

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, September 18, 2023

Regular Meeting

Mayor Grenier called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:37 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Robert Theberge, Berthiaume, Morency, Remillard, Morgan, Eastman, and Roland Theberge.

Absent: Councilor Higbee

Also present: Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Robert Cone, Connor Arsenault, Lori Korzen, Jan Zicha, Maura Annette Chappelle, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the minutes of the September 5, 2023 Regular Meeting and Work Session.

Councilor Roland Theberge pointed out that his name was incorrectly listed as asking about the Fire Department's presence at the bonfire, which should have been Councilor Robert Theberge. Councilor Roland Theberge moved to amend the minutes to reflect this change, with a second by Councilor Remillard. So moved, the motion passed.

The Council then voted to approve the minutes as amended.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #1945 with a start date of 09/06/2023 and an end date of 09/18/2023 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,046,145.80. Councilor Roland Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jan Zicha of 255 Pleasant Street spoke concerning the public meeting being held on September 19 at City Hall for the NHDOT 10-year plan. Mr. Zicha encouraged citizens to attend and to speak up concerning passenger rail service, as NHDOT does feels it is not something the population is interested in. Mr. Zicha noted that Berlin would be a suitable location for maintenance stops and businesses to support railway transportation.

Maura Annette Chappelle of Presidential Highway in Jefferson noted that the hearing is at 3:00 pm tomorrow.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

There were no Council committee reports.

NEW BUSINESS

1. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the updated July and August 2023 Real Estate Transfer Report.

Mayor Grenier noted that property is still selling for more than the assessed value and property values are still rising.

Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme noted that the Real Estate Transfer Report now also includes commercial and vacant properties, thanks to Lise Barrette adding these to the report.

Ms. Laflamme advised that Councilor Kenney will attend the GACIT hearing tomorrow, and they will be reviewing the 10-year plan, which includes the Mason Street Bridge project. Ms. Laflamme also noted that they are one year in on the RAISE grant, and are still waiting on Federal Highways for comments on the draft.

Ms. Laflamme noted that there have been questions concerning the new Disc Golf course in the City. This was a partnership with Micah Bachner, who worked to get sponsorships for the baskets. Two of the baskets were paid for by the City, and some items were paid for out-of-pocket by Mr. Bachner. Any claims would be covered by the City's liability insurance, like any other recreation program. Ms. Laflamme noted that time was spent with Primex vetting the project.

Ms. Laflamme advised that fourteen properties were tax deeded, and two are in the process of being repurchased. Mayor Grenier noted that the repurchase would include all taxes owed, plus the penalty fee.

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

2. Mayor's Report

a. Letter from Del Cain re: Arts District

Dear Mayor Grenier,

I am a new resident of Berlin. I previously lived in Bradenton Fl. where they thought up the successful idea of setting up an Arts District to bring tourists to the city.

Their Arts District cost very little money, mainly involving changing zoning laws so that artists could live in their home and also have a sales studio in their home. It has been very successful. They have 200 to 300 artists living in a large designated area 5 blocks from downtown – a residential area.

Many of the artists are part time, living in Bradenton in the winter and going back to their other homes in the summers.

I could see Boston and NY artists having a home and studio in Berlin, summers, and living elsewhere winters.

To try this requires some zoning changes, signs and publicity inviting artists. Possibly the whole city could be an arts district.

Anyway, if interested look into the idea of a 'Berlin Arts District'...

Bradenton's is very successful – and also real estate in the Arts District (called the 'Village of the Arts') sells at a premium of 30-40% more than residences outside the Arts District.

Sincerely,

Del Cain

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to accept the communication from Del Cain and place it on file.

Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme advised that there would not need to be many changes made to the Zoning Ordinances to allow for this to happen and suggested it be referred to the Main Street Program.

So moved, the motion carried.

- b. Appointment to ZBA – L. Lamirande
- c. Appointment to ZBA – S. Losier

Dear Mayor Grenier,

I would like to inquire about the opportunity for me to join the Berlin Zoning Board of Adjustment. I served as a Milan Zoning Board member, secretary and chairperson for more than a decade until I moved to Berlin in October, 2021.

I believe that my background owning and managing real estate in Berlin as well as the time on the Milan Zoning Board would be helpful on the Berlin Zoning Board as well. I am available to discuss this at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration,

Linda Lamirande

Councilor Remillard moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to approve the nominations of Linda Lamirande as an alternate member of the Zoning Board, and Scott Losier as a regular member of the Zoning Board, with terms to expire on April 30, 2026. So moved, the motion carried.

3. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

4. Council Comments

Mayor Grenier noted that this was Councilor Remillard's last meeting and thanked her for her service to the community. Mayor Grenier stated that Councilor Remillard has done a lot of good work, served on numerous subcommittees, has always had the well-being of the community at heart, and was always prepared and ready to work.

Councilor Remillard stated that she will miss her work on the Council and enjoyed what they do. Councilor Remillard stated that she has enjoyed working with everyone, thanked the Mayor for what he has taught her, and stated that the City is in good hands with the Mayor's knowledge and experience.

5. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Remillard, seconded by Councilor Morgan, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 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.