

City Council Work Session
December 11, 2017

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Superintendent of Schools Corinne Cascadden, Interim President of WMCC, Chuck Lloyd, and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Planning for the Future

Ms. Cascadden reported that there is a movement to change the way that students are educated which includes parental choice and new ways of teaching and learning. There has been some discussion to frame a model of redesigning high school for the future. Changes will involve use of technology; non-traditional seat time schedules, and increased parental choice. Demographics and enrollment patterns, decrease in state aid and adequacy will also be considered. SB 193 is a scholarship or voucher for a parent to choose to home school or send their child to private school and if it passes, enrollment will likely go down by 3%.

The schools were successful in obtaining grant funds to explore whether the Berlin School District should continue to be dependent or whether they should become independent. The study will also review whether the district should consider a grades 7-12 enrollment at Berlin High School and K-6 at Hillside. Finally should the Berlin school District engage in collaborative planning that would afford all students in the Androscoggin Valley the same opportunities. A final report will be presented at a public meeting in late winter or early spring.

The study on grade reorganization will be done by three consultants from NHSAA. This is a planning process to find innovative approaches for educating all students in the Androscoggin Valley. Ms. Cascadden showed demographics that project the population will continue to decrease contributing to decreases in enrollment of 16.7% in Coos County by 2025.

There are currently 86 students being home schooled that report to the Superintendent. There may be some who are not reporting. She encouraged support for HB 1263 which requires accountability for home schooling.

Mr. Wheeler asked what models are used for super schools. Ms. Cascadden noted that high schools will be redesigned with classes offered in a realm of options. We are going to see the exit of grade levels and the onset of personalized learning for every student. Mr. Lloyd added that there are opportunities for students at WMCC that will allow high school students to earn college credits while in high school. Declining student population also affects the college.

Ms. Laflamme stated that Don Jutton, and Pat MacQueen will be reaching out to Council members and the School Board to better understand people's positions on a dependent school district. They will develop a plan to explore all the options. Mayor Grenier committed to reviewing the data and keeping an open mind.

Follow Up on Public Works Director Position

Mr. Wheeler stated that he has provided the job posting, the Director Job description; supervisor job description and salary information obtained from list serve and from the NHMA salary survey. The information shows that we are in the right ballpark with the existing salary. Councilor Rozek asked what Gorham's director is making.

Mr. Wheeler stated that not every PWD director has the exact same job with some running a water system and some who don't run a sewer system. Councilor Rozek stated that, considering the demographics of the city, can we combine the position with the four supervisor positions to make the department more efficient. In discussion, councilors agreed that strong management skills will be key to the position. Councilor Rozek noted that if we pay this kind of money, he wants to bring the department to another level. It was mentioned that cardboard pick up has been discussed but has not been implemented. Councilor Nelson also asked about fees for non-profits who do not pay taxes and receive services. Mr. Wheeler noted that the storm event put things off by several weeks.

Councilor Nelson moved to fill the Public Works Director position; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried.

Mayor Grenier asked to add the Inauguration to the agenda. Councilor Rozek so moved; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried.

CIP

Mr. Wheeler indicated that the CIP is in the same format as in the past. It was approved by the Planning Board. There is a summary sheet for each of the six years in the plan and everything from the first year of the CIP is added to the initial budget request. There is \$2.5 million of need that will be whittled down in the budget process. It will be up to the Council to decide on the highest priorities.

Councilor Nelson moved to accept the Capital Improvement Plan; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried.

Inauguration

Mayor Grenier asked if any of the Council wanted to do a formal inauguration since all were returning to their seats. The consensus was that there does not need to be anything done.

Councilor Nelson asked if the Council would consider name tags that identify members as city council. Ms. Riendeau will look into nametags.

Ms. Laflamme informed the Council that we have the option to add e-mail boxes for each councilor.

Non Public Session

Councilor Theberge moved to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3II (d) land matters; Councilor Otis seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to come out of non-public session. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to seal the minutes until the Mayor and City Manager deem it appropriate to release them as releasing them would make the action taken ineffective; so moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to authorize the City Manager to put out an RFP for a study on fire and ems services, not to exceed \$31,000. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Nelson questioned Holiday meetings and it was the consensus of the Council to meet Tuesday January 2 and to skip the work session on December 25.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Nelson to adjourn the work session.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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