

City Council Work Session

August 7, 2023

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Eastman, Remillard, Roland Theberge, Morency, Berthiaume, and Roland Theberge. Councilor Higbee and Morgan were absent.

Others present: City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr., Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Police Chief Daniel Buteau, Bill White, Jan Zicha, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Roland Theberge, to add two items under Other to the agenda, a letter from La Casita, LLC and a discussion about the Opioid Abatement Program. So moved, the motion carried.

Tax Deferral Discharge

City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr. presented the Council a Notice of Discharge for Robert Franz of 77 Seventh Street.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morency, to approve the tax deferral discharge for the property at 77 Seventh Street, owned by Robert Franz, for tax years 2005 through 2010. So moved, the motion carried.

Sewer Abatement Requests

City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr. presented the sewer abatements received.

1. Matthew Trottier for 32 Birch Street for a burst pipe.
2. Bernard Bleggi for 123 Jolbert Street for a water leak.
3. Madeleine Etienne for 36 Pleasant Street for a leaking toilet.
4. Janeen-Lee Noyes for 1285 Main Street for a leaking toilet.
5. Diane Gilbert for 87 Pine Street for a high bill with no leaks found.
6. Arthur Bergeron for 92 Nansen Street for a leaking toilet.
7. Sandra Estevez for 1 Alice St for a faulty meter reading.

Mr. Warren recommended denying all of the abatements except for Sandra Estevez, as all had water go through the meter. The meter for Ms. Estevez was not read, and Mr. Warren recommended abating half of the bill, which would be an average of similar properties.

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Roland Theberge, to deny all of the abatement requests, except for Sandra Estevez of 1 Alice Street, and to abate \$325.00 of the bill for the Alice Street property.

Councilor Morency asked about Ms. Gilbert's request for a monitor on the line. It was noted that it is up to the homeowner to install.

So moved, the motion carried.

NH Public Works Mutual Aid Program

City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr. advised that he received a letter from the Chair of the Public Works Mutual Aid Board offering Berlin a free two-year membership. This program provides assistance to communities in a disaster. If we need help we would get it, and if another community needed help we

could help them if we were able to. Mr. Warren advised that with membership, we could get reimbursed by FEMA if we were to assist another community.

Councilor Roland Theberge asked how much it costs per year and if other communities in this area are also members. Mr. Warren stated that the first two years of membership are free, and after that it is \$50 per year. Mr. Warren advised he is not sure which other communities in our area are members. When asked if becoming a member would open up more grant opportunities, Mr. Warren advised that it may. Mr. Warren advised that the membership would be presented as a Resolution at tonight's meeting.

ARPA Projects

Mr. Warren advised that he is estimating the three tennis courts at Horne Field to be approximately \$300,000.00.

Mr. Warren also presented a plan for lighting on Hutchins Street from the Cleveland Bridge to East Mason Street. Mr. Warren advised that solar bollards, similar to the ones on the Riverwalk, are available. They are vandal-proof and would require no power lines. These would be installed between the sidewalk and the road, in the grass strip. Public Works would be able to install them, and the total cost would be about \$25,000. Councilor Roland Theberge noted that he would also like to see sidewalk lighting along Hutchins Street toward AVH. Councilor Morency asked about snow on the lights in the winter, and Mr. Warren advised the top is black and mushroom shaped for the snow to melt and slide off. Councilor Roland Theberge asked about a warranty, and Mr. Warren advised that it comes with a three-year guarantee on the light and battery.

Mr. Warren advised that with the other projects discussed at the last Work Session, these two projects would bring the total cost to \$760,000. The ARPA funds available total \$1.05 million, and the remainder could be used for the crack sealing machine or for roads. The money must be used by December of 2024, and any bids will specify that the work must be done before then.

Mr. Warren advised that he will bring a Resolution to the next meeting for the expenditure of the ARPA funds, so that they can get started on the projects.

Mayor Grenier noted that he would like to see the tennis courts done before next spring for tennis season. Councilor Berthiaume asked if the courts could be painted for pickleball, and Mr. Warren advised that the courts on Glen Avenue would be repaved and used for this.

Capital Improvement Program

City Manager Warren advised that he is planning to set up non-lapsing accounts for Capital Improvement Funds, expendable trust funds. There would be a fund for each department, such as Fire, Police, Public Works, IT, and Roads. This would allow a better picture of what is available for Capital Improvement Projects, as the money would not have to be carried over to a segregated fund each year. The money would be voted on in the budget, and a breakdown of the funds would be provided. This is allowed per the Charter, and Trustees of the Trust Funds would oversee them. The Council would be the agents to expend, with a vote at a Work Session, and the funds could still be re-allocated by Resolution if needed. Councilor Eastman noted that they could also choose to not add funds if the account has not been used. Councilor Morency noted that it will help when trying to complete projects, as there will not be a lapse between the end of the budget year and the carryover to segregated funds. Mr. Warren advised that he will bring a Resolution to Council soon for this.

Other

Letter from La Casita, LLC

A letter was received from Eduardo Fuentes of La Casita asking for the Council to vote to support the extension of their liquor license to permit the service of alcoholic beverages on the outside patio of their establishment. A letter from the City is required by the State Liquor Commission.

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second by Councilor Remillard, to send a letter in support of the extension of the liquor license at La Casita, to permit serving alcoholic beverages on the outside patio of the establishment. So moved, the motion carried. Mr. Warren will send an email to the NH Liquor Commission advising them that the City has no objection.

NCHC Opioid Abatement Program

Councilor Morency noted that the recent meeting at WMCC concerning the opioid epidemic highlighted the community need for resources for addiction. Councilor Morency noted that \$47,000 is available from the Opioid Settlement and another \$107,000 from the County. White Horse is ready to start working on a building for a resource center, but needs between \$4,500 and \$11,500 to get started, before federal funds become available in October. Chief Buteau advised that North Country Health Consortium has provided a check in the amount of \$8,000 toward this, and there is a Resolution on the agenda tonight to accept the grant funds. The additional \$3,000 could come from the settlement funds. City Manager Warren advised that there are two ways to move the funds procedurally. One is to have the outside agency request grant funds, and the other would be to create an MOU with the agency. The MOU would put the duties and responsibilities of the organization into an agreement.

Chief Buteau advised that the second part of this program would be the PET (Prevention Enforcement Treatment) officer position at the Police Department. The Police Department received a grant for a full-time position for three years with benefits, however due to staffing they have been unable to fill the position. Councilor Morency advised the Council that he has applied for the position part-time. The Police Commission will vote on this, and Councilor Morency advised that if hired he would not be able to vote on any items that are related to the Police Department as a Councilor. City Manager Warren advised that since the information was disclosed at a public meeting, Councilor Morency has met the requirements for disclosure for the conflict of interest. Mayor Grenier stated that Councilor Morency has his full support in taking the PET position, and noted that he could not think of a better person to handle the program. Councilor Remillard stated that she attended the meeting at the college, that everyone who attended was supportive, and there was no negative feedback. Chief Buteau stated that there is a lot of improvement to be made and lives to be saved, and they are hoping to build trust between the recovery community and law enforcement.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second from Councilor Roland Theberge to enter non-public session at 7:28 p.m. under RSA 91-A:3 II (d). So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote.

The Council discussed a city-owned property. No votes were taken.

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second from Councilor Robert Theberge to leave non-public session at 7:51 p.m.

Being no further business in work session, Mayor Grenier recessed for the regular meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

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