

Public Hearing and City Council Work Session

June 13, 2022

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

Others present: City Manager Phil Warren, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Lori Korzen, Steven Korzen, Henry Noel, Micah Bachner, Amber Bachner, Karen Collins, Ralph Collins, Tom McCue, Dan Whittet, Liz Kelly, Eamon Kelley and Paul Robitaille, Berlin Daily Sun.

6:30 P.M. PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing on the Master Plan update at 6:32 p.m. He invited Tom McCue, Planning Board Vice-Chair to discuss the new Master Plan. Mr. McCue started by thanking Ms. Laflamme for her hard work on this Master Plan all while filling many roles. He also thanked the Public for their involvement. He commented the format used for the Master Plan is a new style and he is looking forward to implementation. He advised there will be a Planning Board meeting next month to officially adopt the Master Plan. He stated an updated plan is presented tonight seeking further input from the Public and City Council.

Ms. Liz Kelly from Resilience Planning and Design, which is the firm assisting the City with the Master Plan discussed the new Master Plan. She advised that creating a Master Plan requires a lot of dialogue and conversations, a lot of analysis on their part on a variety of topics related to land use of transportation, natural resources and economic development. She commented they also did some public outreach as well which the Master Plan is a basis of what was heard during this public outreach. She commented for this Master Plan they decided to use a thematic type arrangement. Instead of the traditional topics of transportation, natural resources as mentioned, all the existing conditions related to that information is in an appendix. The Master Plan itself is organized in themes and those themes are meant to fall into the overall future vision. The main themes are investing in public infrastructure, improve community health and well-being, revitalize downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, support and expand the tourism outdoor recreation industries, broaden tax base through development and redevelopment and preserve what makes Berlin special. Implementation strategies are incorporated to further accomplish each of those themes.

At 6:40 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened up public comments to Councilors first then the general public second.

Councilor Robert Theberge commented from past experience that the Master Plan, although it's a living document, it's seen as just collecting dust on the shelf. He is hoping that the Planning Board doesn't look at it that way.

Ms. Kelly commented that their biggest goal in working with municipalities is trying to design the document so it can be a tool. They try to include some initial recommendations that really focus on laying a foundation for at least guiding implementation of some of these actions.

Councilor Morency questioned in regards to the implementation of the plans, how rigid is it if it doesn't fit the mold, is there room there to make adjustments.

Ms. Kelly responded there is definitely room for adjustments. In general, any municipalities that has a Master Plan for a certain period of time, actions sometimes become irrelevant which is very normal as things change.

There were no comments from the public.

In closing the Public Hearing, Mayor Grenier commented that we were in a much different place when the Master Plan was done last in 2010. We were 4 years into the closing of the pulp mill, we were just beginning the construction of Burgess. The priorities of that Master Plan were different. He doesn't believe the last Master Plan collected dust as a lot of the items in the plan were started including the Burgess project, the development of motorized recreation and infrastructure is slowly improving. He feels the City is well positioned to move forward. He thanked Ms. Kelly and the Planning Board for their great work.

Ms. Laflamme thanked all Planning Board members and everyone who participated. She also thanked Resilience Planning and Design as they heard her loud and clear when she told them she didn't want a bulky Master Plan and likely to sit on a shelf and collect dust. This new Master Plan is themed with photos, graphics, things that just make it easier to read. She is very pleased with the outcome.

Mayor Grenier closed the public hearing at 6:49 p.m.

WORK SESSION

Micah Bachner – Disc Golf Presentation

Mr. Bachner, founder of the Great North Woods Disc Golf league, presented to Council an opportunity to develop a 9-hole course throughout the City with some locations being in public parks. He explained what is disc golf, what is needed to play, the cost and how this would help Berlin's exposure and tourism meeting multiple goals of the City's Master Plan. Questions from Council were asked and answered. Councilor Remillard requested a more detailed plan with specific locations and pictures. Mayor Grenier asked Mr. Bachner to work with the City Manager and Community Development Director to move this forward as time is of the essence. He would like to see this project move forward and ideally have people playing before Labor Day.

Building & Land Sale update

Ms. Laflamme distributed a list of properties to Council. She advised for the building sale, this is a recap as she received approval back in November 2021 from Council to put out to bid for a second- and third-time houses that didn't sell back in the 2021 Building sale and four two families that the City has in their position for the first time. Council agreed back in November 2021 to put them out for a \$5,000 minimum bid. At that time, a rehabilitation period of 12 months was discussed. She is suggesting extending the rehabilitation period to 18 months based on sales from past years.

For the land only properties, she advised Council had approved back in November to offer the five first parcels to abutters which letters will be going out this week. While going through the land parcels she is suggesting the following parcels be put out for sale; 290 Grafton Street (Map 130 Lot 124), 554 Hillsboro Street (Map 130 Lot 189), 339 Goebel Street (Map 118 Lots 183 & 194), East Mason Street (Map 130 Lot 234), Second Avenue (Map 119 Lot 444) and Pleasant Street lots (Map 119 Lots 33, 34 & 35).

Councilor Remillard commented she went through the list and agrees with all of them except for the sale of the Pleasant Street lots. She feels the City should hold on to them until someone comes with an offer. Councilor Berthiaume moved to reauthorize the sale of the seven building properties as decided in November 2021 with the change from a 12-month rehabilitation period to an 18-month rehabilitation period. Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Councilor Berthiaume moved to put out for bid 290 Grafton Street (Map 130 Lot 294) to the general public with a minimum bid of \$7,600. Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Councilor Berthiaume moved to put out for bid to the general public 554 Hillsboro Street (Map 130 Lot 189) for a minimum bid of \$4,440 and 339 Goebel Street (Map 118 Lots 183 & 194) for a minimum bid of \$7,800. Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Councilor Berthiaume moved to offer Second Avenue (Map 119 Lot 444) and East Mason Street (Map 130 Lot 234) to abutters for a \$1,500 minimum bid. Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Councilor Remillard moved to temporarily remove the three Pleasant Street Lots (Map 119 Lots 33, 34 & 35) from resale. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Ms. Laflamme commented there are two properties from the 2020 building sale that nothing has been done yet. The first one, the purchaser passed away over the winter. She has been working with his family to figure out what might be done. As for the other property, she is questioning if anything will ever be done to the property. The concern there is it's a visible location and there has been complaints about the fact that there is outdoor storage on the property. It's been 2 years since the sale and there has been no progress. Councilor Eastman suggested sending a letter to the purchaser reminding him of the requirements. Councilor Remillard advised she had a discussion with the individual and he advised he'd have the whole property cleaned up by July 1st. She recommends sending him a letter giving him 60 days to start cleaning up the grounds and begin work on the property or the City will exercise it's right to take back the property. Councilor Berthiaume commented she agrees with Councilor Remillard to give him a deadline as it's been two years and suggested asking him for what his plans are for the property.

Ms. Laflamme advised that Invest NH is creating a housing fund that should be ready to be in use in July. There are funds in there for demolition and she plans on applying for demo funds for the four multifamily properties Council chose not to put out to bid. She will also be applying for funds through that process to redo the site plan and subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance.

Timber Cut Warrant

Mr. Warren advised this is a timber tax warrant for Binette Realty, LLC. This is for timber cut at Map & Lot 407-2 and is in the amount of \$18.96. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the timber tax warrant to Binette Realty, LLC in the amount of \$18.96. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Councilor Remillard moved to adjourn; Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried by all in favor. The meeting ended at 7:41p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Rioux
Executive Assistant

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

