

City Council Work Session
August 30, 2021

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Eastman, Remillard, Rozek, Higbee, Morgan, Theberge and Otis. Councilor Berthiaume via zoom.

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, BIDPA Chair Mike Caron and William Carroll Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

Non-Public Session

At 6:31pm, Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II. (d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. The motion carried unanimously by roll call.

The sale of real property was discussed.

At 6:44pm, Councilor Theberge moved to come out of non-public session; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor.

121 Main Street

Councilor Rozek moved to waive the normal bidding process and to sell 121 Main Street and the adjacent lots on Pleasant Street that are continuous to 121 Main Street for one dollar to David Scalley with official paperwork finalized next week. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor.

Mayor Grenier thanked BIDPA Chair Mike Caron for working hard for the community as well as Councilor Eastman for bringing this sale opportunity to Mr. Caron's attention. Councilor Eastman commented that Bob Chapman is who brought this to his attention and he deserves credit for this sale opportunity.

Other

City Manager Jim Wheeler presented a letter of resignation to Council with an effective date of December 3rd, 2021. He commented he decided it was time to take on a new opportunity. He stated he hopes this is enough time to find a replacement, but indicated that whether the replacement is found before or after December 3rd, he will help in any way he can. Mayor Grenier commented that now that it's public, he would like to have an immediate request for qualifications advertisement in all of the normal publications.

Councilor Remillard commented that the last time Council went through Primex which coordinated the process. Mayor Grenier responded that yes Primex was used for the hiring process in the past and he would like to go through them again this time. Councilor Theberge asked if the position would be advertised through NHMA. Mr. Wheeler responded yes and it could also be advertised on the Maine website and also Vermont. Mayor Grenier commented Council needs to cast a wide net for advertising this position and when it gets closer to the time frame, reach out to Rick Alpers from Primex to help vet the candidates. Mayor Grenier asked Council if they want to have members of the public who are currently senior managers of entities such as maybe the hospital president to take part of the interviewing process. Councilor Remillard commented that the last time they had Berlin Councilors and Town Managers from North Conway and Laconia participate in the interview process. Mayor Grenier

stated Council would engage the services of Primex to lead the charge. Councilor Rozek asked if Primex had been notified. Mayor Grenier responded Primex had not been notified. Councilor Rozek mentioned that last time Primex came and discussed the plan and procedure with Council and he thinks this is what needs to be done and go from there. Mayor Grenier suggested this should be a work session item at the next meeting on September 7th. Mr. Wheeler asked if zoom would be an option for Primex if they can't attend in person. Mayor Grenier responded yes. Councilor Higbee commented he loved how Primex handle it before as it was a lengthy process as Council had more time. He stated the one thing that was done last time that Council might not need to do this time is list what they wanted from a City Manager. He feels this information is still available and should be utilized instead of going through this part of the process again. Councilor Theberge asked Mr. Wheeler if he found a public works director yet. Mr. Wheeler responded no. Councilor Theberge questioned if this will make the position of the City Manager to get in more difficult. Mayor Grenier responded of course and this will not be an easy transition. He wants everybody to realize there will be elections coming up, there will be at least three new people; a Public Works Director, a Police Chief come January 1st and a City Manager. Council has major work to do. He commented that Council will be meeting more than once a week. Mr. Wheeler clarified that Council wants the position advertised with the current job description and salary will be DOE. Council responded yes. Mayor Grenier advised Councilors to go into the process with ears and eyes wide open and have an open mind. Mr. Wheeler advise he was staying local and his new opportunity was consulting.

Mayor Grenier personally thanked Mr. Wheeler for his years of service. He stated he hates to see him leave, but transition is inevitable in life. He commented he felt the City hit a homerun when he applied for the job and the City Manager at the time strongly recommended him to Council. He commented he has not disappointed in his role of City Manager and did a great job for the City. He also commented that because Mr. Wheeler was a local and his experience with the City, his transition was uneventful and hopes they have the same kind of transition this time. Councilor Rozek commented the City was very fortunate when they hired Mr. Wheeler as he had spent many years in the Public Works Director position. Mayor Grenier commented there was a very experienced Council at the time. He also stated he asked Mr. Wheeler to contact municipal resources as a back up in the event a replacement is not found prior to December 3rd. He stated a contingency plan has to be in place in the event no qualified candidates are identified in the first round of applications.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor. The meeting ended at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Rioux
Executive Assistant

*Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the City Council by motion.