

## **CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, March 21, 2022**

### **Regular Meeting**

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:29 p.m.

#### **a. Pledge of Allegiance**

#### **b. Roll Call**

Present: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Morgan, Eastman, Roland Theberge, Robert Theberge, Higbee, and Morency

Absent: Councilors Remillard and Berthiaume

Also present: Interim City Manager Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Lori Korzen, Steven Korzen, Stuart Light, Micah Bachner, Amber Bachner, Adam Hammill, Ravenmoon Hart, Jared Hart, Steve Foster, Mallory Dix, and William Carroll, Berlin Daily Sun.

**c.** Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the minutes of the March 7, 2022 Regular Meeting and Work Session, the Budget meetings of March 10, 2022 and March 16, 2022, and the Work Session of March 14, 2022. So moved, the motion passed.

#### **Disbursements:**

Disbursement Summary Draft #1908 start date 03/08/2022 end date 03/21/2022 for a total cash disbursement of \$903,099.45. Councilor Roland 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 passed.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Lori Korzen of 788 Kent Street rebuffed the Mayor's comments and stated she was not trying to place blame on or attack the schools, but is here to open eyes to what is going on in the schools. Ms. Korzen shared a handout with statistics from the Department of Education on assessment scores and noted that Berlin ranks well below other cities and towns. Ms. Korzen stated that she realizes that other things, such as hockey, are important, but those looking to invest in the area do look at the school system. Ms. Korzen stated that her children were bullied in school in Berlin, and the problem still exists today. Ms. Korzen asked that the City stop trying to hide these issues and start a conversation to fix them. Ms. Korzen mentioned a Facebook post on which 154 comments were made about bullying and abuse in the Berlin school system.

Ravenmoon Hart of 717 Third Avenue advised the Council that she was the parent who made the Facebook post and that her child overdosed due to bullying. Ms. Hart noted that the school is not doing anything, and that the children need someone to stand up for them.

Jared Hart of 717 Third Avenue stated that upon moving to Berlin 4 years ago, they have been bullied and don't understand why others can't just be civil. Hart stated that people have egged their house and threatened their brothers, and the administration did not do anything. Hart noted that they had to leave BHS to attend the Charter School, and wishes they could speak about issues without being scared about being harassed. Mayor Grenier asked Councilor Morency to look into the allegations made by Hart about the school, to see if they had been reported to the police department.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **1. Council Committee Reports**

There were no Council committee reports.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **2. Interim City Manager/Finance Director Compensation Adjustment**

Interim City Manager Pamela Laflamme provided Council with a Memo concerning a pay adjustment for both the Interim City Manager position and the Finance Director, noting the increased duties on both due to not currently having a City Manager in place. Mayor Grenier noted that this is the fourth month that both have been doing double duty since the previous City Manager left.

Councilor Roland Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to approve a stipend of \$15,000 for the Interim City Manager and \$5,000 for the Finance Director.

Councilor Higbee asked if this would come out of the City Manager salary line, and was advised it would, so it does not affect taxpayers.

Councilor Eastman asked if this will cover until June, when Mr. Warren will start as City Manager. Mayor Grenier advised that it would, along with the time it takes to bring the new City Manager up to speed on issues in the community.

So moved, the motion passed by roll call vote. Robert Theberge – yes, Higbee – yes, Morency – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – yes, Roland Theberge – yes, Grenier - yes

### 3. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the property transfer list for February 2022.
2. The 2021 AVRDD Budget Report is attached.
3. Update on the 2022 Full Statistical Revaluation.
4. We have several projects out right now for consideration, the bids for the Riverwalk project are due this Thursday. We have the feasibility work for the closed-loop system with White Mountain Paper Company due in early April as well as a boiler replacement project for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. We just signed the start letter with CMA for the Route 110 extension project as they have worked out the scope and schedule to get things underway. We also are finalizing the work for the landfill gas project with CMA. Finally, we are working with Burgess BioPower, HEB and Wilson Engineering on putting together another attempt at the RAISE grant program for reconstructing infrastructure downtown.
5. Now that we have gained daylight and lost most of the snow, I will be working on getting out the final round of houses and land that was agreed upon in November. I should be finalizing documents over the next week or so and getting notices out to the public.
6. The contract with the new City Manager has been signed, and Mr. Warren will be starting on May 2, 2022.

Ms. Laflamme also advised the Council that EMS will be attending the budget hearing on March 30, 2022 with other public safety agencies instead of March 28. Chief Watkins will also bring the new EMS contract for ratification that evening.

Councilor Eastman asked about the mitigation for the landfill and Ms. Laflamme advised that although they had some pushback from DES for a less expensive option, they will be allowed to move forward and cost should be pretty close to what was budgeted in the current budget. They may need a little more for the project in this budget, but are hoping to stay under the \$100,000 mark.

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

### 4. Mayor's Report

Mayor Grenier advised that he did not single out Ms. Korzen when mentioning those who speak negatively about the school, but stated that he will defend the school as they do a great job with limited resources. Mayor Grenier stated that they teach students to be prepared for the workforce, not just to a test. Mayor Grenier again noted that education begins at home with the parents, and if not taught basic skills at home, teachers are only with them 6 ½ hours a day for 180 days, and cannot teach everything. Mayor Grenier noted that at least half of the senior class is

going off to college, so they are not doing so bad. Mayor Grenier noted that people are buying homes in Berlin, so some people do see a future here.

## **5. Public Comments**

Lori Korzen apologized for thinking the Mayor's comments at the hearing were directed at her, and again stated that she is not attacking the community or school system. Ms. Korzen noted that kids deserve better and agrees that learning begins at home. Ms. Korzen asked what could be done for parents, and stated that unless we work together, we cannot fix the problem.

Amber Bachner stated that she works as a substitute teacher and believes the community could help the parents. Ms. Bachner suggested inclusive events to bring kids out into the community and begin conversations for parents to have with their children. Ms. Bachner suggested summer or fall festivals and educational encounters that would foster a sense of community between people.

## **6. Council Comments**

Councilor Eastman stated that he was unaware of the school issues before this evening and stated that the test scores are the only barometer to compare our school with other communities. Councilor Eastman noted that we cannot fix a problem until we identify what it is. Councilor Eastman suggested that parents and the community can work with the school board to come up with a strategy to mitigate the problem. Councilor Eastman noted that Berlin is not immune to bullying, and that it may be a small group, but they are part of our community.

## **7. Adjournment**

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Morgan, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 pm. So moved, the motion carried.

A True Record, Attest:

Shelli Fortin  
City Clerk

Note: Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the Council by motion.