

City Council Work Session
March 20, 2017

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Representatives from Primex Carl Weber and Rick Alpers, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Police Chief Pete Morency, Superintendent of Schools Corinne Cascadden, Finance Director Patty Chase, and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

Primex Insurance Discussion

Carl Weber informed the Council that Primex provides the City with Worker's Comp, Property/Liability and Unemployment insurance. They are a public risk pool and Berlin was one of the founding members. The premise is to share risk with other cities, towns, schools, and districts in NH. Part of what the pool does is help the City manage its risk by providing training. There are about 40 to 45 employees per year who participate in the training programs. There are also statutory caps afforded to municipalities in a pool where maximum damages are in place because of membership in the pool.

The risk pool also works to keep contributions stable. Rates are based on a five year experience window. Primex also offers a multi-year agreement with a cap on increases of 10% on Workers Comp and 7% on property liability for 3 years. Participating does not guarantee that the cost will go up; based on experience, costs could be stable or go down.

Mr. Weber indicated that if the City participates in the Prime Program, a discount 2.5% could be achieved. Rick Alpers added that it takes a little effort to achieve Prime and he went through the self-assessment that lists the practices that include benchmarking, adoption of safety policies, claims reporting, Temporary Alternate Duty, facility inspections and participation in the Joint Loss Prevention Committee.

Mayor Grenier asked who would actually do the work to achieve Prime. Mr. Alpers stated that it is usually at the discretion of the Council with the JLPC and staff working on it.

Mr. Weber explained that if there is money left over, it is returned to the members and over the years \$400,000 has been returned to the City. Councilor Theberge asked who is responsible for training and Mr. Weber replied that programs are offered and Primex helps with good best practices; however the municipality schedules the employees for training. Mr. Alpers said that they just recently did a confined space training with classroom training as well as practical training to practice the procedure. On April 14, there will be Flagger training.

Councilor Nelson asked how quickly we could take care of the items remaining to achieve the Prime discount. Mr. Wheeler stated that some of our policies are outdated; however it could be done in a period of months. Councilor Nelson asked about the alternative work program and Mr. Wheeler noted

that we have it and when the need arises, we are putting people back to work on Temporary Alternative Duty. Councilor Nelson then asked who clears snow at 2:00 a.m. at the Police and Fire Stations. Chief Morency replied that maintenance does it for the PD.

Mayor Grenier referred to specific questions that the Police Chief had regarding Worker's Compensation claims. Chief Morency acknowledged that it is very clear that RSA 281 gives the guidelines for what is covered and Primex adheres to the law. He is satisfied that the issues he had are resolved.

Mayor Grenier asked if complacency plays a role in WC claims and Mr. Weber stressed that it is important to do the benchmarking on a yearly basis keeping safety at the forefront. Councilors encouraged the implementation of Prime asking Mr. Wheeler how long it would take to reach compliance. Mr. Wheeler indicated that Prime could be achieved in a matter of months.

Councilor Theberge asked if training is mandated and Mr. Weber replied that training is one of the responsibilities of being in a pool and doing everything possible to lower risk. He added that Primex has expanded their legal services, helping municipalities with contracts and other legal matters. There is also a HR claims specialist on staff who can help with HR issues.

Councilor Rozek asked if Primex coverage would be denied if elected officials chose to go against the advice of the city attorney. Mr. Weber stated that coverage includes decisions the council makes. Coverage is not designed to deny but designed to address decisions. He encouraged a call to Primex prior to making a questionable decision; however Primex is there to partner with the City not work against it. He encouraged participating in Prime and taking advantage of the multi-year agreement to maximize savings.

Councilor Rozek moved to enter into a multi-year agreement with Primex for fiscal years 2019, 2020 and 2021 for Property Liability Insurance with a max increase of 7% and for Worker's Comp insurance with a maximum increase of 10%; Councilor Nelson seconded and the motion carried. All were in favor.

FY 18 Proposed Budget Admin Reductions

Mr. Wheeler provided a memo that outlined \$33,590 of cuts to the Administration budget. The Council had asked to see what \$50,000 and \$100,000 of cuts would look like. He stated that the only way to get to \$50,000 or \$100,000 is to cut personnel and that may be achieved by combining positions.

Councilor Theberge questioned the effect of cutting \$5,000 from Professional Services. Mr. Wheeler explained that we've hired an outside facilitator in the past and used this account to pay for it. Without the funding, we will have to go without the service.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3(c) Matters which, if discussed in public would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person; and (e) Consideration of pending claim. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

The health department billing clerk resigned and Simone will be doing the final Medicare billing for the City

Councilor Higbee moved to come out of non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 (c) and to re-enter under RSA 91-A:3 (e) Consideration of Pending Claim; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to come out of non-public session. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved to seal the minutes until case has been adjudicated; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

There being no further business in work session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant