

City Council Work Session  
February 8, 2021

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

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 823 8997 8376; Passcode 036829, 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 were: Councilors Theberge, Otis, Remillard, Higbee, Eastman, Rozek, Morgan, Berthiaume who participated at home and were alone in their respective rooms; Mayor Grenier was present and in the room with City Manager James Wheeler.

Others present: City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Fire Chief James Watkins, Barbara Tetreault Berlin Daily Sun, Will & Katie Barth, and Jessica Johnson

Mayor Grenier noted that this is a Work Session and the Council will not be taking public comments. He asked to add HB623 and SB 135 to the agenda as the bills will be heard tomorrow. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morgan to add the items to the agenda. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

### **Capital Improvement Plan**

Mr. Wheeler reported that an annual update to the City's capital improvement plan for the next six years is available for review and acceptance by the Council. Information is gathered on several projects and the document is first presented to Planning Board. It then comes to the Council for approval and the first year capital items are in the annual budget. The definition of a Capital project is one that is expected to cost \$10,000 or something that will last 3 or more years.

The summary sheet fy 2022 has proposed expenses of \$3.9 million and by the time the budget is passed, usually about \$500,000 of capital is appropriated. The goal is to have the Council approve the plan by motion. This will not obligate the city in any way. Councilor Eastman asked if there is anything that addresses Route 110 and Mr. Wheeler referred to a pumping station sheet which is SF 12 and to sheet # GF 47 which is slated for 2027. He clarified that these projects are not funded and they will be updated as funding becomes available. Councilor Rozek commented that the plan is a "wish book." Mayor Grenier noted that any of these projects could get pushed ahead depending on circumstances.

Ms. Laflamme added that it is important to vote on the plan as State statute make it mandatory to enact certain types of ordinances. CIP was instituted about a dozen years ago as a tool for planning purposes. The CIP sheets also stipulate whether the project is in alignment with the City's Master Plan. Showing that we have a CIP in grant applications is beneficial as well. Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to accept the 2022-2027 CIP as presented. In the roll call vote that followed, all Councilors voted affirmatively.

### **Short Term Rentals**

Ms. Laflamme indicated that the Planning Board has been aware of Air B & B's for the past few years and in the beginning there was not a lot of information relating to them. That has changed and NHMA has put out an article and several communities have regulations. Air B & B's have provided opportunity in the community for lodging when there are no hotels in the City. It would be good for abutters to be notified and for City officials to know where they are, and who the contacts are for safety purposes. The Planning Board will look to put some regulation in place in the next few months.

Mayor Grenier noted that one reason property values have risen is because of the sale of houses as short term rentals. They are a valuable tax resource but there will be pockets of problems. We need to take the problems seriously and regulate so there is minimal impact to neighbors. Councilor Eastman agreed saying that the Air B & B's are fulfilling a need. Mayor Grenier commented that we owe it to the entire community to have a review by the PB.

Councilor Berthiaume reminded the Council that people want to buy here because the community is accepting of ATV's. If we pull back, then we have another problem. Councilors expressed support for the Air B & B's especially since we have no commercial lodging. Councilor Higbee noted that he likes the Planning Board reviewing to create a permitting process and they might also consider a complaint process. Mayor Grenier agreed adding that we need a constructive plan to make sure we have a process for the problems.

Councilor Rozek moved to send the issue to the Planning Board for a recommendation; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call. Mayor Grenier proposed having it done by May 1.

#### **SB 135**

Mayor Grenier stated that SB135 has broad bi-partisan support within the legislature. Senator Hennessy has asked and Mayor Grenier has agreed to participate in the public hearing. He asked that the Council send a letter as well. The bill would increase school funding from \$10,677,887 to \$11,017,470.

Councilor Eastman moved to support SB135; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call. Councilor Higbee commented that this does not take the pressure off of the legislature to fix education funding.

#### **HB 623**

This bill would do much the same as SB135 and assures that school funding would not be less than last year. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Rozek. The motion carried unanimously by roll call.

#### **Other**

Councilor Rozek expressed concern about tearing down the old Woolworth building. He noted that it is not a bad looking building from the outside facade. He feared that tearing it down would be unsightly with grade differences between the front and back of the building. Ms. Laflamme agreed to put some studies that have been done together for Council to review.

Mr. Wheeler noted that Supreme Pizza was taken down by its owner today.

#### **Adjournment**

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to adjourn. All voted affirmatively by roll call. The meeting ended at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Tremblay  
Administrative Assistant

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