

**City Council Work Session
May 24, 2021**

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Chris Fournier from HEB, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

Mayor Grenier called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Non-Meeting with Legal Counsel

At 6:01pm, Mayor Grenier requested to enter in Non-Meeting per RSA 91-A:2, I. (c) Legal Consultation. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morgan to go into Non-Meeting per RSA 91-A:2, I. (c) Legal Consultation. So moved, the motion carried with all in favor.

At 6:50pm. Mayor, Council and Staff came out of Non-Meeting.

Mason Street Bridge – Chris Fournier, PE, HEB

Mayor Grenier introduced Chris Fournier, Vice-President/Lead Structural Engineer from HEB. City Manager Jim Wheeler invited Chris to tonight's City Council work session to discuss options in regards to the Mason Street Bridge project as requested at the last Council meeting on May 17, 2021. Mr. Wheeler advised he asked Mr. Fournier two questions; 1) What if we replace the steel with concrete? 2) What if we replace the whole bridge? Mr. Wheeler stated the goal with these two questions was to see if there was a way for the project to qualify for the State Bridge Aid Grant. He also mentioned that Mr. Fournier has been in contact with the contractor as they are waiting on the approval to move forward with the project and order the time sensitive materials they need. Mr. Fournier commented that when this project was first looked at, the most apparent item found was the structural deterioration of the concrete below the steel girders and also the concrete deck above the steel girders. Mr. Fournier advised the steel is in good shape and the goal was to preserve them. He explained that it's important to understand the magnitude of cost for the preservation we are currently discussing. He mentioned the total cost to replace the bridge would be about \$5,000,000. Councilor Rozek asked if there are items we can completely replace which would make the project eligible for the State Bridge Aid Grant. Mr. Fournier confirmed that the repairs needed are considered preservation items compared to rehabilitation items needed to qualify for the Grant. Councilor Rozek commented that he understands there is no time to completely change the scope of the project. He questioned how long the contractor has before the water is raised. Mr. Fournier commented 18 days. Councilor Rozek also asked what the life expectancy is after the repairs. Mr. Fournier commented that the DOT has done studies on these types of repairs and noted a 20 year expectancy. Councilor Rozek asked if there were no repairs done to the bridge, how long before a catastrophic failure. Mr. Fournier advised that the components discussed that needed repairs have been rated a 4 out of 10 by DOT. He explained that there is really no specific answer. It could be five years or tomorrow. It's really unknown. Mayor Grenier explained that the City Manager Jim Wheeler needs authorization to move forward in purchasing the materials that are time sensitive. Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Remillard to authorize City Manager Jim Wheeler to pre purchase the needed materials to rehabilitate the Mason Street Bridge. So moved, the motion carried with all in favor.

Property Value Abatements

City Manager Jim Wheeler advised Monica Hurley, Assessing Agent from Corcoran Consulting Associates was present via zoom to answer any questions in regards to the recommendations. Mayor Grenier commented he went through the recommendations and all made sense to him. He stated he did a rough estimate and figured the granted abatements represent about \$110,000 worth of value loss which will be about \$10,000 of loss tax revenue. He recommends moving forward with the recommendations. Councilor Remillard commented she went through a few and didn't disagree with any. She suggested moving forward with what was recommended. Councilor Otis commented that he found them all to be legit. Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Morgan to accept the recommendations from Corcoran Consulting Associates, as well as for the abatement for the Eagles as recommended by KRT and authorize City Manager Jim Wheeler to sign. So moved, the motion carried by majority vote with one recusal from Councilor Rozek.

Rte. 110 Urban Compact

City Manager Jim Wheeler advised he discussed with Bill Cass, Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer for the NHDOT, in regards to the Rte. 110 Urban Compact. Resulting from the discussion, Mr. Wheeler put together a list of [Elements for a Potential Agreement with NHDOT in regards to Rte. 110](#). Mayor Grenier commented that Mr. Wheeler was able to increase the maintenance agreement from 3 years to 5 years. Councilor Berthiaume questioned the Urban Compact would extend up to where. Mayor Grenier responded it might be beyond Jericho State park. Councilor Remillard asked if they are flexible in the length of the Urban Compact. Mayor Grenier answered yes. He also suggested that the Council support the City Manager Jim Wheeler to pursue the agreement presented with NHDOT. He asked if any Councilors opposed to pursuing the agreement, none were in opposition. Councilor Higbee asked what it would cost the City in today's dollars if it owned this route or an estimate. Councilor Rozek commented that he would also like an estimate included, and would like to know how much money the property and business owners are going to invest in that area to justify why the Council is accepting this. Mayor Grenier commented that it's the only way to develop that part of the City without overburdening the rest of the taxpayers. Mr. Wheeler concluded that he was just looking for some consensus, a more formal detailed agreement would be put together and that Council will have the ultimate say on all this.

Other

There were no items under other

Adjourn

There being no further business Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:36 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Rioux
Executive Assistant

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