changing their fee structures and it was not clear if the ambulance service would remain viable. At this time, the Council has no appetite for bringing BEMS to the fire department. It would be prudent for BEMS to contact the City Manager to develop a 3 to 5 year contract so that the Council will know the cost ahead of budgeting. Mr. Dubey agreed. Councilor Eastman reiterated that the City will not pursue bringing EMS to the fire department. Councilor Remillard added that the city does not want to take over and does not want to interfere with BEMS employees.

Statistical Update Contract

Mr. Wheeler reported that we received two responses to our RFP for the assessing statistical update contract, one from KRT and one from Corcoran. He and Bob Goddard have done due diligence and determined that the qualifications are on par with each other. KRT's price is \$105,000 which was in line with what we paid 5 years ago and 10 years ago. Corcoran is at \$58,000 and when the price came in so low, Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Goddard wanted to make sure the firm was vetted properly. Mr. Goddard added that he spoke with several communities and no one has a bad thing to say about Corcoran.

Councilor Higbee noted that interior inspections do not appear in the contract and Mr. Wheeler clarified that measuring and listing occurs in the five year period between updates. Councilor Rozek asked if the public will have the opportunity to speak to Corcoran in person once the reveal is done. Mr. Goddard replied that there will be hearings and taxpayers will be able to get answers to their questions. Councilor Eastman commented that the contract has been reviewed; Corcoran is familiar with the software so he is comfortable hiring them. Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Eastman to hire Corcoran Consulting Associates, Inc. to do the City's Statistical Update contingent upon the approval of the DRA. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Mason Street Bridge Schedule

Mr. Wheeler shared the proposed schedule for the Mason Street Bridge project from HEB. He stated that it does not look like stimulus funding will happen any time soon. Mason St Bridge is on a schedule based on the drawdown of Smith Hydro in September. Councilor Rozek proposed postponing the project for one year fearing that the bridge would be unusable all winter. Mr. Wheeler noted that the City is protected with liquidated damages of \$1000 per day if the contractor doesn't meet contract times. Councilor Rozek thought stimulus might be available next year. Councilor Eastman agreed saying that if we wait materials could be scheduled well ahead of time. Councilor Theberge commented that the underneath of the bridge is in bad condition. Councilor Remillard asked Councilor Rozek if he could see any reason why the project cannot be postponed and he replied that the pictures showed the bridge has been compromised because of wear and salt but he didn't see a problem with waiting.

Mayor Grenier said, knowing the condition of the bridge, he is very uncomfortable waiting another year. The cost is sure to climb. Councilor Otis stated that he supports getting it done and he feels that grants will be drying up next year. Councilor Eastman confirmed that Mason St is a red listed bridge and he asked if there is funding. Mayor Grenier noted that funds for red listed bridges are ten years out.

Mr. Wheeler stated that this was talked about during the budget process. The City would borrow the money to complete the Mason St. Bridge and we would also borrow for the Fire Department floor and other FD building improvements. It is expected that the loan will be for \$1,053,491.63. Of this, the \$532,000 for Mason Street is a solid number and the remaining projects are estimates. Councilor Rozek noted that even when the FD building was new, it was not built for the weight of the apparatus we put in it. He added that he would support the Fire Department project but not the bridge.

Councilor Higbee supported putting the project together and getting the financing. If stimulus money were to become available, there are multiple projects that could be done. Mr. Wheeler noted that financing is at 2.23% for ten years. Councilor Remillard reasoned that the money rate is very good. Councilor Eastman conceded to putting the bridge project out to bid. Mr. Wheeler established that the Council will have to vote to award the project.

USDOT Build Grant Application

Mr. Wheeler shared the BUILD grant with the Council, which was submitted today. It will be posted to the City's web site and all are encouraged to read it. It tells the full story of what Berlin is trying to do with the heated streets. Wilson Engineering, and HEB, contributed to the grant proposal as well as Burgess Biomass. The project would rebuild Main Street from St. Anne's Church to Green Square. The total project cost is \$18.7 million and rural areas are not required to submit any match. Damon Frecker said that Burgess is thrilled to have been a part of the application which is a quality document. UNH has signed on as a project partner as well. The grant announcement is expected in September 2020. If we were to get the grant, construction would begin in 2024 through 2026.

Councilor Higbee commented that he is so impressed with the proposal that managed to get done amidst all the other work going on. Mr. Frecker added that an excellent team was put together by the city and they produced very high quality work product. The Burgess team is excited about it.

Other – Outdoor Seating for Restaurants

Councilor Otis reported that he was contacted by the owner of the Pub regarding having tables outside. He thought he could put 3 tables 6 feet apart to generate revenue. He is a responsible business person and would only serve alcohol to people having a meal at a table.

Mr. Wheeler indicated that we have to maintain width on the sidewalk so that a wheelchair can get through. Mr. Hall reviewed some of the ADA requirements for sidewalks. Mayor Grenier asked that everything be done to assist. Mr. Wheeler stated that each location will need to be reviewed. He will also ask Primex about liability.

Councilor Rozek said that he was surprised to hear that we have an issue with dry camping and he would like to be notified of the details of the complaints mentioned by Councilor Berthiaume.

Non Meeting

There being no further business in Work Session, Councilor Otis moved to go into non-meeting per RSA 91-A:2 (b) Collective Bargaining; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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