

City Council Work Session

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

December 7, 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 **839 4212 3545**; Passcode **14766**, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, [www.berlinnh.gov](http://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](mailto: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, Rozek, Higbee, Remillard, Otis, and Eastman who noted they were alone in their respective rooms; Councilors Berthiaume and Morgan were excused.

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Fire Chief James Watkins, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun.

### **Broadband Committee Representative Selection**

Ms. Laflamme reported that the County Commissioners established a Broadband Committee so that local towns, Carol Miller from the State and North Country Council can review the North Country's Internet availability and accessibility. It is important to have representatives from each of the communities. As the largest community, in tandem with the County, the City will apply for planning grants from the USDA to determine where there are gaps in Internet accessibility.

Councilor Rozek asked what parts of the City are not covered by Spectrum. Ms. Laflamme replied that the expectation is that everyone would have the ability to have fiber which is now only available on Main Street and on East Milan Road. Councilor Rozek asked how much time she has to dedicate to this and Ms. Laflamme said that it is a monthly meeting and North Country Council is taking the lead at the request of the County.

Councilor Rozek moved to appoint Pamela Laflamme to the Broadband Committee; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

### **Discussion with PB Chairman Tom McCue re: Development Activity & Roles and Responsibilities of Local Officials**

Mayor Grenier introduced Tom McCue who is Chair of the Planning Board. He noted that the Board has bylaws that do not allow more than 3 consecutive terms and Mr. McCue has run the terms but he will stay on as an alternate. He added that he strongly suggests that the Board amend its bylaws to take another look at the regulation.

Mr. McCue thanked the Mayor and added that it is important to get new people on the Board and he is happy to stay on as an Alternate. He wanted to talk about development in Berlin and the roles and responsibilities of the Planning Board and City Council. NH is not a home rule state and municipalities have only the powers granted to them by the legislature.

Anything having to do with land use, falls within the purview of the Planning Board and/or Zoning Board. Issues of tax relief, infrastructure, buying city property, and public private partnerships fall under City Council. The Planning Board is governed by State law, RSA 674. It is essential that everyone is treated the same. No applicants should feel unduly prejudiced. The City is not being anti-development and with Pam's efforts, Berlin is one of the best places in the State to do development.

There is a need to be organized and by following process, we can assure that we treat everyone the same and avoid confusion for the applicant. Mr. McCue went through the processes for an applicant starting with a preliminary conceptual consultation through to a complete application. It is important that no board be seen as endorsing a project. Mayor Grenier thanked Mr. McCue.

### **North Country Council 2021 Dues**

Ms. Laflamme indicated that North Country Council bills on a calendar year and they have lowered dues by 5% recognizing that communities are struggling. She added that she has worked with them more this year than in any other year. They provide a great partnership, keeping on top of grants and broadband.

**Collective Bargaining**

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to go into non-meeting per RSA 91-A:2I(b) Collective Bargaining. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

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.