

## **City Council Work Session February 21, 2022**

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

Others present: Interim City Manager Pamela Laflamme, SAU3 Superintendent Julie King, SAU3 Business Manager Marion Moore, Fire Chief Jay Watkins, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Tom McCue, Lori Korzen, and William Carroll, Berlin Daily Sun

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

### **NHMA Legislative Policy Process 2023-2024**

Mayor Grenier introduced Tom McCue who's been the City's Representative for the NHMA for eight years. He has also served the City of Berlin in various capacities for eighteen years to include City Councilor and Chairperson of the Planning Board. He also commented that Mr. McCue is also now a voting member on the Coos County Planning Board. He brings valuable experience to both the City of Berlin and the Governor of Coos County. Mayor Grenier explained Mr. McCue is seeking a vote from Council so he can serve as our Representative for the Legislative policy process.

Mr. McCue presented to Council the NHMA Legislative policy process for 2023-2024. He explained that on Friday April 1, 2022 will be the organizational meeting which will include the individuals like himself who volunteer on behalf of Cities and Towns. Then the Volunteers are divided into three different subgroups. One looks at finance/revenue issues, the second looks at general administration and governance issues and the third one is for infrastructure development and land use. Through the months of April and May, each subgroup meets to review for both legislations that they know are coming and to look at policies that different Cities and Towns suggest. The Staff at NHMA will then compile the information and Mr. McCue will come back to Council late in the Summer of early Fall 2022 to review the different proposals.

Mayor Grenier commented that since 2009, between the suspension of payment to the Municipalities for the State's contribution to retirement, the reduction and some forms of State Aid to Education and a loss of distribution, the City of Berlin has lost \$14,000,000 of State Aid of all types. Councilor Berthiaume moved to appoint Tom McCue as the City of Berlin Representative to the NHMA Legislative Policy Conference, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **DRA ordered Full Statistical Update Contract with Corcoran Consulting**

Ms. Laflamme explained this is a result of the consent decree that the City had with the BTLA. The DRA is fully in charge of our process during this statistical update. She commented the City will still have their regular current contract with Corcoran Consulting in place which is for a 5-year period. This work is in addition to the current contract. She stated a draft of the contract was submitted to the DRA and they came back with 27 changes. It is clear they will be very involved in this process. This contract will start after March 1, 2022 pending approval from the DRA to start the process officially. She pointed out two things included in the contract. The first being that payment will start this fiscal year with the remaining budgeted in the next fiscal year. The second thing is because of the way this contract is laid out and specifically stated by DRA, we will have someone from Corcoran Consulting on site 50% of the time and it needs to be someone at the level of assessing supervisor. She commented the contract is a very extended contract and looks like it's going from March 1, 2022 to March 1, 2024. This is because it is unknown as far as how long it will take to close out the docket with DRA. Corcoran Consulting intends on getting the work done on June 30, 2023.

She also stated after going back and forth between the Attorneys, Corcoran Consulting and the DRA, she thinks it's a good idea for the period of this extra statistical update contract that the Council remain the Board of Assessors and not bring in a new Board of Assessors. She feels that would be a heavy burden on whomever we bring to the table as there will be a lot of oversight in this process through the DRA. She is suggesting waiting till this contract is done and the DRA says we're good and the BTLA closes the docket before bringing in a new Board of Assessors. Councilor Berthiaume inquired if this is what we have to do as a result of the lawsuit with the Assessing Board. Ms. Laflamme responded yes, this is the agreement we came to with the BTLA. Mayor Grenier asked if the residentials will be done for this Fall to set the tax rate. Ms. Laflamme stated it's their process to get as much done as they can as quickly as possible. Once the DRA sets the schedule, she will know more after the first meeting how quickly they think things can layout. It's Corcoran's intent to move through this process, it's just not clear at this point what the DRA's intent is.

Councilor Robert Theberge questioned if the City needs to provide office space to the Corcoran Consulting Representatives that will be on site. Ms. Laflamme responded we already have space set up for them as they currently come once a month. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the assessing contract with Corcoran Consulting for an additional amount of \$79,200 to perform a DRA ordered full statistical update for all non-utility properties, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman. Mayor Grenier requested Ms. Laflamme keep track of all costs associated with this.

#### **DES Feasibility Study with White Mountain Paper Company Discussion**

Ms. Laflamme reminded Council White Mountain Paper Company presented a few times to Council expressing their interest in taking wastewater from our treatment plant. They were able to get a grant through the State clean water revolving fund for \$100,000 to do a feasibility study in conjunction with the City. After conversations with White Mountain Paper Company, they've agreed to let the City receive the money and run the process which would include a full request for qualifications. If this feasibility study proves this is a good idea, any subsequent phases would allow us to use the same Engineer of Record for the whole process rather having to start all over. She is seeking Council's approval to allow the City to take over the process, receive the funds and put out the request for qualifications. Councilor Remillard questioned if \$100,000 will be enough for all it involves. Mayor Grenier responded this is just for Engineering and to determine if it's even feasible. Councilor Higbee moved to allow the Interim City Manager to proceed with the DES feasibility study with White Mountain Paper Company and that the City of Berlin be the lead sponsor, Councilor Roland Theberge seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

At 7:15pm, 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.