

CITY OF BERLIN
New Hampshire

Minutes of Council Work Session of 3/17/2021
Via Zoom
6:30 pm

Members:

Mayor Grenier
Councilor Remillard
Councilor Theberge
Councilor Higbee
Councilor Eastman

City Staff:

James Wheeler, City Manager
Holly Larsen, Finance Director/Tax Collector
Pamela Laflamme, Community Development Director
Mark Lapointe, Assistant Director of Public Works
Roland Langlois, BPW Supervisor
Jon Goudreau, Superintendent of Pollution Control
Terry Letarte, Recreation Director
JD Girard

Public: Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun

At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 894 6301 0108; Passcode 290897, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, www.berlinnh.gov.

b) *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:*

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:*

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587 or e-mail at: plaflamme@berlinnh.gov

d) *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting.*

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Public Hearing

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 6:34 pm for Resolution 2021-11 NHDOT TAP Funds for Hutchins Street Sidewalk. There were no public comments. Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 6:35 pm.

Mayor Grenier opened the Public Hearing at 6:35 pm for Resolution 2021-12 Authorizing USDA RBDG Broadband Feasibility Grant. There were no public comments. Mayor Grenier closed the Public Hearing at 6:35 pm.

Special Meeting

1. Resolution 2021-11 NHDOT TAP Funds for Hutchins St Sidewalk

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty One

A RESOLUTION authorizing an application to NHDOT Transportation Alternatives Program for a grant in an amount up to Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000.00). The purpose of the grant is to construct a new sidewalk along Hutchins Street between Napert Village and the intersection of Columbia Avenue with Hutchins Street.

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

Whereas, up to Eight Hundred Thousand (\$800,000.00) is available to municipalities in New Hampshire and all grants require a match of twenty percent of the total project; and

Whereas, if awarded, up to Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000.00) of the funds will be used for constructing a new sidewalk along Hutchins Street between Napert Village and the intersection of Columbia Avenue with Hutchins Street; and

Whereas, the City recently finished a new sidewalk project along Hutchins Street and there is an area approximately 1,700 feet in length with no sidewalk; and

Whereas, the City recognizes Hutchins Street is the City's primary truck route and north/south connector road which experiences heavy traffic and a new sidewalk connecting the two existing sidewalks will make the area much safer for pedestrians and motorists alike; and

Whereas, the City's Master Plan calls for the application of TAP funds to construct additional sidewalks in the City.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved by the City Council of the City of Berlin as Follows:

That, the City Manager is authorized to apply to the NHDOT Transportation Alternatives Program for a grant in an amount up to Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000.00). The purpose of the grant is to construct a new sidewalk along Hutchins Street between Napert Village and the intersection of Columbia Avenue with Hutchins Street and the City Manager is authorized to execute any documents which may be necessary to effectuate the NH DOT Transportation Alternatives Program grant and contract;

Be it further resolved that the City Manager is authorized to receive said grant and the grant proceeds are hereby appropriated for the purpose of the grant; and all grant proceeds shall be deposited with the City Treasurer and any additional use of these funds beyond the scope of work as listed in the application shall require prior approval of the City Council.

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

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to remove this item from the table. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to read Resolution 2021-11 by short title for a second time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to read Resolution 2021-11 by short title for a third time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee that Resolution 2021-11 be passed.

Councilor Higbee stated that he is hoping to see this come to fruition, even if it will take several years to complete.

Councilor Theberge asked where the intersection with Columbia Avenue is and Pamela Laflamme advised across from the wood yard on Hutchins Street, by the park.

So moved, the motion passed by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

2. Resolution 2021-12 Authorizing USDA RBDG Broadband Feasibility Grant

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-One

A RESOLUTION authorizing an application to the USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program for up to \$30,000.00 for technical assistance to determine the scope and feasibility of making broadband more accessible and providing more choices to residents in Berlin.

