

City Council Work Session

February 7, 2022

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Robert Theberge, Higbee, Eastman, Roland Theberge, Remillard, Morgan and Berthiaume. Councilor Morency was absent.

Others present: Interim City Manager Pamela Laflamme, SAU3 Superintendent Julie King, SAU3 Buildings and Grounds Director Bryan Lamirande, Fire Chief Jay Watkins, Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Finance Director Holly Larsen, Lori Korzen, Steven Korzen, Micah Bachner, Amber Bachner, Stuart Light, Richard King, and William Carroll, Berlin Daily Sun

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Non-Meeting

At 6:31pm, Mayor Grenier requested to enter in Non-Meeting per RSA 91-A:2, I; (c) Legal Consultation. Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Roland Theberge to enter into Non-Meeting per RSA 91-A:2, I; (c) Legal Consultation. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

At 6:53pm, Mayor, Council and Staff came out of Non-Meeting.

Finance Software Selection

Ms. Larsen advised Council a Request for Proposal was put out for new financial software back in August. She commented the City has been using Munismart since 2003 and there is updated software out there that can do a lot more. After reviewing the proposals received, she is proposing to upgrade with BS&A and Interware Development. She commented the Town of Gorham is using Interware and it makes it easier for Citizens to do online transactions. Mayor Grenier commented that with this new system, Citizens will be able to verify the cost of vehicle registration online reducing the amount of calls coming in to City Hall which will help the finance department which is already short staffed. Ms. Larsen commented it will be a great online tool. Mayor Grenier questioned the security on this software. Ms. Larsen advised quite a few Cities and Towns in NH use BS&A and have not had any issues. Councilor Higbee asked what is the plan for moving from the current software to the new one and will there be an overlap. Ms. Larsen responded there will be a short overlap to get all of the conversion done. She also stated the current contract with Munismart expires in December 2022 and she is hoping to have everything transitioned by then. Councilor Robert Theberge questioned if the City is protected against cyber-attacks. Ms. Larsen responded our Property and Liability Insurance carrier Primex covers cyber-attacks and also offers multiple trainings on the subject. Councilor Berthiaume questioned if the dog licenses and vehicle registrations will be able to be paid online with this new software. Ms. Larsen responded yes, you will be able to pay online and it will be very user friendly. Mayor Grenier asked what the annual cost is for the new software. Ms. Larsen advise the current annual software cost is \$33,662 and the new software will be \$35,228. Councilor Remillard asked how will you interact with BS&A. Ms. Larsen advised they will do in person. She explained we need to sign the contract first, then issue a deposit and then the set up will start. Councilor Remillard moved to enter into a contract with BS&A and Interware Development to provide the City's financial software as outlined in their proposal to the City of Berlin using the rate provided, fees and payment schedule of their proposal, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Capital Improvement Plan 2023-2028

Ms. Laflamme advised the full version of the plan was provided to Council as a link which is on the City's website. Included with today's agenda is a summarized version of the plan including each year's totals. She commented she realized we've been doing this the same way for the last 15 years without very many adjustments. When this plan was originally implemented, the idea behind it that prior City Manager MacQueen had laid out per the State statute was that you link capital projects to the master plan. She

commented a lot of the projects have been in the plan for a while and there is not a lot of new ones this year which she feels part of that is because it hasn't been utilized as the tool it should be. With the new financial software coming this year, changes for next year will include; account numbering, how we do the budget and how we do capital budget. Ms. Laflamme advised for this year it will be the same process as we do not have the new system in place. She feels this will be a good opportunity to step back and figure what is really wanted out of the capital program, how projects will be presented and start linking it back to the master plan. She commented the Planning Board talked about this at length at the last meeting as State Law makes them provide recommendation to the Council before it comes to the Council. The Planning Board always feels a little disconnected as a lot of these projects no longer tie to the master plan and some of them are small projects that don't really meet the capital threshold which is \$10,000. They really liked the idea of overhauling this document and doing it in a way that is more useful for not just the Planning Board, but the City Council as they get into the budget season. She stated that the Planning Board did vote to recommend to Council to adopt this year's plan. Councilor Higbee moved to accept the Capital Improvement Plan 2023-2028 as presented, Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

2021 Property Abatement Recommendations

Ms. Laflamme advised there are three abatement recommendations attached from Corcoran Consulting. The first one is for 399 Portland Street; the owners purchased this property for \$20,000 last Fall. She commented this property is in an awful state for disrepair and Corcoran went in a re assessed. They are recommending reducing the value from the current assessment of \$63,700 to \$26,300 until such a time as when the owners make improvements. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the property value abatement to Eugene and Debra Foss from \$63,700 to \$26,300, Councilor Morgan Seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

The second one is for property on Cates Hill Road (Map 403 – Lot 4.1) owned by Amie and Susan Ramsey. This is for a barn they have on 20.44 acres which most of it is in current use. Apparently, our tax card was coded as the barn being built in 2015, but upon inspection by Corcoran it was confirmed it was built in the 50's. They are reducing the condition of the barn and are recommending an adjustment from the current value of \$10,122 to \$8,122. Councilor Berthiaume moved to accept the abatement recommendation for Amie and Susan Ramsey of 204 Cates Hill from a property value of \$10,122 to \$8,122, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

The last one is for 356 School Street. The owner hasn't lived here for quite some time and there has been several deferrals made by the Board of Assessors on the property. The owner has been trying to sell the property for a while. It's down to \$49,900. Corcoran did go in and the property is in poor condition. They kept the assessment close to the sale price. They are recommending a drop from \$86,600 to \$50,100. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the abatement recommendation for Lisa Sims of Somersworth, NH for property of 356 School Street from \$86,600 to \$50,100, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Timber Tax Cut Warrant

Ms. Laflamme advised this is a small levy for Steve Binette's property Binette Realty, LLC (Map 407 Lot 17). He reported taking out 165.32 tons of biomass grade chips for a tax yield due to the City for \$10.91. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the timber yield tax of \$10.91 to Binette Realty, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Group Net Metering Recommendation

Ms. Laflamme advised she sent both proposals received from Freedom Energy Logistics and Standard Power of America to Skip Sansoucy for his review. She stated Mr. Sansoucy and Jim Wheeler looked at both agreements, did some research and came back with a recommendation for City Council that the right proposal for the City at this point is the proposal from Standard Power of America. She stated she received numbers

from Standard Power today and they are going with the \$0.007 as opposed to the \$0.005 that Mr. Hayden indicated in his presentation. They are willing to take the School accounts as well as smaller accounts. They indicated the Schools would be getting an annual reimbursement of about \$8,300 and for the other accounts we provided them from the City side to include; Pollution control, The Pump Stations, the Street Lights this will generate an annual reimbursement of about \$12,000. Standard Power's terms are extremely flexible. In the proposal they did it for 2 years, but Skip said he'd be comfortable doing 5 years as they have the (30) day out on either side included in the agreement. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the Group Net Metering recommendation made by the Interim City Manager to go with the Standard Power of America agreement with a 5-year term, Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Route 110 Water & Sewer Design Extension Project – Engineer Award Recommendation

Ms. Laflamme advised only two proposals were received. One from Horizons Engineering and CMA Engineers. She stated the proposals received were extremely competitive and very similar. She commented Water Works was in on the selection, along with Public Works, Pollution Control, Rodney Bartlett from MRI and Jason Gagnon, Supervisor from the North Conway Water Precinct. The group was able to come to a decision and recommended awarding to CMA Engineers. The thing that separated the two firms was that CMA Engineers is proposing a more aggressive schedule to get the project designed. They are proposing being done late Summer early Fall as opposed to Horizons Engineering which is proposing being done in 2023. Ms. Laflamme commented she has received a lot of calls from Congressional Staff wondering where we are with our projects and where we will be in line for ARPA Funds. She stated we need to get this designed quickly if we want to be in line for those Funds. Mayor Grenier commented that the Executive Council signed the agreement with the City of Berlin last week so we are on the clock now and have to get moving. Councilor Eastman questioned Ms. Laflamme as to what was the timeline requested in the proposal. Ms. Laflamme responded there were no set timeline, we asked the Firms to tell us their timeframe. Both provided a schedule and CMA had them finishing somewhere between August and October of this year and Horizons had them finishing in February 2023. Councilor Eastman asked if either Firms were contacted after review of timelines. Ms. Laflamme responded the reviewing group decided they didn't need to do interviews and mostly just to save time to get it going. Councilor Robert Theberge moved to award the Route 110 Water & Sewer Design Extension Project to CMA Engineers, Councilor Morgan seconded the motion carried by majority in favor with abstentions from Councilors Berthiaume and Eastman. Mayor Grenier indicated that Councilor Berthiaume abstained as her husband owns property along the Route 110 corridor and stands to benefit from the project. Councilor Eastman explained he has no financial interest, but does paperwork for Binette.

Other

Ms. Laflamme informed Council that when grants are given and made to the Berlin Airport Authority through DOT, they require a Certificate of Vote from the City Council to give authority to the Berlin Airport Authority Chairperson, which in this case is the Mayor, the Authority to sign the grant. We were made aware that the vote doesn't need to be done for each single grant that a one-time vote from Council is accepted. Councilor Remillard moved to authorize the Chairperson of the Berlin Airport Authority to sign the grant application for the fencing project and any future grants with the Council still being notified when a grant is being applied for, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

At 7:30pm, there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier recessed before moving on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Rioux
Executive Assistant

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