

CITY COUNCIL INAUGURATION MEETING – Monday, January 18, 2016

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. The pledge of allegiance to the flag preceded roll call. Present: Councilors Remillard, Otis, Morgan Allain, Gentili, Higbee, Rozek, Nelson and Theberge. Also present: City Manager Wheeler, Department Heads, citizens and Kirsten Knowlton Daily Sun reporter.

Mayor Grenier welcomed everyone for attending the Inauguration Meeting tonight. He emphasized that this is not a one man show and it is nice to see how Berlin has thrived with everyone working together. There is no tougher tasks than those faced by the Police Department. The Board of Education also has a tough job and they have been asked to do more with less. Our children get a first class education here and its hats off to them because they do a fantastic job. As a grandfather and dad, he is committed to the City of Berlin. The Mayor then introduced Senator Jeff Woodburn and said the Senator is ready to help whenever we ask and is often times here within an hour. He is dedicated to Berlin and is a true friend who works hard for us.

Senator Woodburn related that in all his years of service, he never got a standing ovation like he did tonight. The Senator congratulated the Mayor and City Councilors being sworn in tonight for their public service. He then presented Mayor Grenier with a 1992 Inauguration Invitation he found in the books from when Mayor Grenier was first elected to City Council back in 1992. Public service so important and a true testament to public service is when someone like Mayor Grenier honors a commitment even through harsh criticism that sometimes comes with public office. He thanked all for their public service and enjoys collaborating on things like taking on the drug epidemic. The Senator wants to make sure that government is there to serve us in return.

Councilor Gentili thanked those that elected him into office and said he was grateful to have all his family attend tonight's inauguration ceremony.

Minutes, Previous Meeting

Councilor Remillard moved with a second by Councilor Otis to accept the minutes of the January 4 Regular Meeting/Work Session. So moved, the motion carried.

Disbursements: Disbursement Summary Draft #1757 start date 1/5/2016 end date 1/15/2016 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,010,595.20. 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.

Councilor Higbee moved with a second by Councilor Morgan Allain to recess this portion of the meeting to go into the inauguration portion of the agenda. So moved, the motion carried.

1. Call to Order by Mayor Grenier

INAUGURATION CEREMONY

Swearing in Ceremony by:
Mayor - Elect
Councilors – Elect

Debra Patrick, City Clerk
Paul Grenier
Denise Morgan Allain
Peter Higbee
Michael Gentili
Roland Theberge

Councilor Higbee moved with a second by Councilor Theberge to close the Inauguration portion of the meeting to enter into the regular order of business. So moved, the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Resolution 2016-02 accepting a donation of \$6,578.00 from LS Power Development, LLC to provide equipment for the Rescue UTV at the Fire Department. (1st read)
Councilor Remillard moved with a second by Councilor Otis to table the resolution and schedule a public hearing on February 1, 2016. So moved, the motion carried.
3. Resolution 2016-03 authorizing the sale of 121 Main Street, Map 119, Lot 51 along with three adjacent parcels fronting along Pleasant Street identified as Tax Map 119, Lots 33, 34 and 35 to Affordable Housing Education and Development (AHEAD) Inc. for the sum of Forty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$45,000). (1st read)
Councilor Higbee moved with a second by Councilor Morgan Allain to table the resolution and schedule a public hearing on February 1, 2016. So moved, the motion carried.
4. Council Comments - No comments
5. Inaugural Address (Verbatim)

"I want to welcome all of you, again, to the Berlin Inauguration Ceremony this evening. I also want to thank Senator Woodburn for attending this evening as well as being a forceful advocate for Berlin in the NH Senate. Along with Rep. Robert Theberge, Rep. Yvonne Thomas and Rep. Alethea Lincoln-Froborg, Berlin is very well represented in Concord. For that, I am indebted to you for your commitment and service.

