

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, March 18, 2024

Public Hearing

Mayor Cone opened the Public Hearing at 8:40 pm for Resolution 2024-05 Ambulance Purchase.

William Graham of 587 Cheshire Street advised that he has been involved with EMS in the area for 37 years. Mr. Graham shared a handout of information and concerns about ambulance coverage. Mr. Graham noted that the ambulances that are proposed to be purchased do not meet the current contract requirements, and are not four-wheel drive. Mr. Graham asked who would do transfers if Berlin Fire only covers 911, as there are residents who need to be transported home on hospice and to nursing homes. Mr. Graham stated that he did not care who provided the service, whether the City or a private business, but would like to see everything covered under one umbrella.

Mayor Cone closed the Public Hearing at 8:44 pm.

Regular Meeting

Mayor Cone called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 8:45 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Cone, Councilors Mia Qualls, Higbee, Berthiaume, Morency, Valerino, Grenier, Korzen, and Theberge.

Absent: None

Also present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Fire Chief James Watkins, Scott Lees, Morgan Phillips, Eric Cripe, Julia Bynum, John Higgins, Derik Crowell, Kris Saunders, Justin Jacques, Jon Leveille, Ray Dube, William White, Sarah Mafera, Stuart Light, Jamie Welch, Gina Welch, Ralph Collins, Lori Korzen, Roland Theberge, Roland Sanschagrin, other members of the public, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Morency, to accept the minutes of the March 4, 2024 Regular Meeting and Work Session, and March 11 Budget Work Session. So moved, the motion passed.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1957 with a start date of 03/05/2024 and an end date of 03/18/2024 for a total cash disbursement of \$943,159.82. Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Morency, to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

There were no Council Committee Reports.

2. Resolution 2024-05 Ambulance Purchase (tabled 3/4/2024)

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Four

A RESOLUTION authorizing the purchase of two Chevrolet Ambulances, model year 2014 and 2015, equipped with all necessary equipment.

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

WHEREAS, the Fire Department, planning for a takeover of EMS services in 2025 is in need of equipment for service delivery; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the City and of the Fire Department to procure said equipment in advance of the July 2025 takeover of EMS; and

WHEREAS, there are unneeded Capital Funds and unrestricted State funds available for said purchase; and

WHEREAS, the Fire Chief has located 2 vehicles that will serve the EMS program and are fully equipped with cardiac monitors, power loading stretchers, radio communications equipment and most of the small equipment required for EMS service delivery, at the cost of \$85,000 each; and

WHEREAS, said vehicles will serve the needs, both short and long term, of the EMS program.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Berlin, NH that purchase of 2 ambulances, fully equipped be authorized, funding to come from 30-402-402631-6036 Invest NH MPU Grant - \$150,000 and the remaining \$20,000 be re allocated from 01-495-495416-0007 Segregated Funds / IT Cabling Project.

Be it further resolved that the Council recognizes the nature of this purchase will require a waiver of procurement requirements and that the City Manager is authorized to do all things necessary to complete said purchase.

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

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, to remove this item from the table. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, to amend the title of the Resolution to read two Chevrolet ambulances, model year 2014 and 2015. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, to read Resolution 2024-05R1 as amended by short title for a second time. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, to read Resolution 2024-05R1 as amended by short title for a third time. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Grenier, that Resolution 2024-05R1 as amended be passed.

Councilor Korzen advised that he is not opposed to purchasing the ambulances, however feels that there needs to be discussion, and more understanding, concerning the takeover of the ambulance service. City Manager Warren advised that they are planning to discuss this fully on April 8 during the Fire Department budget presentation.

Councilor Higbee noted that this issue has been looked at for the last 6-8 years, and is ongoing. Councilor Higbee noted that the Council had decided that it was in the best interest of the City to take over 911 services. Councilor Higbee noted that this will not happen for more than a year, and if for some reason it falls through, they could sell the ambulances. However, they will not be ready to take over without this purchase.

Councilor Berthiaume noted that this issue has been studied twice by committees, and came down to a split vote after the last study. Councilor Berthiaume noted that the Fire Department has been doing a good job planning ahead and personnel are qualified to work as both firefighters and EMS.

Councilor Qualls stated that when the Fire Chief presented this to the Council, she agreed it was a phenomenal deal for fully equipped ambulances, and does not want to pass up the opportunity.

Councilor Korzen stated that he would like to see the City all in or all out for services, and they will need to make sure they have a plan to take over moving forward.

Councilor Berthiaume noted that this Resolution is strictly for the purchase of the ambulances.

So moved, the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

1. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the February 2024 Real Estate Transfer Report.
2. Preparations are ongoing for the solar eclipse, April 8. We will be opening up the Emergency Operations Center on that day. This will accomplish 2 things – in the case of an extremely busy day we will be able to handle all incidents and it can also serve as a training opportunity.
3. The chairlift project is progressing but one issue has been discovered, when the lift passes the landing for the first stairway landing the height is less than state standards. The present chairlift has the same design and the construction of the building prohibits modification to meet the height requirement 100%. We have applied for a variance to address this. There is a high probability that the variance will be approved. Once approved, construction will continue on the lift.
4. Installation of the council chamber broadcast system has begun, completion is anticipated to finish within the next month.
5. The fiber project is moving along, pole attachment agreements have been executed and the contractor will be finalizing plans where equipment and connections will go in each connected building.
6. We have filed with HSEM and FEMA to be placed in the queue for federal disaster funding for the December 2023 severe rain event.

Councilor Theberge asked about the installation of cameras, and City Manager Warren advised that cameras and microphones will be installed in both Council rooms, which will provide the best coverage and simplest operation. It is a scalable system and can be added to in the future.

Councilor Korzen asked about the fiberoptic installation, and if the Spectrum outage was due to the Fidium project. City Manager Warren advised he was not sure what caused the outage for Spectrum, but the Fidium project is separate from the City's fiber project. The City's project will provide our own network, which is a closed loop system and will not be impacted by outages such as these.

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

2. Mayor's Report

There was no Mayor's Report.

3. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

4. Council Comments

There were no Council comments.

5. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Morency, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 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.