

# MAYOR'S REPORT

MARCH 26, 2010

It's already been a whole month since my last report. There has been a lot going on in the last few weeks between budget activity and all of the economic development projects that I'm committed to. On budget work, things pretty much are moving as I suspected they would except for one positive development. All of the city employees and their union representatives are "burning the midnight oil" to find ways to save and defer costs to Berlin's taxpayers. Because there is no official agreement as yet, it would be premature to comment on the efforts. I have been in contact with various reps and I'm very excited with the honesty and genuine openness with the different proposals they are discussing among themselves. I also have to recognize the hard work of Carl Weber of Primex who is a representative of our health and property insurance carrier. He has been to Berlin twice already and plans at least three more trips before we have our budget public hearing in May. To keep our property tax rate the same next year as this year, we must find a combination of about \$1.6 Million in budget reductions or areas where we may gain in revenues. Everything is on the table right now to try to make a budget that works for all. The City Council has been very busy with at least two to three meetings a week for the next month as well.

As of Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 5PM, the bankruptcy court was no longer accepting bids for Frasers Cascade Mill. With all but a few items for the gasification project completed, we will know very soon the future of Cascade. There again, Cascade Mill is still operating and making money because of the dedication and hard work of all of the mill workers. As Mayor, I'm very proud of the sacrifices made by all of the employees to position the Cascade Mill to operate for many years to come. Your "never say die" spirit keeps me focused on the end result as well as we enter the final negotiations.

Also on March 16<sup>th</sup>, I was invited to attend the onsite tour of the Laidlaw property with the members of the NH EFSEC committee. It was interesting to see how well preserved #11 boiler is after not operating since 2006. Laidlaw officials have been very busy working on their state application for a possible Site Certificate issuance by October 1<sup>st</sup>. I finally met Mr. Michael Bartoszek, who is the CEO of Laidlaw Berlin Biopower and we had a very cordial conversation on his plans for the future development of the entire site. He also is very willing to work with Berlin in a number of ways, and we finished our brief talk by him asking how Berlin Youth Hockey's season was going.

Moving forward in the next month or so, I will ask the City Council to

resume discussions on much stricter regulations and enforcement of building codes violations. It is very clear to me that if we don't completely change how we deal with our notorious slumlords, Berlin will never reach it's potential, with or without any of the proposed biopower projects. As we speak, roughly 20% of Berlin's school budget is dedicated to special education. Roughly half of those students have been living in Berlin for less than three years. The vast majority of Berlin's Police efforts and resources are consumed by those with little or no respect for the people of this city. The time has come, and no time is better than now, to retake control of our city. We are ALL paying for this to continue, whether it is in bigger school budgets, police budgets, or sadly, larger Coos County Jail budgets.

Speaking about the City Council members, if you see your councilman on the street in passing, you may want to express a bit of gratitude. Whether you agree or disagree on certain positions some may take, we have been working close to 20 hours each week for the last three weeks. All have a diverse interest in seeing fit that the city becomes a better place. I want to publicly acknowledge the efforts made by all. I am certainly thrilled to have Lucie Remillard on the council. She brings energy, excitement and a plain speaking style that really serves all of Berlin very well.

The Berlin Planning Board will have the opportunity on April 6<sup>th</sup> to meet with Laidlaw officials. Lou Bravakis of Laidlaw has expressed on numerous occasions to me the willingness to work with the city to make their project a showcase for all to be proud of. With the large majority attending the March 16<sup>th</sup> public hearing expressing support for the project, the city nonetheless must still ensure that Berlin's quality of life is not adversely affected by the operations of the plant. I'm very confident that the Berlin Planning Board's review will be thorough and will address all the issues that may arise.

Finally, I want to tip my BHS hat to Mike Gaydo. Anyone in the last 40 years or so who was involved in area athletics knows the contribution he made to us all. A real class act, and when someone tells you no one's irreplaceable, you can bring up Mike Gaydo's name. That will silence the debate. I want to also wish Police Commissioner Steve Griffin a speedy recovery. Berlin needs you back at work!!

Thank You

Paul Grenier, Mayor of Berlin