

# MAYOR'S REPORT

## DECEMBER 30, 2011

It's already the end of a very busy year. As I look back, what a successful year it turned out to be. There is an atmosphere here in the Berlin area that finally things are going our way. Gorham Paper and Tissue, Burgess Biopower and finally funding for the opening of the Federal Correctional Institute here in Berlin has completely set in motion the redevelopment of our economy. There will still be some pain ahead however, as we transition. There will obviously be some specialized training needs for some folks, but finally, there are reasons to stay in Berlin if you are fresh out of school. Then there are still the issues with some of our major employers who have been cornerstones in our community for decades. I remain hopeful that as these important businesses exit bankruptcy, the health and welfare of the employees are the utmost primary concern.

One person who I rarely mention in my reports is the performance of City Manager Pat McQueen. Many of the successes we currently are experiencing is the result of his behind the scenes work. Pat conducts himself with the highest ethical and moral standards I've ever witnessed. He understands Berlin, knows the seriousness of the issues we face, and is always the first to suggest solutions. Pat's unassuming style will never make him a favorite of the press, but I compare his attention to detail and patience to that of a Swiss watchmaker.

The Berlin Public School system will kick off the budget process in early January. It is important that I mention how impressive our Board of Education handles the enormous challenges they constantly face. They have supported the efforts of Superintendent Corrine Cascadden and Business Manager Bryan Lamirande to streamline operations. They are tackling waste and duplication with a vengeance. They are finding new ways to accomplish important tasks smarter and more efficiently so that precious resources can be directed to where they truly belong. For some, it's difficult to get used to, but job preservation depends on the Board's success.

Look for another increase in Berlin's share of county taxes. Even though the county commissioners have developed essentially a flat expenditure budget from last year, the state keeps downshifting costs. In fact, our nursing home Medicaid reimbursement rates have been lowered almost 5% across the board. In addition, the state's regulations on nursing home operations are choking every licensed

operation. When I walk the halls of both Coos County long term elder care facilities, however, I remain committed to the residents' quality of care. These folks have earned the right to live out the remainder of their lives in a proud and dignified manner. When the state legislature walks away from their responsibility, the burden is pushed onto all of the county's taxpayers.

On January 10, voters will go to the polls to vote in the presidential primary elections. Also, there will be a separate ballot question asking if you favor the city's redistricting plan. Even though it's not perfect, I ask all of you to vote "YES" to the question. We will be developing this spring a method of having multiple voting precincts in the city, much the same way we do it now. This process was arduously difficult to develop and the City Council looked at every option on the table. This process won't change the "one man one vote" mandate, and unlike years past when Berlin was truly divided into separate ethnic neighborhoods, having a group of councilors elected at large makes them accountable to the entire city.

Finally, Berlin High School's winter athletic teams are in full swing. Berlin is fielding great teams in all gender sports. Let's make a night out and come see our young adults as they represent our proud community.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!!

Paul Grenier, Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Grenier", written in a cursive style.