

PUBLIC HEARING – DECEMBER 19, 2016

Mayor Grenier opened the duly scheduled and advertised Public Hearing at approximately 7:36 p.m. to hear comments on the following subject matters:

Resolution 2016-36 appropriating \$200,000.00 from the City's Unappropriated Fund Balance to the Health Department's Home Health Nursing Program.

Mayor Grenier asked for comments from the public; with none presented, the public hearing on the subject matter above closed at 7:36 p.m.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, December 19, 2016

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:37 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. The pledge of allegiance to the flag preceded roll call. Present: Councilors Remillard, Otis, Gentili, Higbee, Rozek, Nelson and Theberge. Councilor Morgan Allain was absent. Also present: James Wheeler, Susan Tremblay, Patty Chase, Angela Martin-Giroux, Pam Laflamme, Doris Fortier, Kelly Corcoran and Barbara Tetreault

Minutes, Previous Meeting

Councilor Remillard moved with a second by Councilor Otis to accept the minutes of the December 5th Regular Meeting/Work Session as well as the December 12th Work Session. So moved, the motion carried.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1779 start date 12/06/2016 end date 12/19/2016 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,303,125.76. Councilor Theberge moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports – There was none.
2. Resolution 2016-36 appropriating \$200,000.00 from the City's Unappropriated Fund Balance to the Health Department's Home Health Nursing Program. (Tabled 12/05/2016)

A RESOLUTION appropriating \$200,000.00 from the City's Unappropriated Fund Balance to the Health Department's Home Health Nursing Program.

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Berlin as Follows:

Whereas, the Berlin Home Health Program has been in existence for over 75 years; and

Whereas, the Program has come to a critical juncture where funding is necessary to make operational and staffing improvements including:

1. Acquire an electronic medical record system including software and hardware to effectively continue to provide services.
2. Increase salaries and wages to meet the market demands of hiring and retaining staff.
3. Pay for interim management services as well as any other services needed to facilitate this transition.

Whereas, the infusion of \$200,000.00 is expected to retain and improve a long standing and important service provided by the City; as well as position the Home Health function, provided by the City, to become a financially self-supported function.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Berlin, NH that Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$200,000.00) is hereby appropriated to the Berlin Health Department Home Health Program in the fiscal year 2017 budget in addition to all previously appropriated funds, for the purpose of effectuating necessary improvements to the Berlin Health Department's Home Health Program.

This Resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after passage.

Councilor Nelson moved with a second by Councilor Theberge to remove the resolution from the table at this time. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Nelson moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to have the resolution read a second time by title only. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Nelson moved with a second by Councilor Theberge to have the resolution read a third time by title only. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Nelson moved with a second by Councilor Theberge to pass the resolution. This motion required a 2/3 vote in order to pass. Roll call resulted in affirmative votes of Councilors Gentili, Higbee, Nelson, Theberge and Mayor Grenier. Councilors Remillard, Otis and Rozek voted in the negative. Mayor Grenier declared the motion failed.

NEW BUSINESS

3. Ordinance 2017-01 Commercial Tax Exemption (1st read)

Councilor Theberge moved with a second by Councilor Nelson to table the ordinance and schedule a public hearing on January 3, 2017. So moved, the motion carried.

4. City Manager's Report

1. We welcome Tyler Carrigan to the Fire Department. He is one of the hires through the SAFER Grant and will be starting work on January 3rd, 2017
2. Demolitions are complete for 167 Willow Street, and 615 Fourth Avenue. There is still some cleanup work to be done at 290 Grafton Street and 630 Rockingham is next in this round of housing demolitions.
3. KRT, the City's assessing contractor, is doing some data collection in Berlin consisting of measuring and listing of a random selection of homes. They are expected to finish this week. This is part of their regular contract work for measuring and listing.

4. Kids from Kindergarten to Third Grade can register now for basketball which will be played on Saturdays beginning February 4th. The cost is \$35. Jim Couhie. A long time instructor, will lead the program.
5. The Finance Director and I have met with Department Heads to begin the FY2018 budget process. I will present a proposed budget schedule to the Council for consideration at an upcoming meeting.
6. Despite a weekend with a wide range of weather conditions including snow, rain, freezing temperatures and unseasonably warm temperatures the PWD worked around the clock to keep streets as passable as possible. Mother Nature seemed to throw everything at us she could muster up. Thank you to the employees of the PWD as well as the other departments who provide service in these challenging conditions.
7. Merry Christmas!

Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to accept the City Manager's Report and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

5. Mayor's Report

In light of the Council's vote regarding the Health Department, Mayor Grenier wondered what the best path forward will be.

Councilor Rozek stated that he had previously spoken with the Mayor regarding his opinion on this matter. School funding then became an issue and may result in a major increase in the tax rate for this coming year. He feels that the current tax rate is the kiss of death for the City. It is prohibiting new growth and has a bad long term effect for new employment in the City. When the public hearing took place he was pleased to hear that there may be outside funding available. Public funding for the department is critical at this time. He expects that the City will need to find between \$200,000 and \$250,000 for the school budget this year. Councilor Rozek feels that the Health Department can be privatized and that the Council needs to concentrate on education. This was a very difficult decision. He would have voted differently if the Council was only looking at one issue.

City Manager Wheeler said that an exit plan needs to be developed. Mayor Grenier stated that the Council will review this matter further at the January 9th work session.

Mayor Grenier stated that the Berlin Housing Authority delivered their PILT payment in a Christmas card. The \$13,630.80 payment was the largest to date.

Mayor Grenier wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to accept the Mayor's report and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS – Doris Fortier, an RN for the City of Berlin, because of the vote regarding the City's Health Department, informed the Mayor and Council that she was effectively giving her two week notice.

7. Council Comments – Councilor Theberge is concerned with how the roads were treated this past weekend, pointing out that Main Street still is not picked up and State Street is very icy. He is concerned about the area surrounding the schools as well as Main Street and feels that it needs to be looked into.

Councilor Nelson stated that with all of the types of weather encountered over the weekend, she feels that the Public Works Department did a good job with keeping up with it.

Mayor Grenier stated that the Council needed to remember that everyone is entitled to their opinion and should be respectful of one another.

Councilor Rozek felt that with all of the different types of weather, the Public Works Department did a great job.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Mayor and Council, Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to adjourn the regular meeting. So moved, the motion carried and Mayor Grenier declared the regular meeting adjourned at approximately 7:55 P.M.

A True Record, Attest:

Elaine Riendeau
City Clerk