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

Whereas, there is grant money available from the USDA Rural Business Development fund; and

Whereas, there are many benefits to increasing access to broadband and fiber to the premise to improve the economic opportunities of Berlin; and

Whereas, this work is in the early stages of formation and there is a need to collect data and work collaboratively with the County in the development of a vision, goals and objectives to guide future work; and

Whereas, if it is found to be feasible to bring more providers, add more connections, make broadband more competitive and affordable, it would benefit every sector and every family in the community; and

Whereas, the City is in need of more ways to attract and retain commercial development; and

Whereas, access to broadband in today's world is just as necessary as any other utility and there is a need to work to make it more available and more affordable.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved by the City Council of the City of Berlin as Follows:

That, the City Manager is authorized to apply for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant of up to \$30,000.00 for technical assistance to determine the scope and feasibility of making broadband more accessible and providing more choices to residents in Berlin; and the City Manager is authorized to execute any documents which may be necessary to effectuate the USDA contract.

Be it further resolved that upon approval, the City Manager is authorized to receive said grant and

the grant proceeds are hereby appropriated for the purpose of the grant. All grant proceeds shall be deposited with the City Treasurer and that any additional use of these funds beyond the scope of work as listed in the application shall require prior approval of the City Council.

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

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Remillard, to remove this item from the table. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Remillard, to read Resolution 2021-12 by short title for a second time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Remillard, to read Resolution 2021-12 by short title for a third time. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier - yes

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Remillard that Resolution 2021-12 be passed. So moved, the motion passed by roll call vote. Higbee- yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – yes, Eastman – yes, Grenier – yes

Pollution Control

Mr. Jon Goudreau, Pollution Control Superintendent, discussed his FY22 budget requests. Mr. Goudreau noted that overall he is requesting an additional \$18,000 which is essentially a flat budget request. Money has been moved out of the chemical line item and moved into sewer cleaning repair line item to do maintenance on the truck. Other changes are in health insurance, and contractual items. Mayor Grenier asked how many full-time employees are there, and how many are nearing retirement. Mr. Goudreau advised that they have 7 full-time employees, and one who has given a date of December 31 of this year for retirement. There is one other employee of retirement age, who has not indicated that he is considering this yet. Mr. Goudreau advised he will come to Council when it is time to replace the position, which is the Assistant Superintendent/Chemist. Councilor Remillard asked about the fencing project, and Mr. Goudreau advised the security fencing has been installed completely, and that the rest of the project will be completed in May. Councilor Theberge asked if Mr. Goudreau had a chance to visit the lift station and treatment plant at White Mountain Paper Company, as he was concerned about the clay that comes from that station and if the Pollution Control station would be able to handle it. Mayor Grenier advised they are just beginning the process, and City Manager Wheeler advised that there would be an engineering study to answer these questions. Councilor Eastman thanked Mr. Goudreau for a terrific job with his budget and operations. Mayor Grenier asked if there were any Capital projects planned. Mr. Goudreau advised they were saving approximately \$18,000 due to interest rates being down. Mr. Wheeler advised there is a \$460,000 user charge that is appropriated, which is a reserve for the replacement of Capital equipment. Mayor Grenier asked about revenues, which Mr. Goudreau advised are down a bit, as are state aid grants. However, he believes they will be close to projection by the end of the year.

Recreation Department

Mayor Grenier invited Ms. Terry Letarte, Recreation Director, to review her FY22 budget requests. Ms. Letarte advised that she sent a cover letter regarding the budget, which addressed the only substantive change, which is the assistant position which she is hoping to make full-time. Ms. Letarte advised that there is a high turnover rate with a part-time position, and a full-time position would allow them to increase programming. The assistant position handles all of the sports programming and is in the field with the public and the children. Mayor Grenier advised the person in the position now does a fabulous job with the kids. Ms. Letarte advised we need someone on the ice and in the ballfield, along with someone in the office for administrative work. Mayor Grenier advised it is only a \$12,000 difference in the budget, and the community will get much more. Councilor Theberge advised that the assistant is very qualified, and is very knowledgeable about sports, and agreed with Ms. Letarte's request to make the position full-time. Councilor Remillard thanked Ms. Letarte for her letter and advised she supports the full-time position as well. Councilor Higbee asked if the additional hours will provide more of the same activities, or new activities. Ms. Letarte advised those additional hours could be spent looking for grants and creating new programs. Ms. Letarte advised the assistant will also need to learn some of the administrative tasks to fill in for the Director. Mayor Grenier asked about Capital projects, and Ms. Letarte advised they are looking into a security system, providing cameras in the gym and in the office for liability reasons. Councilor Remillard asked about the Trust in Recreation Fund which was eliminated. After discussion, it was decided this was a scholarship provided by the Council at one time, which was ended as they could not legally do it.

