

City Council Work Session September 10, 2018

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Paula Kinney, AV Chamber of Commerce; Corinne Cascadden, School Superintendent; Bryan Lamirande, Business Manager, Berlin Schools; Claire Stiles, Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

AV Chamber of Commerce – Request for Helicopter Rides at RiverFire

Paula Kinney joined the Council to discuss the Chamber's request. The ReMax hot air balloon will not be at the event this year and they want to bring in helicopter rides instead and will use Horne Field as the landing space. This would be the same company that comes up for Jericho ATV Festival. Councilor Higbee asked about adding the City as an additional insured entity for the day. Ms. Kinney replied he will do that as he does for the Jericho ATV Festival. Mayor Grenier asked Mr. Wheeler to review the process for this request, which is covered by Chapter 10 of the City's ordinances. Ms. Kinney asked for permission to run the helicopter from noon until about 8:00pm. There was a suggestion to do abutters notices to the neighbors.

Councilor Higbee made a motion seconded by Councilor Theberge to allow permission for CR Helicopters of Nashua to offer helicopter rides from 12pm until 8pm to the public, listing the City as an additional insured and that the City will send letters to the abutters giving them notice of the activity. All councilors voted in favor of the motion, motion passed.

School Department Update

Superintendent Cascadden and Business Manager Lamirande updated the Council about some of the changes that the department is seeing. The decrease in employees for this school year has less teachers are doing more work. The district saw an increase in the population of students with disabilities by 11 students, 5 of whom are preschool aged. The current special education population among the student body is 23% at this time.

There was a discussion about save our schools movement and materials were distributed. Ms. Cascadden said that the school board is grappling with the decision about whether they should shut down the Brown School, there is room in the high school to add students but there are lots of factors to consider.

Ms. Cascadden thanked the Mayor and Council for their support. Mayor Grenier said he will take an active role in the legislative process when called up on to do so.

Mr. Lamirande reviewed the spreadsheet he sent ahead with the Council. He reminded the Council that there had been discussions about using capital funds for the purchase of bus. They returned more than \$400,000.00 in surplus to help lower the tax rate at the last budget cycle. The bus purchase is \$87,000.00 but they also would like to purchase a new minivan bringing the total request to \$107,000. They will donate their current minivan to parks and recreation. Councilor Theberge asked if they would use the minivan for a trade-in but it was determined it really wasn't worth it and the recreation department could really use it. They are looking for guidance about moving ahead with both purchases.

The district has saved a lot of money by using the van as opposed to paying mileage reimbursement to staff for trips to Concord. The van has also been use to transport families to the homeless shelter in Lancaster and students to the Davenport School in Jefferson.

Councilor Morgan Allain asked about seatbelts in the new bus. The bus will not have seatbelts as there are a lot of studies out there that go back and forth as to whether they make the bus safer or not. Lots of issues around monitoring use, compliance, etc. The district does have portable seatbelts if needed. NHDOT requires if they purchase buses with seatbelts, then all buses must be retrofitted.

Councilor Higbee asked about the funding breakdown. Mr. Wheeler reviewed the projections and surplus numbers used to calculated the tax rate during the budget process. After much discussion it was decided that the amount requested would be funded through the undesignated fund balance. The Mayor told the Council that the resolution on October 1st will be for \$107,000.00 and because they would be using funds from the undesignated fund balance they will need a 2/3 majority of the Council for approval. Mayor Grenier reiterated the willingness of the Council to work with the schools.

Councilor Theberge asked about whether the purchase would be done as a loan or outright purchase and after a quick discussion it was determined it makes more sense to purchase the vehicles outright.

There was a discussion about school funding and what may have to happen in terms of the pros and cons of keeping Brown School open. No decision was reached.

Proposed Assessing Contract Amendment

Mr. Wheeler reminded the Council about the statistical update contract with KRT. The Board of Assessors also need to discuss it as well. The Department of Revenue Administration has not yet approved the contract details but the amount will not change it will still be \$12,000.00. Once the DRA approves the contract parameters, the Board of Assessors need to approve it as well. Mr. Wheeler asked that the Council give him the authority to enter into a contract with KRT that will be contingent upon approvals from both the DRA and the BOA. It will be charged to KRT's line item in the operating budget which will likely go into the red but it was thought it would be balanced out by other line items that might not be expended as expected.

Mr. Higbee made a motion, seconded by Mr. Otis to allow Mr. Wheeler to enter into a contract agreement with KRT for a statistical update subject to BOA/DRA approval in the amount of \$12,000.00, all councilors voted in favor of the motion.

Other

Councilor Higbee – Homecoming – he won't be able to attend but encouraged other councilors to attend. The Mayor will be in attendance. The Mayor also asked councilors to attend a ceremony Saturday morning at 9am across from the Police Department to dedicate the Anthony Urban Memorial Highway which will be led by the captains of the high school sports teams.

Adjournment

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to adjourn the meeting; so moved, the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pamela Laflamme

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