

City Council Work Session June 21, 2021

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Eastman, Theberge, Remillard, Rozek, Berthiaume, Otis and Morgan; Councilor Higbee 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, Deputy Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Superintendent of Schools Julie King, School Business Administrator Marion Moore, Captain Jeff Lemoine, Barbara Tetreault & William Carroll Berlin Daily Sun, Stuart Light and Members of the Public.

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

Mason Street Bridge Contract

City Manager Jim Wheeler presented the Mason Street Bridge contract from HEB including two elements one being the bridge joint procurement discussed previously that wasn't part of the original contract in the amount of \$1,800 and the remainder is for construction administration estimated at \$45,000 plus reimbursable expenses estimated at \$5,000. Councilor Rozek pointed to page 2 of 3 of the contract expressing concerns under the Assumptions section, second bullet which states the agreement does not include review of change orders and contract amendments will be provided for each change of order that arises. He feels there shouldn't be any additional charges for any order changes. Mayor Grenier agreed and suggested the approval of the contract subject to the amendment of this item. Councilor Rozek moved to accept the contract amendment #3 to the Mason Street Bridge Project subject to the amendment under the assumptions section, Councilor Berthiaume seconded. Councilor Eastman questioned the hourly rate. Mr. Wheeler stated it wasn't included in this contract, but would be sending it to Mayor and Council. The motion carried with all in favor.

DES Correspondence re: East Milan Rd Landfill

City Manager Jim Wheeler discussed the [letter of deficiency](#) received from NHDES in regards to the Berlin East Milan Road Landfill. He brought up a picture showing the layout of the sampling points along the road which is essentially the City's property line. He explained there's a solid waste rule which says you can't have gas migrating offsite that exceeds 50% LEL. He commented there had been discussions started with the Bureau of Prisons to install additional well points. We have been out and have actually sampled the air in this water pump station, the sewer station and in the training facility. The readings in all three places was at 0 which represents no detection of gas. In addition to this was installing additional well points. When this was first presented to DES at the time, they were very much on board with the reasonableness of this plan. We were going along with this plan, however there's been a change in leadership and compliance at DES and they are taking a much more strict hard view and want us to resolve the issue. To resolve this issue means some sort of capital expenditure to capture gas before it leaves the property. Mr. Wheeler stated he's been talking with CMA which was the engineering company hired at the time and they advised resolving the issue would mean the City would likely have to do a series of gas collection wells which if spaced at about fifty feet apart would require about ten wells. He advised the estimated cost for this would be about \$100,000 which he has included in the revised budget which will be reviewed during this meeting. Councilor Remillard asked if this would resolve the issue 100%. Mr. Wheeler responded there is always a chance it doesn't work and we'd have to maybe install another 9-10 wells, but has a hard time believing that would be the case and feels the first try would get it. There is no guarantee. Councilor Rozek commented in regards

to the letter as far as deficiencies and feels the City was negligent as we weren't in compliance, DES gave suggestions which we didn't take action on and now the City is in a bad spot. Mr. Wheeler stated he did attend a meeting at DES with the Director of solid waste and the compliance person two years ago and had Paul from CMA attend via conference phone. The softer approach was described to DES and at the time they were good with it. Councilor Rozek questioned if the City did anything with the softer approach. Mr. Wheeler explained at the time the City proceeded to get permission from BOP for the wells, but due to the Federal shutdown nothing moved forward then Covid came along so no actions have been taken for the last year and a half. Mr. Wheeler commented that the City is working on the best reasonable way to fix this issue.

FY2022 Budget

Mr. Wheeler stated he met with Mayor Grenier, Superintendent of schools Julie King and School Business Administrator Marion Moore this morning to finalize changes to the budget. He discussed the tax rate projection resulting from expense and revenue changes is "no tax rate increase". This includes a use of \$2,220,000 in UFB to reduce the tax rate. This round of changes includes an additional amount of \$1,300,000 in surplus from Schools in order to be able to make this reduction. He commented that he did check with the City's auditor and he feels comfortable in saying when all is set and done, they City will have a fund balance that will be at least the minimum. He suspects it will be more than the minimum the DRA wants the City to have which is generally 1.1 million based on the City's budget. He reviewed the changes in both Revenues and Expenses. The total increase in revenues affecting the General Fund is \$1,214,310.00 and the total expense increase affecting the General Fund is \$617,899.48 which includes a market wage increase for Office Staff. The base rate for the 11 positions affected is \$14.11. The wage adjustment is \$1.25 per hour for a 35 hour work week. The total additional expense due to this change is \$26,106.80. Councilor Eastman commented that the taxes are still going up as the values are going up. Mayor Grenier commented that we are not raising taxes, we are spending increased revenues on capital items that are desperately needed in the City.

At 7:08pm being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier recessed for a ten minute break before moving on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Rioux
Executive Assistant

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