

City Council Work Session

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

February 15, 2021

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 820 7514 6976; Passcode 112778, 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.

Present at roll call were: Mayor Grenier at City Hall and in the room with James Wheeler; via Zoom, Councilors Theberge, Rozek, Otis, Higbee, Remillard, and Eastman who noted they were alone in their respective rooms.

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, and Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun.

Airport Grant

Ms. Wheeler reported that there is a new Resolution for the Airport Grant included under new business in the regular meeting. This will be to replace Resolution 2021-02, the federal grant that was approved for the Apron and Stub Taxiway Pavement Maintenance, Overly, Marking and Area Lighting Improvements. The amount the City was to pay in the original resolution was about \$6,900, which was a 10% match. Due to COVID, there was a freeze on grants from the Division of Aeronautics, which has since been lifted. The city will receive approximately \$3,500 in an additional grant money from NHDOT. This will reduce the cost to the city to about \$3,500. This will push the schedule out a little for the work, which was supposed to begin in April. Councilor Eastman asked if this will cost the city any additional money to submit new paperwork, and Mr. Wheeler advised it should not. If there was a minor fee associated with the new paperwork, it would not be as much as they will save. Mayor Grenier advised this will also be on the agenda at the Berlin Airport Authority meeting scheduled for tomorrow night.

Housing & Community Development Plan

Pamela Laflamme advised that when the planning grant was submitted to the CDFR for the North Woods Learning Center project, some minor details were noticed that need to be addressed. One of which is that the Housing and Community Development Plan was close to the date for renewal, and was so close that they requested a new one. The plan is written to include goals and priorities from the City's Master Plan, Community Profile, and Economic Development and Marketing Strategy, with both long and short-term goals. Ms. Laflamme advised that the public hearing notice is required to be advertised in a daily paper, so the Union Leader will need to be utilized, along with the Berlin Sun. Due to this requirement, the public hearing date will need to be March 15, 2021. Also, at the last hearing on the project, it was not mentioned that handouts were available to the public, which will need to be included at the next hearing. Mayor Grenier asked if this could also be used for CDBG grants, and Ms. Laflamme answered that they will be able to use it through March 15, 2024.

Pending Legislation

Mr. Wheeler advised that HB213, which would have eliminated thermal energy from Renewable Energy Credits, is not going forward. It was deemed inconvenient to legislate last Friday afternoon. This is good news, as Burgess Biopower is hoping to use Thermal Energy REC's for their proposed greenhouse project.

Mr. Wheeler advised HB411 has not yet been scheduled for hearing. This bill proposes to form a study commission to study the equalization rate. Currently the BTLA has developed a standard that allows a taxpayer that files an abatement to apply the new year's equalization rate when the abatement is granted. This is a problem with utilities who file for abatements, as when the equalization rate drops, it ends up being a windfall for them. The bill hopes to take a more measured approach, with the study commission making a recommendation to the Governor and legislature by November 1, 2022. Mr. Wheeler suggest to the Council that the City should take a position so that they can provide written support and testimony when the hearing does take place. Mayor Grenier noted that the equalization rate in the year you have filed for should be applied, and that this will put an end to the utility companies using this as they have the money to fight. Councilor Higbee moved to send a letter of

support for HB411; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried by roll call with all Councilors voting affirmatively.

Non-Meeting

Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to enter into non-meeting at 6:51 pm per RSA 91-A:2 I (b) Collective Bargaining. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

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