Despite the many difficult challenges we face near term, the state of our city and its future remain very promising. The city's finances is stronger now than in any time in the last 14 years. We are working hard as a city to bring new job opportunities to our community. The BIDPA board, comprised mainly of Berlin's most successful business people led by Mike Caron, are the efforts of Chairman Caron and senior city staff that we have a new employer in Berlin today. Stephen and Gary Capone of Capone Iron Corporation could have located anywhere, but building a personal relationship was critical to understanding Capone's needs as well as our desire to be partners in the success of their expansion. The Capone family are highly respected, solid community members who have a strong desire to play an active role here in many areas. Dave Presby of Presby Steel keeps looking for new opportunities to play a much larger role here in our city. He has invested new monies in expanding his operations this past year with an eye toward even greater opportunities at his Jericho Road plant. With Gorham Paper and Tissue operating two machines at capacity and Burgess Biopower finally operating as designed, Berlin's business community is finally poised to flex its muscles. The city's corrections industry is employing a bit over 600 people most of whom live right here in Berlin. Berlin's unemployment rate, long the highest in NH and bumping around 10% when we took office 6 years ago, has steadily decreased to under 6%. It should be our goal, Mayor and Council, city staff and board members, to cut in half our unemployment rate again in the next two years. It is an aggressive goal, but one member of our community who can't find a job and wants to work is one too many.

This coming year, Berlin will see the beginning of long needed road reconstruction. Including the Hutchins Street rehabilitation project, the city is projecting to spend nearly \$6 million dollars. That is over and above the money spent on the Route 110 realignment project. The members of this council who reaffirmed their commitment to serve our community should be commended for having the foresight to work together to reinvest in Berlin. Another significant position this council has taken is the recent vote to send a letter to NH EFSEC to support the Northern Pass proposal. In all the years we have collectively spent trying to reinvigorate our economy, the biggest stumbling blocks are always the remoteness to markets and the cost of electricity. With the real threat of power prices skyrocketing as coal plants retire, we need much more clean cheap power. Sitting back and doing nothing in reality is tantamount to handing the keys to Berlin's economy back to the bank. Then there is still the issues of getting power out of the region on the Coos loop. Part of Northern Pass's proposal includes the Coos Loop upgrade, an issue that directly affects Berlin in the last 8 years of Burgess Biopower's PILT agreement with us. On the line is additional tax receipts to the city for excess REC payments that will produce well over \$1million dollars annually.

That is no small sum given the state of our infrastructure. We all need to work together, developers, citizens and government to find solutions that are acceptable to most everyone.

The City Council this term does have some serious challenges to deal with, however. The results of the recent evaluation has created difficulties for many of our citizens. Most of the affected folks are long-time residents who saw their tax bill climb, some sharply. We are very fortunate that the City Council is very frugal financially. We don't live by party labels of liberal or conservative, we want a community we can be proud to live in and still be affordable. I pledge to continue to be a fiscally frugal public servant. With the recent escalation of highly addictive illegal drug use in the Androscoggin Valley, we need to work hand in hand with the Berlin Police Commission and our highly professional Police Department how to best deal with the problem. It has been said many times we cannot arrest our way out of this issue. It will take collaboration from our state and Federal Delegation members as well as our neighbors north of the notches. This problem will also take the full involvement of Berlin's citizens. Ignoring this issue is no longer an option.

Finally, I would like to re-emphasize my commitment to the removal of substandard housing here in Berlin. There has been a lot of work done by many dedicated municipal employees. We have made much progress, but there is much more that needs to be done. Because Berlin lost one of its pioneers of this effort to cancer late last year in Joe Martin, we should not only maintain this effort, but intensify our activity, in his memory. I had many private conversations with Joe and one thing became very clear. He had the same pride and goals for our community as I have and we both were in positions to make a difference. Let's keep the momentum going on all fronts, and I want to thank all city employees for your efforts!!!"

Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to accept and file the Mayor's Inaugural Address. So moved, the motion carried.

6. Adjournment: There being no further business before the Mayor and Council, Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Remillard to adjourn the regular meeting. So moved, the motion carried and Mayor Grenier declared the regular meeting closed at approximately 7:27 p.m.

A True Record, Attest:
Debra A. Patrick, CMC
City Clerk