

City Council Work Session
April 2, 2018

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Finance Director Patty Chase, School Superintendent Corinne Cascadden, JD Girard, Andre Bergeron, Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant

Ms. Cascadden reported that Allen Pike is the STEM teacher and he is very motivated taking every opportunity to enhance the STEM Program. This grant will allow the purchase of additional equipment including software to learn about drone mapping and heliocentric cars as well as other on line learning equipment. Ms. Cascadden confirmed that the money is available in this school year. Mayor Grenier asked how many students are taking advantage of the program and it was noted that there are 43 students in robotics and 17 in the drafting class. There is also a robotics team that is in competition.

Ms. Cascadden stated that there will be a report to the Council on April 30 about the dependent vs. independent school systems, presented by MRI who conducted the study. She planned to ask teachers and administrators to attend and wants to keep the option of using the auditorium open for the presentation.

There is another study regarding the reorganization of grades that will be presented Thursday April 19. The study group looked at all the buildings, capacity of space, and programs offered. They will present their findings which will give information about what schools will look like in one year and in three years. Ms. Cascadden predicted that the poorer communities will be in another law suit with the State in the near future. Mayor Grenier commented that the Commissioner of Education and has done nothing to educate himself; he's a very poor Education Commissioner with a political agenda, not an education agenda. Ms. Cascadden added that he does not know or support public education.

The Schools were also successful in getting public infrastructure security grants in the amount of \$268,000 for surveillance and security at the main entrance of the high school. There is currently no line of sight from the offices and an overlook will be created so that staff in the office can see the entrance. The back side of the building will also be made more secure. The road access around the building is pending.

Proposed Change to Resolution 2018-05

Mr. Wheeler reported that the resolution for repair of Engine 4 has \$40,000 appropriated and the new estimate is \$44,000 to repair the fire truck. He requested a change in the resolution to a not to exceed amount of \$47,000. Councilor Remillard questioned whether the remaining amount could be taken from the FD budget where it would be reconciled at year end. Ms. Chase agreed with the City Manager that the funds should be appropriated before they are spent. Mr. Wheeler added that this would qualify as a capital expense and capital expenses have to be appropriated.

Personnel Policy

Mr. Wheeler explained that the personnel policy was introduced and adopted in 1995 by resolution and it has not been changed since then. Many of the items in the policy are covered in the collective bargaining agreement. He proposed to have the adopting resolution from 1995 rescinded, then immediately adopt the policy by motion. With that document in place, the City Manager could go forward with replacing outdated policies with new ones. There is an FMLA policy draft that is ready to be adopted.

Councilor Remillard questioned rescinding the Council's authority over the policy. She advocated that any changes made to the policy would come to the council. Mr. Wheeler stated that the personnel policy should be a live document that is changed and updated regularly. Councilor Higbee asked how long it is expected to take and Mr. Wheeler thought it would take the better part of a year. Councilor Higbee noted that administration creates the policy and it should go to the board for approval.

Mr. Wheeler said that he conferred with the City's labor attorney, Mark Broth who stated that a town administrator may not have the authority to change policy; however city managers are allowed to do so. In the discussion that followed Council agreed to rescind the resolution that adopted the Personnel Policy, then readopt the 1995 policy by motion. Every change that is made to the Personnel Policy will come to the Council for approval by motion.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A: 3 (d) land matters. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Mr. Wheeler and Ms. Laflamme updated the Council on proposed property transactions.

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to come out of non-public session. So, moved, the motion carried.

There being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the Regular meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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