

City Council Work Session November 5, 2018

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Finance Director Patty Chase, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Public Works Director Eric Grenier, Code Enforcement Michel Salek, Fire Chief John Lacasse, Fran Cusson, Tara MacKillop, Claire Stiles, and Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*

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

AV Home Care

Fran Cusson and Director Tara MacKillop addressed the Council on behalf of AV Home Care. MacKillop stated that they wanted to thank the city for the funds given to them and to report to the Council on the programs offered. MacKillop advised they have been in operation since 1975, and that the \$8,774.00 given to them last year by the city was used for the Title 20 Homemaking program, which currently serves 99 Berlin residents. Cusson advised that the sliding fee scale has been modified to \$2 per visit, and that all state programs saw a 2% increase in reimbursements as of January 2018. Cusson advised that the Homemaking program is the first line of defense to keep people in their homes. Mayor Grenier asked about "Dorothy's Gift" and Cusson advised that the annual yard sale and campaign have helped to keep this program going, which is used to help clients who cannot afford to pay and with 24/7 care that is needed in emergency situations. Mayor Grenier asked about the staff, and Cusson advised they have 48 employees, who are mostly part-time. Cusson advised that flexible schedules are offered to the staff.

Mutual Aid Discussion

Fire Chief John Lacasse advised the Council that currently mutual aid is just a handshake agreement with the surrounding communities. There is also an organization called North PAC which includes most of Coos County and some of Vermont. The dues for North PAC are \$500.00 per year. Chief Lacasse advised that currently the surrounding communities are charged for the overtime pay for coverage at the station, but not for the apparatus. A traditional agreement would have no cost involved for the other communities. Chief Lacasse stated that there would be no major benefit to a formalized agreement for grants, but it may be helpful for disaster assistance. Chief Lacasse advised that in the long-term an agreement would be beneficial, but would not be in the city's best interest for the budget now. Mayor Grenier asked if a formalized agreement could be drawn up with the agreement they currently have with the surrounding towns and Chief Lacasse advised it could be.

Fire and Code Update

City Manager Jim Wheeler advised the Council that Chief Lacasse has been working on fire inspections with Michel Salek in Code Enforcement. The plan is to move building inspection under the Fire Department. Councilor Berthiaume asked if this is just on paper and City Manager Wheeler advised it is. City Manager Wheeler also advised that they would like to move the Code Enforcement office to the old Health Department space, which has the benefit of better security and a location next to the Welfare Department. Work will be done in-house. City Manager Wheeler also advised that they would like to fill the budgeted part-time position in Code. They will keep the hours flexible to suit the best candidate for the position. Michel Salek advised that they have had a total of 219 permits this year, 287 last year, and 338 in 2016. Mayor Grenier advised there was a push to get apartment buildings up to code, and we

need to stay on top of it. Councilor Berthiaume asked if there would be accountability tracking for the position and Chief Lacasse advised there would be and that he currently does keep track of inspections and the hours involved. Councilor Rozek shared a concern that the city is not growing, but personnel continues to, and suggested that some of the current employees may be able to assist. Chief Lacasse advised it could be an option, however there is specific knowledge necessary for the position and overtime may be an issue. Michel Salek reminded the Council that the administrative position was combined with the Fire Department.

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second from Councilor Gentili to allow the City Manager to advertise and hire for the part-time position for Code Enforcement. So moved, the motion carried.

Solar Energy Systems Exemption Sunset Clause

City Manager Wheeler advised that at the end of 2012, the Council had approved an exemption for residential solar systems for the full cost of the equipment. The sunset clause is December of 2018. Mayor Grenier asked if this was an exemption for the life of the property and suggested that a tiered exemption could be designed. The exemption is currently permanent, and Community Development Director Pam Laflamme advised there only a few in town. Councilor Higbee pointed out that it does not really change the value of the property and stated that it is a good idea to encourage alternative energy sources. City Manager Wheeler will look into the number and sizes of the systems in the city, and will also find out what other communities are doing.

Mayor Grenier advised there are two other items to be added to the work session agenda, one concerning the 10-year plan for Route 16 and the other concerning assessing.

Councilor Morgan Allain moved, with a second from Councilor Berthiaume to add the 10-year plan and assessing items to the agenda. So moved, the motion carried.

Route 16 portion of the NHDOT 10-Year Plan

Community Development Director Pam Laflamme and Public Works Director Eric Grenier shared with the council a map with four boundary areas and suggestions for roadwork to be forwarded to North Country Council for the NHDOT 10-year plan. Since the reason for the Council choosing the Cleveland Bridge to Phase 1 of the Route 110 project as their first choice was to improve the entrance to the city, Eric Grenier and Laflamme felt that moving the boundary line to the town line should be considered. Eric Grenier advised that it would be his recommendation that Boundary Area #1, from the town line to Watson Street, and Boundary Area #2, from Watson Street to the Cleveland Bridge, could be to mill and overlay existing pavement, since the roadway surface is generally in good condition. However, Boundary Area #3 from Cleveland Bridge to the Y at Veteran's Park, and Boundary Area #4, from Veteran's Park to Green Square, should be a full depth reconstruction, as this was not part of the roadway reconstruction in the 1980's. Councilor Theberge asked about sidewalks, and Eric Grenier advised the sidewalk on the west side would be included. Mayor Grenier advised he would also like to see Pleasant Street from Veteran's Park to the US Post Office included as well. Councilor Rozek mentioned the condition of Hutchins Street and was advised this will need to be done within the next few years, before the 10-year plan would be available.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Morgan-Allain to add the City Engineer's recommendations for Boundary Area #1 and Boundary Area #2, along with Pleasant Street from Veteran's Park to Exchange Street, to the Route 16 Project for the NHDOT 10-Year plan, which will be submitted to North Country Council for consideration. So moved, the motion carried.

Community Development Director Pam Laflamme also advised the Council that a vote of support was needed for the Route 110 Urban Compact Project.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second from Councilor Rozek to show support for the Route 110 Urban Compact Project to Jericho Park. So moved. The motion carried with a vote of 8 for, and one opposed.

Assessing Update

City Manager Jim Wheeler advised that KRT is still working on the update and it has not been approved by the Board of Assessors. Since the MS-1 still needs to be submitted, and the DRA still needs to set the tax rate, the tax bills will be late going out. City Manager Wheeler advised that if the new assessment is approved this week, then the tax rate could be brought to the Council on November 19, and tax bills will go out after that.

Councilor Berthiaume asked if the Council could look at the Ordinance about dry camping that was passed due to Camp RZR. This ordinance also had a sunset clause.

Non-public Session

Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to enter into non-public session at 7:40 pm per RSA 91-A:3 II (d) land matters. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved to come out of non-public session at 7:56 pm; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Non-meeting

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to enter into a non-meeting per RSA 91-A:3 II (b) collective bargaining at 7:56 pm. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to come out of the non-meeting at 8:03 pm. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Rozek moved, with a second from Councilor Higbee for the city to retain and demolish the tax deeded property at 615 Burgess Street. So moved, the motion carried.

There being no further business in Work Session, at 8:05 p.m., Mayor Grenier called for a short recess and the Council went on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

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

.