

City Council Work Session
January 3, 2017

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Otis, Remillard, Gentili, Higbee, Theberge, Rozek and Morgan Allain; absent was Councilor Nelson

Others present included City Manager James Wheeler, Fire Chief Randall Trull, Assistant Fire Chief Thad Soltys, SFC Engineer Jeff Murphy, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Public Works Director Michael Perreault, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m. and wished everyone a Happy New Year. He asked to add a verbal request from the Bureau of Trails and a non-public session regarding the consideration of legal advice to the agenda. Councilor Rozek so moved; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Berlin Fire Alarm Evaluation

Mr. Wheeler introduced Jeff Murphy from SFC Engineering who provided a comprehensive review of the current fire alarm system and possible replacement options. As we work on the Route 16 project, new utility poles are being installed and existing utilities are charged with providing new wire to the poles. For the existing fire alarm system, this would cost around \$100,000. For less than this investment, the City could upgrade its fire alarm system to a radio system or a system that uses an independently owned fire alarm communicator that connects to a third party monitoring company. The final decision about what approach to take has to be the community's.

Mr. Murphy reported that there are three options with the first being a system that could be relocated as originally installed for a cost which is budgeted. This system uses telegraph wire and has not changed much since it was first used.

The second option is a radio system managed through the fire department and uses radio frequencies to the fire house. It can use multiple signals so the department has more information when responding to an incident. The final option is a supervising station where the user goes to a monitoring company and they would then call the fire department. This system can monitor any and all systems in the building; however it takes about 3 minutes to be transmitted to fire department.

Councilor Theberge asked how the radio frequency is transmitted and Mr. Murphy confirmed that it is a locally powered wireless system with a master box that would not go on utility poles. Councilor Theberge confirmed that there is a 24 hour battery backup.

Councilor Rozek asked how this relates to the old fashioned call boxes that currently hang on poles. Mr. Murphy stated that there are two components, one being the publicly accessible alarm boxes in neighborhoods and the second being the fire alarms to particular commercial structures that have fire or sprinkler systems.

Chief Trull clarified that the boxes on poles are from 1897 and they are not replaced when they malfunction. Mayor Grenier said that he is inclined to support Option 2 where the fire department controls the system. In Option 3, we do not control. Mr. Murphy added that third party operators are tested and licensed so that they cannot get into a situation where they cannot accept a signal. Councilor Remillard asked what other communities are doing.

Mr. Murphy indicated that Portsmouth has abandoned their wired system and gone with a radio system. Hampton went to option 3 where they have a third party calling in the alarms. Mayor Grenier pointed out that some of the protected properties are municipal buildings and we would also have to be paying a third party to protect the building, increasing operations costs. He also warned that three minutes in some dense neighborhoods in the City could easily spread a fire to other buildings. He added that he trusts the City's internal experts who support option 2.

Mr. Murphy commented that unless there is an ordinance forcing commercial properties onto the City fire alarm system, the owners can choose to not be covered. Councilor Remillard acknowledged that they would be making the choice of what they want for their building. Mr. Wheeler established that protected facilities have been sent a communication with the report to see if they have a preference. Councilor Remillard stated that she would like to see what the results are.

Councilor Otis asked if this is just for the section of Route 16 or for the whole City. Mr. Wheeler stated that this is important now because we don't want to spend money on an outdated system. Whatever is done now, will become the model for the remainder of the City. Mr. Murphy added that some costs would not be repeated in subsequent applications of the new system.

Councilor Rozek asked about the electronic technology, saying that it often gets obsolete and has to be replaced. Mr. Murphy estimated that the technology would have to be upgraded about every 15 years. Councilor Higbee asked if there will be a fee if Option 2 is chosen and Chief Trull confirmed that there would be; however it is less than that of a monitoring company.

Mr. Wheeler explained the schedule saying that we are trying to move this along as fast as possible since the poles are going up now. Ideally the new system has to be in place before the old system is dismantled. It may be necessary to bring the old wire to the new poles as a temporary alternative. Mr. Murphy reasoned that the City may want to limit bidding where the life safety system is concerned. Councilor Rozek stated that he agrees with Option 2; Councilor Remillard is also leaning that way; however she would like to hear the feedback of the stakeholders.

Communication Town of Pittsburg, Legal Control of Municipal Roads

Mayor Grenier said that the State Legislature reviewed and made changes to the rules under which the PUC's Site Evaluation Committee operates in the last session. He felt that the SEC process should be respected. He would support letting SEC do its job. Councilor Rozek added that the communication suggests that SEC would make a decision and then permitting would begin on the local level. He added that the County needs jobs. The Council took no action on the communication.

Proposed Budget Schedule

Various department heads have until 1/15 to present their budgets. On March 6 the city manager will submit his budget to the City Council. There were no objections to the proposed schedule.

Bureau of Trails Request

Mr. Wheeler reported that on behalf of the Bureau of Trails, Clint Savage asked for the Council's support for extending OHRV traffic further north on Jericho Road. He recommended referring the item to the Traffic Safety Committee.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Morgan Allain moved, with a second from Councilor Remillard to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (I) Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel. The motion passed unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved to come out of non-public session; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved to seal the minutes of the vote taken in non-public session until the City Manager and Mayor authorize the action as releasing them would render the decision made ineffective; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

There being no further business in work session, Mayor Grenier called a recess until the start of the Regular Meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant