

City Council Work Session February 27, 2017

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Otis, Remillard, Gentili, Nelson, and Higbee; absent were Councilors Morgan Allain, Rozek and Theberge

Others present included City Manager James Wheeler, Representative Paul Henle, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Police Chief Pete Morency, Assistant Police Chief Dan Buteau, and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

NH Tax Shift Plan

Mayor Grenier introduced Representative Paul Henle from Concord Ward II to talk about his proposed tax shift plan. Representative Henle reported that his bill, HB415 was voted inexpedient to legislate; however HB489 which will set up a commission to review revenue passed the House and will move on to the Senate. It is a small step forward.

Representative Henle reviewed the various revenues in the 4.5 billion State budget. He concluded that the State could not raise additional revenue because their revenue streams are maxed out.

Mayor Grenier made the point that in 1996 nursing homes made a small amount of money and now the nursing homes will lose \$9 million dollars. Originally the Federal government would give 50%, the State 25% and the Community was responsible for 25%. As the federal and State governments go back on their promises, the counties are left to pick up the tab. Coos and Sullivan Counties have tax rates over \$3 per thousand. These increases in the long term are unsustainable.

Mr. Henle stated that in order for the City to get help, something has to be done to gain revenue. He suggested an income tax of 4%. Mayor Grenier thanked Representative Henle for making the trip.

Primex Multi-Year Agreement

Mr. Wheeler reported that there are two documents that represent a proposal by Primex to have the City commit to Property Liability and Worker's Comp insurance for three years; in exchange they will cap the increases in those three years to 7% for PL and 10% for WC. The Council would be asked to pass a motion to continue with Primex over the next 3 years. The Police Department has had some issues with the Worker's Comp insurance.

Chief Morency commented that Primex does a great job and they provide us with good service. There have been a few incidents recently with WC where an officer is injured and has to start on preventive measures. If the officer is found to be free of disease (rabies from dog bite, hep c, aids, tb) then the preventive measure is charged to the officer or to the department.

It may be that all the companies are doing the same; however it seems to be a fight to get coverage.

Mayor Grenier mentioned that a change is needed in the budget hearings. The Police and Fire hearing will be moved to March 29 and on March 20 we could invite Primex to discuss insurance. Councilor Nelson asked if the problem with WC is consistent in other departments. Mr. Wheeler stated that we can check with other department and in response to Councilor Higbee, he noted that we can look at other vendors as well.

Other

Ms. Laflamme reported that it is important to the permitting process that North Country Growers show they have site control on the land they plan to purchase. BIDPA reviewed and approved a \$20,000 option for them to purchase 173 acres on East Milan Road. The agreement is that \$20,000 will be used toward the purchase price of the land, or if the project does not move forward by 4/29, BIDPA will keep \$5,000 and \$15,000 will be returned to North Country Growers. Mayor Grenier assured the Council that they are fully committed to making this happen.

Councilor Higbee moved to approve the \$20,000 option offered to American Ag by BIDPA for 173 acres of land on East Milan Road; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Non-Public Session

At 7:15 p.m. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Nelson to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II(d) Land Matters. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

At 7:30 p.m. Councilor Higbee moved to come out of non-public session; Councilor Otis seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Remillard moved to seal the minutes until the issues have been disposed of, as releasing them would render the action taken ineffective; Councilor Nelson seconded and the motion carried.

Mayor Grenier thanked Councilor Gentili for working the Riverdrivers Call to Duty game over the weekend.

Councilor Otis moved to adjourn; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant