

City Council Work Session June 17, 2019

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Public Works Director Eric Grenier, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, several firefighters, School Business Administrator Bryan Lamirande, School Board Chair Nicole Plourde, BEMS President Chris Dubey, Police Chief Pete Morency, Finance Director Patty Chase, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun* and public

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

State Revolving Loan Funds

Mr. Wheeler explained that there are two resolutions to continue with I & I removal. One is for \$848,620 of I and I removal and another is for \$500,000 of Demolition. These loan/grants offer a percentage of loan forgiveness which is grant. We are excited about being allowed to use SRF money for demolition of properties are owned by the City and have a basement drain or flat roof. We will be able to take these multi units down with SRF money and pay pack through the Sewer Fund. The application is due at the end of the month. Final read of these resolutions will be at the first meeting of July.

BEMS

Mr. Wheeler explained that the BEMS contract is due at the end of the month. The agreement is in the same form as we have been using for years. Changes include language that takes extenuating circumstances into consideration. The subsidy is also charged differently in that we have had increases of \$500 per year paid in monthly increments. In this contract, the cost would go up \$1500 up front with no further increases, giving BEMS money up front to make wage increases. There is language about funding capital improvements, allowing the potential for the city to take advantage of grant funding which may not be available to private entities. The termination clause is also being changed so that any remaining subsidy in the contract would be applied to acquisition cost, if the City were to acquire the company.

Another change is for Berlin to begin a conversation with Milan regarding participating in the subsidy. As it is now, Berlin pays the subsidy and BEMS responds to Milan and they have no responsibility for payment. Councilor Remillard questioned why the City would take the steps to meet with Milan since BEMS is a private company; she thought Milan should have their own contract with them. Mr. Dubey stated that Milan is not interested in signing an agreement with BEMS. He said they are reluctant to pay because BEMS will continue to respond. Councilor Remillard added that Milan should be charged for every time BEMS responds to Milan.

Mr. Dubey added that the current contract obligates BEMS to respond. In this contract, response to Milan is no longer made a requirement. The contract is being amended so that whoever is responsible for ems will not have a requirement to go to Milan. It will allow us to put Milan in a position where they pull their own weight. Communities using the service will pay for the service. Councilor Remillard affirmed that it is not Berlin's intent to stop coverage to Milan immediately but this language would allow us to stop responding over time. Councilor Berthiaume moved to accept the proposed changes

and authorized the City Manager to sign a contract between the City of Berlin and BEMS; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried.

Future of Brown School

The School will actively use the building until the end of August and Mr. Wheeler asked what the Council wants to do to divest itself of Brown School. Suggestions include doing an RFP; seeking proposals for use by for profit or nonprofit organizations. The Council could appoint a committee to be the entity to review proposals. Councilor Berthiaume stated that this is too important to accomplish tonight. She added that we should put out an RFP and establish a committee. Councilor Remillard agreed that we should create a committee and welcome letters of interest.

Mr. Lamirande expressed concern for winterizing and monitoring the building. He explained that there is a system in place where notification of problems with the heat are sent by e-mail. Internet access for that building was not included in the school budget. He estimated that the winter costs of the building would be approximately \$29,763. Councilor Rozek stated it would not be unreasonable to drain the pipes and close down if it goes through one winter with no buyer. Brown School will be revisited in the spring of next year. A Committee for the purpose of reviewing proposals for Brown School would include 2 BIDPA members; 2 Council members; 2 PB members; someone from the neighborhood; a representative of the Chamber; private business owner, and a staff person. Councilor Berthiaume and Councilor Remillard volunteered to represent the Council.

Budget

Mr. Wheeler went over the projected Revenues including equitable aid proposed by the Senate of \$1,017,069 and Municipal aid of \$238,546. Bids on oil resulted in a savings of about \$70,000; school grants were also adjusted. There is also an increase of \$32,500 from the general fund to the airport budget. The proposed tax rate will increase by .25 to \$39.52

Expenses

Mr. Wheeler distributed a summary and a detail of the budget with proposed changes from the Public Hearing. All of the outside agencies are restored. Cut positions from all departments have been restored. There is an additional \$32,000 for landfill monitoring due to chemical pfas prevalent in ground water and funds are being added for landfill gas at East Milan.

In Capital Improvements half of the cost of the reval will be in this budget and ½ in next year's budget. There is \$28,000 to pay the sidewalk tractor lease and we need salt trucks, and a packer. We will continue to use the 3 packers we have and concentrate on purchasing salt trucks with plow equipment.

There is street and sidewalk replacement work to do on Hutchins Street; and if Riverwalk does happen, we need to have \$180,000 for match. School grants were adjusted to reflect actual amounts. All of the detailed changes result in the summary changes presented in the amended resolution and increase the tax rate by .25 per thousand. Councilor Rozek confirmed that this budget is based on getting funds from the state. Mayor Grenier said that this is a judicious and cautious budget and he anticipates favorable school funding. If for some reason, State funding does not come through, the budget will be pared down. By mid-July, there will be a budget from the State. Councilor Rozek left the meeting at this time.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person; (d) Land Matters. The motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Council conceded to a minimum bid of \$500 for a property at 155 Willow Street to be offered to abutters.

Councilors discussed a potential conflict of interest.

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to come out of non-public session. The motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved to adjourn; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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