

City Council Work Session

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

December 14, 2020

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 **861 3437 1332**; Passcode **098772**, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, [www.berlinnh.gov](http://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](mailto: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.

Present at roll call were: Mayor Grenier at City Hall and in the room with James Wheeler, Pete McGillen, Maurice Mailhot, and Floyd Burlock from the VFW; via Zoom, Councilors Theberge, Rozek,

Higbee, Remillard, Otis, and Eastman who noted they were alone in their respective rooms; Councilors Berthiaume and Morgan were excused.

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Fire Chief Jay Watkins, Police Chief Pete Morency, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Bridgett Beckwith, Dan Whittet, Beano Lamontagne, representing the VFW Pete McGillen, Maurice Mailhot, and Floyd Burlock Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun.

### **Veteran's Park – VFW**

The VFW submitted a proposal with a layout of what is planned for Veteran's Park. They will add a monument that will identify the park as Veterans Memorial Park. They also intend to move the monument near the gazebo and Mark Chapman has agreed to move the Spanish American War Monument that is currently at Community Field. The VFW has been working in collaboration with other service clubs and service organizations. All memorials will be in one place with the exception of the Viet Nam War Memorial. Councilor Theberge complimented the veterans saying that this is a great project and will make things more attractive coming into Berlin. Pete McGillen, Maurice Mailhot, and Floyd Burlock left the meeting at this time.

### **Tax Increment Financing District**

Mayor Grenier introduced Mr. Lamontagne and his colleague Bridget Beckwith who works with the State's tax programs. Mr. Lamontagne said that someone to speak about the TIF Districts will be available for the next meeting.

Ms. Beckwith stated that she manages two tax incentive programs, the ERZ and the Coos Program. She knows a little about TIF saying that it is a defined area in a community where a portion of taxes can be used to finance economic development activity. The community would have to adopt RSA 162K and identify the district. Then each district develops a plan that dedicates increments of taxes to the bond payments for infrastructure improvements.

Ms. Beckwith added that the ERZ Program is tax credits that come off the business enterprise tax and can be spent in an established zone. There is \$825,000 available every year. Mayor Grenier asked if an ERZ Grant can be used in conjunction with a TIF district and Ms. Beckwith stated that it could. Councilor Eastman asked how long it takes to establish the zone. Ms. Beckwith noted that the application process is easy and would take about 4 weeks.

The Coos Job Credit is available to any business that hires and retains new employees. They can get a tax credit of \$700 to \$1,000 per year for five year. Ms. Beckwith confirmed that all these programs are stackable, where a business can participate in all the programs.

At the Mayor's request, Mr. Lamontagne explained EDA grants for infrastructure improvements that are available to communities every year. The representative for EDA is Alan Brigham. The money can be brought into communities to do public infrastructure projects such as water and sewer on Route 110. A meeting with Mr. Brigham could be scheduled.

Mayor Grenier noted that the City wants to bring infrastructure out further on Route 110 to attract commercial economic development. He added that he wants the Council to understand what a TIF District will and won't do. He asked Ms. Laflamme to work on identifying TIF boundaries. Mr.

Lamontagne stated that the USDA is another resource. After years of having their offices in VT, the new director, Anthony Leonardo, is based in Concord. Mr. Leonardo has made a commitment to help with the North Country's needs. Mayor Grenier said that next Monday, he would like to hear about the TIF District and to have BIDPA Chair Mike Caron in on the call. If developers are watching, this may seem overwhelming, but it's really not. One step at a time, it will get done.

### **Public Works Equipment**

Mr. Wheeler reported that he received new information from Mike Turner from John Deere, about replacing two additional loaders. He's offered the option of buying two new loaders, one with advance pricing and one with arrears pricing. We would not receive nor would we pay for the second loader until the next fiscal year. The advantage to buying two at this time, is that we take advantage of pricing which is the same as last year.

Councilor Rozek asked if we could go back to running a 544 rather than the 620. Mr. Wheeler said that after consulting with the operators, they felt that we could use the additional power. One of the older loaders will be dedicated to loading sand and salt. We need seven pieces of equipment and two additional loaders will get us to seven. Mr. Wheeler clarified that ideally, we run 9 pieces of equipment, including a truck and or grader. The money for the first payment will come from surplus from the garbage packer, salt truck and snow blower. We budgeted more than what was spent and there is about \$40,000 to apply to the new equipment. Councilor Rozek asked if we know what the price increase would be and Mr. Wheeler noted that it would be an increase of 2.5%. Councilors conceded to ordering two loaders now, with one having the payment deferred until the next fiscal year.

### **Berlin's Face Covering Ordinance**

Mayor Grenier noted that when the ordinance was passed we said that it would be reviewed on 12/14 to see if we want to institute the punitive part of ordinance. A few days after our ordinance was passed, the Governor instituted an order for mask wearing. Mayor Grenier suggested leaving our ordinance as it is seeing that it runs concurrently with the Governor's. Though we don't have 100% compliance, people are following the recommendations. The consensus was to leave the ordinance as is.

### **Traffic Control Plan for Princess**

Mr. Wheeler reported that Cross wants to tear down the Princess on the 21<sup>st</sup>. He sent a traffic control plan this afternoon. In this plan, traffic would be sent to Cole Street and Pleasant Street. Traffic entering Main Street could use Mechanic Street for access. Cross has been asked to start as early as possible during the day. As soon as the building is down, they will open downtown and the demolition is not expected to take more than one day. Councilor Remillard asked that other nearby businesses be notified as well.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Councilor Remillard moved to adjourn; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call. The meeting ended at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Tremblay  
Administrative Assistant

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