

## **City Council Work Session May 10, 2021**

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Berthiaume, Eastman, Otis, Theberge, Higbee, Morgan, Remillard; Councilor Rozek was absent.

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Chief of Police Peter Morency, SAU3 Superintendent Julie King, SAU3 Business Manager Marion Moore, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public

Mayor Grenier called the meeting to order at 6:30pm

### **Decision for publishing the budget**

City Manager James Wheeler presented the [proposed changes made to the FY22 proposed budget](#) and advised he increased the UFB used from \$800,000 to \$1,920,000 to offset the tax rate. These changes produced an estimated/projected tax rate of \$37.80 compared to the current rate of \$35.93, reflecting a \$1.87 increase. Mayor Grenier explained it's a moving target and there's still six weeks to go till the budget is finalized. He stated we can't over predict what we are going to get. Councilor Eastman asked if the \$5,000,000 from the American Recovery Plan (School Grant) is a set amount. Mrs. King stated it was an estimate. Councilor Eastman commented that he would like to keep the tax rate down and proposed shaving off \$1,000,000 from the FY22 proposed budget to match last year's budget and keep the tax rate at \$35.93. Mayor Grenier explained because of the increases in oil, gas and NH Retirement, it is impossible to cut \$1,000,000 from the budget as just these items reflect a \$900,000 increase. Councilor Higbee commented that he doesn't agree with shaving \$1,000,000 from the proposed FY22 budget and feels the estimated/projected rate of \$37.80 is appropriate. Councilor Remillard commented that she believes the tax rate should be kept at \$35.93. She's OK with the \$1.87 increase but will stand strong with the \$35.93 rate. She feels with the revenues and flat lining the budget, we could keep the rate at \$35.93. Mayor Grenier proposed a motion be made to advertise the proposed FY22 budget for the public hearing on May 26. Councilor Eastman asked if there would be more modifications prior to the May 26 public hearing. Mayor Grenier responded no. Councilor Berthiaume moved to proceed with publicizing the proposed FY22 budget summary for the public hearing on May 26, as presented, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **Excavation Tax Warrant**

Mr. Wheeler asked Council for authorization to execute the Gravel Tax Levy for excavated material to Albert Guay in the amount of \$63.84. Councilor Otis moved to authorize City Manager, James Wheeler to execute the Gravel Tax Levy; Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **Short Term Rentals Discussion**

Community Development Director Pam Laflamme informed Council that the Planning Board has been discussing short term rentals and reviewing ordinances from other communities. She explained that the primary issues in regards to short term rentals in Berlin were: noise, trash and parking which are all addressed by existing ordinances in Berlin's Municipal Code. In pulling all this together, she realized that it was not actually coming together as an ordinance that would fall under the scope of what would be considered planning or zoning codes. Councilor Remillard stated the Planning Board has looked at a lot of options and she feels this should go back to Traffic and Safety. She suggested maybe enforcing with fines as we really don't have major problems at this time. She recommended Traffic and Safety

joined by the Police Department to come up with a process on how to issue warnings or fines. Councilor Berthiaume asked if a noise complaint could be considered under a business ordinance. Mayor Grenier commented that he feels the Police should be involved to enforce regulations. Mr. Wheeler advised the need to take a hard look at the rules and regulations with the Police Department. Chief of Police Peter Morency commented that there is a landlord nuisance in place. Mayor Grenier suggested putting a packet together to include a registration process for safety reasons and to stay ahead of the issues so we don't end up like North Conway. Councilor Eastman asked if the registration process could be online. Mrs. Laflamme replied that yes, we could have it right on our website. Councilor Berthiaume suggested the packet should include the OHRV ordinance.

### **List of Tax Deeded Properties**

Mrs. Laflamme presented the list. Mayor Grenier stated that the properties included in the top bracket of the list have been approved for demo and are good to go. He suggested the other seven be put out to bid. Councilor Higbee asked if the first batch of buildings being demolished are all part of the I&I project. Mr. Wheeler responded that all except 54 Pleasant Street as this was a claim through our Insurance carrier Primex due to a fire. Councilor Berthiaume questioned if the two properties that were put out to bid last year should be put back out. Councilor Eastman commented this would be a good time to put them all out to bid as the market is low for available properties. Councilor Remillard advised she wants to see 190 Glen Avenue before agreeing to the demo. Councilor Theberge inquired if there were any updates in regards to George Stanley's property. Mr. Wheeler advised that legally we are good to move forward with taking action on this property. Mayor Grenier asked if the Planning Board was looking at vacant properties. Mrs. Laflamme advised in 2017 was the last time they really looked into the vacant properties and four out of the six properties they recommended to Council be sold were put out to bid and sold. Mrs. Laflamme stated the Planning Board could start looking at the list again and work with Public Works to see if some of the properties are of use to them. Mayor Grenier asked that the Planning Board put a list together to present to Council.

### **Other**

There were no items under other

Mayor Grenier acknowledged Janet Tremblay from 812 Second Avenue. Mrs. Tremblay expressed her concerns in regards to sewer issues. She stated her backyard is a mess as it's all sinking in and these issues have been going on since 2016. She said she requested blue prints from the City, but never received them. She also mentioned contacting Lancaster requesting the blue prints, but they advised her the City of Berlin can provide them. City Manager James Wheeler advised Mrs. Tremblay he could print them for her tomorrow.

There being no further business Councilor Remillard moved to adjourn; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:27 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Danielle Rioux  
Executive Assistant

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