

City Council Work Session

Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3

October 19, 2020

At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 894 1788 5091; Passcode 477754, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, www.berlinnh.gov.

- b) *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:*

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

- c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:*

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587 or e-mail at: plaflamme@berlinnh.gov

- d) *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting*

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Present at roll call were: Mayor Grenier at City Hall and in the room with James Wheeler; via Zoom, Councilors Theberge, Higbee, Berthiaume, Morgan and Eastman who noted they were alone in their respective rooms; Councilors Rozek and Remillard were excused.

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Fire Chief Jay Watkins, Assistant Police Chief Dan Buteau, Will Rosenberg, Henry Boucher, Chris Dubey, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun and public

Mayor Grenier asked to add items to the agenda: request for sign on to a letter from Mayors regarding the growing homeless situation in the State; a communication from the Chamber of Commerce re: Light Up the Sky; discussion of election expenses and the Clean Diesel Grant program. Councilor Theberge moved to add the items to the agenda; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Berlin EMS Presentation

Chris Dubey reported that he has decided to sell his stock in BEMS to Butler Transport, a Maryland based company. Mr. Will Rosenberg, representing the company was present. Butler Transport will bring services, equipment and significant upgrade to what BEMS has been able to provide and they will do it in a few short months. They plan to have power lift stretchers, technology on trucks and they will provide for the employees to keep their jobs with upgrades to benefits.

Mr. Rosenberg confirmed, that they are under a legal agreement with BEMS. Mr. Wheeler noted that by purchasing BEMS, Butler assumes the contract with the City which is valid until 2022. Mayor Grenier confirmed that there is nothing for the Council to do at this time. He added that it is in the best interest of all parties to have certainty on all sides. Mr. Rosenberg noted that Butler is privately held and not driven by numbers; they are looking to be here as a partner. Councilor Eastman thanked Chris Dubey for his years of service and he welcomed Butler to the city.

Master Plan Consultant Selection

Ms. Laflamme reported that the last Master Plan was done in 2010 so it is getting dated. With work done by the Community Profile and Economic Development Strategy, there is already a head start on the next Master Plan. With a grant from the Tillotson Fund for \$20,000 and a budget appropriation of \$15,000, the budget is \$35,000. We were expecting several proposals; however only one was received from Resilience Planning and Design. The firm comes with good references from Rochester, Portsmouth, and Littleton and they will be able to build on the work that has been done. Councilor Eastman asked if the disposal of City properties has been discussed in the Master Plan. Ms. Laflamme said that the prior plans addressed community facilities with not much attention on housing. She added that she can talk with Resilience about it. Councilor Higbee moved to award the Master Plan contract to Resilience for a sum not to exceed \$35,000; Councilor Eastman seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Public Works Reorganization

Mr. Wheeler shared a reorganization plan for the Public Works Department. The proposal reduces the number of supervisors from four to three and adds an Assistant Public Works Director. The Assistant will take care of the day to day operations of the department and the supervisors will report to this position. Mayor Grenier confirmed that this is budget neutral. Mr. Wheeler noted that he's spoken to the supervisors and encouraged all to apply. From there, he will work on filling the Public Works Director position.

Councilor Berthiaume asked if there is a fair shot throughout the department for the Assistant position. Mr. Wheeler stated that it will be posted internally. Councilor Higbee questioned having fewer

supervisors since each seems to have their area of specialty. Mr. Wheeler stated that there is one job description for the supervisors and they are interchangeable; they are all familiar with all aspects.

Councilor Eastman stated that the Assistant is a good idea. Mayor Grenier asked when the change would be implemented and Mr. Wheeler indicated that it would be right away. Mayor Grenier asked if any Councilors were opposed to this change and there was no opposition.

Public Works Equipment

Mr. Wheeler explained that there is a memo about Public Works equipment in the packet. After having loaders not pass inspection last year, we found that it was a routine that we did not want repeat. The four loaders that passed inspection last year did not pass this year. The good news is the investments made in the last few years gives us 8 pieces of reliable equipment where we typically run 9. Seven of these are new and we are in a much better position than last year.

There is a Clean Diesel grant available that will pay 25% of a piece of equipment as long as it meets the criteria. Once the purchase is made, the old equipment has to be destroyed. We have a 2001 salt truck that is still regularly used. It would be eligible for grant funding; however the 1978 salt truck in our fleet is not eligible. We may want to keep the 2001 truck in lieu of taking \$25,000 of grant funds. Mayor Grenier suggested that if the grant money can be spent in March or April, allowing us use of the truck through the winter, it may be feasible. Mr. Wheeler noted that DES is wanting us to commit on what equipment we will forgo.

Councilor Eastman asked how much it would cost to replace the cab on the loaders that don't pass inspection. Mr. Wheeler stated that we would have to buy a roll over protection kit to install at about \$16,000 each and then finding sound metal on the loader to attach the cab to may be a challenge. A new loader is \$33,000 per year. Councilor Higbee commented that it makes more sense to keep the 2001 salt truck rather than go for the grant money. Mayor Grenier gave credit to the mechanics at Public Works.

Letter Addressing Homelessness

Mayor Grenier stated that he has been attending monthly Zoom meetings to deal collaboratively with other mayors in the State on issues every community faces. All were in agreement that homelessness is getting to be more of a problem. Mayors have been asked to sign a joint letter to Governor Sununu. Mayor Grenier asked for the Council's authorization to sign a letter on behalf of Berlin. Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to authorize Mayor Grenier to sign a joint letter from Mayors on the homeless crisis in the State; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call. Mayor Grenier noted that he would forward a copy of the letter to the Council.

Light Up Berlin Sky

Mr. Wheeler informed the Council that he received a draft press release from the Chamber of Commerce. They had an idea to provide a symbol of hope by lighting some of the boom piers on a week night for locals. They are intending to light only five or six of the boom piers, between the park and walking bridge. The Police Department wants to close the road.

Mayor Grenier asked if there were questions or concerns. Councilor Higbee suggested that a longer span of lit boom piers would allow people to be more spread out. Councilor Berthiaume commented that the Chamber wanted feedback for this idea. Mayor Grenier noted that if the City schools go into

remote learning, then the lighting should not occur. He added that the cases are isolated incidents at Bureau of Prisons.

DERA Grant

Mr. Wheeler stated that he's been working with Tim White from DES on the Clean Diesel Grant, which would reimburse the City 25% of the cost of outdated equipment. A resolution is proposed for first reading. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morgan to add Resolution 2020-25 as Item 6 a) on the agenda. On a roll call vote, all voted affirmatively.

Election Expense

Item #6 under new business is a resolution for a grant that will reimburse the city for election expenses. Ms. Fortin became aware of the grant; she applied and was awarded \$5,900. Mayor Grenier thanked the City Clerk.

At 7:47, there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier 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.