

City Council Work Session
October 15, 2018

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Otis, Higbee, Berthiaume, Rozek, Gentili, Morgan Allain, and Théberge.

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Public Works Director Eric Grenier, School Superintendent Corinne Cascadden, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Wastewater Superintendent Jon Goodreau, Fire Chief John Lacasse, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*, and public, Claire Stiles.

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

Councilor Rozek moved to add two items to the agenda, Corinne Cascadden with a School Department update, and a discussion about Bill Jackson. Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried.

Fire Department Request for Pumper and Equipment

Fire Chief John Lacasse advised the council that the Assistance to Firefighter Grant opened early this year. Last year it opened on December 26, this year it opened in September and closes at the end of this month. Chief Lacasse advised that this year he would like to apply for a pumper truck instead of a ladder truck. It is a very competitive process, and the items that the grant committee will look for are age of apparatus, call volume, and financial need. The current pumper truck is a 1979 Pierce, which is almost 40 years old, and they are looking for equipment older than 25 years. Chief Lacasse advised they are also looking to replace their SCBA and PPE equipment which are the breathing apparatus and personal protective gear, along with the extrication equipment, also known as the “jaws of life”. Mayor Grenier suggested that Chief Lacasse contact Chuck Henderson from Senator Shaheen’s office in reference to the grant application process. Councilor Higbee asked if requesting a pumper truck this year and not the ladder truck will affect their application, as the ladder truck has been requested in the past. Chief Lacasse advised it would not, as it is a new process every year. Councilor Rozek asked how old the extrication equipment was and Chief Lacasse advised it is 23 years old. Mayor Grenier asked if the resolution would be needed before the deadline at the end of the month and was advised they would not.

Wastewater Tractor Bid Results

City Manager Wheeler advised that the request for the tractor was brought before the council with the Sewer Capital Improvement Plan, and the amount requested was \$55,000 for the tractor with a snowblower. Two bids were received, one from Absolute Power Sports for \$47,000, and one from Watterman Farm Machinery for \$47,508. Since the bid from Absolute Power Sports meets the specifications, is the lowest bid, and is a local business, City Manager Wheeler requested the Council award the bid to them.

Councilor Rozek moved to award the bid for the Tractor with a snowblower to Absolute Power Sports for \$47,000; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried.

Request for PWD Employee

Public Works Director Eric Grenier updated the Council on the hiring process for the new public works employee. Eric Grenier stated that he has had another employee give a two-week notice and would like

to fill both positions from the pool of applicants they have if the Council will approve filling the second position.

Councilor Berthiaume moved to allow the Public Works Department to fill the second vacant position; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried.

Councilor Theberge asked what position is available and Eric Grenier advised it is a laborer.

Bemis Street Update

Eric Grenier advised that he visited Bemis Street last week to look at the condition of the road. The subgrade of the road is poor and a temporary solution is needed to get through the winter. They will be looking at options and costs to do something more permanent. Eric Grenier advised that they do have a local contractor who will drag a shim course and they are scheduled for tomorrow morning. Councilor Rozek asked about renting a paving machine and if the department would have the manpower and ability to do that in the future. They will have to look at the numbers to see if it is feasible or cost effective. Councilor Higbee asked about an infrared heating machine and stated that some are skeptical about how it will work with old pavement. Eric Grenier advised that it works well with when bonding to new pavement, but he does not have much experience with how it would work with older pavement. Councilor Morgan Allain asked which portion of Bemis Street would be done and Eric Grenier advised that approximately 725 feet from Rheims Street up to just before 64 Bemis Street would be done, at a cost between \$10-12,000. Eric Grenier advised there is a clear transition in the pavement at that point.

469 Hillsboro Street Correspondence

City Manager Wheeler advised that a lot of work has gone into this property, including a site visit to assess, and commended Chief Lacasse, Angela Martin-Giroux, and Michel Salek for their hard work. A copy of the letter to Mr. Stanley was shared with the Council, giving him until October 26 to register the structure as a blighted and vacant building and provide a plan as to how he will correct the insufficiencies. The work must be completed by November 14, at which time it will be re-inspected. City Manager Wheeler advised there may be other issues that were not visible at the first inspection. Mayor Grenier thanked the neighbors for their patience in dealing with this issue for the last 10 years, and suggested that there are other properties that the city should consider sending letters to the owners. Mayor Grenier mentioned the property on Willard Street and City Manager Wheeler will check to see when the last correspondence was with the property owner. Councilor Berthiaume asked about the building with fire damage by Sinibaldi's Restaurant on Champlain Street. This building has been purchased, but there has been no plan filed yet for repair.

School Department Update

Corinne Cascadden advised the Council that last winter they were awarded a grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to look at ways for the schools to collaborate for education in the valley. Cascadden advised that they have been meeting monthly and held two teacher forums, one in Berlin and one in Gorham, last spring. Another goal was to get students talking about their educational opportunities. They recently sent home surveys for the students and received 520 responses. Of the responses received, they were pleased to see that an equal percentage of students were interested in staying in the area, as they were in leaving and coming back later, and leaving the area. The next phase is to hold Community Forums, which will be run by NH Listens and will ask some key questions about education in the valley. They are not talking about consolidation or regionalization, but about collaboration. The Forums will be held on Tuesday, October 23 and Thursday October 25 at Berlin High

School and Gorham Middle High School respectively. Councilor Higbee asked about the turnout at the Teacher Forums and was advised there were about 90 staff that attended from both schools.

Bill Jackson

Mayor Grenier advised that he received a request that the City of Berlin consider presenting a plaque to Bill Jackson for his service to the area. Jackson has been very ill and was a driving force behind AVER when the mills went bankrupt. The citizen that made the request is willing to pay for the cost of the plaque. The Council agreed that Jackson should be recognized for his contributions. City Manager Wheeler will take care of ordering the plaque.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain 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 Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to come out of non-public session. All voted in favor.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to seal the minutes until the project is disposed of. So moved, the motion carried.

With no further business in the Work Session, the Council moved on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelli Fortin
City Clerk