

City Council Work Session
October 1, 2018

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortier, Public Works Director Eric Grenier, School Superintendent Corinne Cascadden, BIDPA Chair Mike Caron, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Councilor Higbee moved to change the order of the agenda so that 121 Main Street discussion is first and to add Item 3a. "Voting Disposition" to the agenda; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Wheeler introduced Shelli Fortin, the new City Clerk and Eric Grenier, the new Public Works Director. Mayor Grenier welcomed both.

121 Main Street

BIDPA Chair Mike Caron explained that BIDPA had a Purchase and Sale agreement with AHEAD for 121 Main Street and it has since lapsed. AHEAD wants to do further study of the building. Extending the P & S would be a non-monetary transaction that would just allow for more study. Ms. Laflamme added that there is renewed interest because AHEAD has partnered with Coos County Family Health and all are contributing toward the study. This would give AHEAD site control which was recommended by the City Attorney.

Councilor Higbee moved to approve an extended Purchase and Sale agreement renewal with AHEAD for 121 Main Street, giving the City Manager authority to sign; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried. Councilor Higbee confirmed that this includes the land that wraps around the building on Pleasant Street. Mr. Caron left the meeting at this time.

FEMA Storm Damage Reimbursement Update

Mr. Wheeler referred to a spreadsheet that outlines the work that was done as a result of storm damage in October of last year. The costs listed include people time, equipment, material and contractor costs. We have received about \$100,000 from FEMA so far. There is still \$523,000 of unfinished road and culverts that are awaiting approval by FEMA. Mayor Grenier asked if there have been challenges to submitting costs and Mr. Wheeler indicated that we have met the challenges with more detailed explanation which satisfied the agency. Councilor Theberge asked about unfinished culverts before the pump station on Hillsboro Street and Mr. Wheeler confirmed that this is in a request to FEMA. Councilor Remillard asked if there is a deadline for FEMA to submit this money to the City and Mr. Wheeler noted that there is not; however he is hoping that it will be in this fiscal year.

Transportation Funding Update

Mr. Wheeler stated that we are trying to get every dollar for transportation projects. The existing transportation projects are estimated at \$7.47 million and there is currently \$7.36 million of funding.

Projects include Route 16 including Hutchins and Bridge Streets; Hillside Avenue Bridge which has a budget of \$150,000 and is expected to come in at \$131,000. The Mason Street Bridge is not funded; however we will get the work done with State Bridge Program funds. LED Lighting project came in at \$127,993 after getting a rebate of \$91,750. When the exact amount is known, we will do a resolution to re-appropriate the remaining funds. Other projects in this estimate include Strom Damage at \$150,000; Hutchins and Bridge Street at \$130,000; Riverwalk match at \$172,000; additional LED Lighting on Hutchins Street at \$6,000 and Bemis Street is estimated at \$50,000.

Mayor Grenier stated that if everything falls into place, the remaining \$106,000 will have \$20,000 for Bemis Street and \$70,000 for the Riverwalk match, leaving \$30,000.

Mayor Grenier questioned whether the Water Works could bid on the contract work for the Riverwalk. Ms. Laflamme noted that the project is funded with DOT money and has gone through the competitive bid process. The funding source could be contacted to see if it's allowable.

Councilor Higbee asked about the condition of Mason Street Bridge. Mr. Wheeler said that he and the structural engineer from HEB went under the bridge since the water level was lowered. Their inspection revealed that there is some decay; however the bridge is sound and it is not a red listed bridge.

School Bus and Minivan Appropriation

Mr. Wheeler said that there is a resolution on for first reading for \$107,000 to be appropriated to the school department for a bus and minivan. Ms. Cascadden added that in response to the Council's question about seat belts on buses, it is addressed by the manufacture where seats are made to be 4 inches higher and are called crash barriers. She confirmed that the minivan has seat belts,

Utilities Update

Mr. Wheeler reported that Skip Sansoucy's update of utilities as of 2018 is less than that of last year. Annually, utility values have to be equalized using the median ratio. When we were at \$56 million, the ratio was 110. The median ratio is 96.2 and adjustments will be made for market impacts. As values go up, it causes a whiplash effect with utility values and stresses the need to take advantage of the increased values. Mayor Grenier added that there is a need to come up with \$14 million of additional assessments to break even. If there is no update, the utility values alone would add \$1.38 to the tax rate.

Non-Public Session

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

The Council discussed property issues.

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Otis to come out of non-public session. All voted in favor.

Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to seal the minutes until notifications have been sent; releasing the minutes would render the action taken ineffective. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Otis to enter into non meeting per RSA 91-A:2, I (b) Collective Bargaining. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

With no further business in the Work Session, the Council 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.