Public Works Department

Mr. Wheeler advised that for the most part, the public works budgets are flat-lined except for health insurance and NHRS. There is an increase in landfill monitoring for Solid Waste.

Mr. Wheeler advised there is a new line item for the Assistant Public Works Director position, which is budget neutral, as part of the money came from a Supervisor position, and part from the Director's position.

Mr. Wheeler reviewed the Capital projects for the Public Works Department and Parks. Mr. Wheeler advised that City Hall is starting to have problems with the roof, as shingles are missing. The roof has not been replaced since 1994, and \$100,000 is being budgeted for that. There is \$165,500 for five loader leases. This will give the department a total of 8 loaders. Sidewalk tractors are budgeted at \$65,000. There is \$15,000 budgeted for the Riverwalk match. There is \$425,000 budgeted for three new trucks; a recycling truck, a salt truck and a dump truck. Retaining walls are budgeted at \$20,000. Hutchins Street lighting is budgeted at \$16,000. Drain line replacement is budgeted at \$100,000 for High Street. Heritage Park roof is budgeted at \$25,000. Pavement resurfacing is at \$20,000. Mason Street bridge repairs is at \$600,000, and they have talked to a contractor and Brookfield about the project. They will split the work between at least two seasons, which will allow this to be reduced to \$300,000. \$60,000 is budgeted for a new truck with a dump body. Recreation building repairs is budgeted at \$50,000, which is planned for the roof and insulation.

Councilor Eastman stated that roofing projects should be done, as this is a very important maintenance item. Councilor Eastman asked about Covid money and if this could be used for equipment. Mayor Grenier advised he would like to keep the budget as close to what was presented until they know how much State or Covid funding will be available. Councilor Eastman asked about a maintenance schedule to keep the equipment up-to-date. Maintenance is kept up-to-date by a computer system. However, they do not have the same number of mechanics to keep up with work such as sandblasting and painting. Mr. Wheeler advised they used to have a position for just auto body work, which they no longer have. Mayor Grenier asked about the new snow blower, and was advised they have had no major breakdowns or issues. Mr. Wheeler advised that Public Works was able to try a wheeled sidewalk plow last year. Ideally they would like to get two, but that will depend on pricing. Mayor Grenier discussed the condition of the current trucks with Mark Lapointe and Roland Langlois.

Other

Mr. Wheeler shared the HEB agreement related to the Mason Street Bridge project, to put the project out to bid again. Every time the project is put out to bid it costs \$4,600. The first two times they did not get a bid, however we will need to put it out soon to be sure the contractors do not fill their schedules. In speaking with the contractor, they feel they could get the work done in the three weeks available when Brookfield shuts down. However, if the project goes over, Brookfield would charge \$9,000 per day.

Councilor Remillard advised a lot would be based on the contractor that is hired, and hopefully it will be someone with a lot of experience and credibility to avoid the expense of fines.

Councilor Eastman asked about Phase 2, which will be the bridge piers. Councilor Eastman asked if one pier could be done one year, and one the next. Mr. Wheeler advised that may have to be done.

Councilor Theberge asked if the contractor could work 24/7. Mr. Wheeler advised that would be up to the contractor who bid, and if they had the resources.

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Remillard and seconded by Councilor Theberge. So moved, the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Shelli Fortin