

City Council Work Session
March 11, 2019

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Library Director Denise Jensen, Airport Manager Marcel Leveille, Chief Pete Morency, Assistant Chief Dan Buteau, Finance Director Patty Chase, Claire Stiles, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Administration

Mr. Wheeler distributed summary sheets with the same information as in the binder with the exception of additional columns that indicate how much we are proposing to change the budget. There were no changes from the previous year in the Mayor and City Council budget (01-401).

Overall the Administration budget (01-402) is decreased by \$27,475 with most achieved by reducing a full time position to part time. Mayor Grenier confirmed that the insurance savings of \$8,517 are from one employee. Mr. Wheeler clarified that the other half of the insurance savings will be reflected in the Welfare Department budget.

Data verification on assessing was reduced.

In the budget for Elections (01-403), Ms. Fortin confirmed that there are two elections this year, a municipal in November and there will be a presidential primary. Seeing as there were two elections last year, the budget was kept relatively the same.

City Hall and Other Buildings (01-404), saw an increase of \$2500 in electricity. Mr. Wheeler explained that the City did the Smart Start Program on several City buildings. The project was supposed to pay for itself with the savings without adding costs and that is not what we are seeing. There is a meeting scheduled this week with Eversource to discuss. Mr. Wheeler confirmed that this increase in electricity will be seen throughout the budget.

Property Liability (01-406) reflects the new rates. The County Tax (01-407) is an estimate. Under Personnel Benefits (01-410) the PD severance pay went up. Chief Morency explained that the budgeted amount of \$174,000 for this year will not be fully expended and what is left will be returned as a surplus to the city. The \$182,000. is the projection for the upcoming year.

Library (01-451)

Ms. Jensen thanked the Council for their continued support. She shared a recent patron's comments who said that he appreciated that he didn't have to buy anything and he didn't have to belong to be at the library; he thanked the Library for leaving the lights on.

Ms. Jensen indicated that the Library gave out 212 new cards last year. The Library is a safe place for children and teens to go after school. There are several services at the library and recently genealogy was added. Councilor Theberge asked if the library is used as a meeting place. Ms. Jensen noted that

the library is used for supervised visits that are held in the children's department. Patrons increased by 144 last year.

Mayor Grenier asked about the decline of patrons over 5 years. Ms. Jensen stated that there has been a decline of about 2000. She attributed some of the decline to downloadable books that can be borrowed from home, saving a trip to library. Councilor Higbee said that he could see the decrease in patrons however use is up. Ms. Jensen stated that the cost of Downloadable books is going up by \$50 per year. The State Library used to charge by population; however they now charge by population and use which lowered the price considerably.

Mayor Grenier asked about Unemployment Insurance questioning whether the charge to the department was based on that department's use of the program. Ms. Chase stated that the total amount is divided up among departments based on a percentage of salary.

Councilor Remillard asked about the per diem position and Ms. Jensen stated that the person is called when there is a vacation week or when someone calls in sick

Airport (65-434)

Mr. Leveille stated that all are invited to come to the airport to see and tour the projects that are planned. He noted that in the airport budget, he increased the salaries. Mayor Grenier confirmed that the BAA would need to agree to salary increases. Mr. Leveille indicated that if he buys 9,000 gallons of fuel, there is a price incentive that allows for more profit so he increased both Jet and low lead amounts.

He added that there is a blade for the loader that would allow for more efficient plowing on Hangar Alley; it comes at a cost of about \$10,000.

Heating oil and fuel for the trucks was increased to reflect what was spent this year.

Mayor Grenier noted that the jet fuel expense was increased; however the revenues do not reflect the increase. Mayor Grenier said that there is not much support for throwing the budget being out of sync, adding that he won't vote to increase the airport budget by \$43,000. Mr. Wheeler noted that there is \$20,000 of revenue expected in 2020 for additional logging.

Mayor Grenier confirmed that the Water Works is still buying sand. Mr. Leveille added that Mr. Flint is buying sand as well. Mayor Grenier asked how many hours were under NOTAM at the airport and Mr. Leveille responded that his estimate is a total of 7 days. During those times, the airport is open to helicopters.

Mr. Wheeler mentioned that the Library had one capital item for building maintenance. That will not happen in the coming budget; it will likely need to be budgeted for 2021.

Other

Mr. Wheeler reported that the State Fire Marshal's office does a competition for 3rd graders where their artwork is featured in a fire and life safety school calendar. Art work from students from across the State is submitted. This year, Cage Long from Ms. Valliere's class has the winning art that will appear for the month of April in the calendar. There will be a ceremony at the fire academy.

At 7:15 Councilor Rozek moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3II (d) land matters and (i) consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call. Chief Morency and Deputy Chief Buteau were present for the nonpublic session

Land matters and a legal issue were discussed.

Councilor Rozek moved to come out of nonpublic session; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried.

Councilor Rozek moved to seal the minutes of the non-public session as releasing them would make the action taken ineffective; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business in Work Session, Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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