

City Council Work Session

June 20, 2022

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

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, SAU3 Business Manager Marion Moore, SAU3 School Board Chair Ann Nolin, School Board Member Nathan Morin, Steven Korzen, Lori Korzen, Micah Bachner, Amber Bachner, Paul Robitaille, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

At 6:26 p.m., Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Roland Theberge to enter into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II; (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Roland Theberge to amend his motion to also include (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. So, moved, the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

Two items were discussed during Non-Public session.

Town of Gorham Board of Selectmen Chair Michael Waddell met with Council and Staff to discuss shared issues around their respective hydro electric facilities and recreational trails. Mr. Waddell invited City Manager Phil Warren to attend a Zoom meeting with himself and the Bureau of Trails tomorrow morning.

Mr. Warren presented a letter to Councilors he received from a resident interested in purchasing a City owned parcel that abuts their property. He advised he visited the parcel and it's very steep and water runs down. This parcel is wooded and serves as water retention. He is recommending the City retains this parcel. Councilor Remillard moved to send a response letter thanking the resident for his inquiry and advising the parcel is not for sale for environmental drainage reasons. Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

At 6:58 p.m., Councilor Morency moved to come out of Non-Public session with a second from Councilor Remillard. So, moved, the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

Mayor Grenier requested to add an item to the agenda under other to discuss a communication received from Lori Korzen in regards to the NH Food Bank. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Berthiaume to add the item to the agenda under other. So moved, the motion carried with all in favor.

Budget Discussion

Mayor Grenier advised the FY23 Budget will be passed tonight during regular meeting. He commented since the Budget Public Hearing, he received news of new revenues coming to the City that were passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor. There will be almost 1.3 million in funding coming in. This includes the School's Extraordinary Needs Grant in the amount of \$377,415. The Governor signed on Friday the one-time State Fund that will fund 7.5% of the municipal share of NHRS for teachers, fire and police for a total of \$703,406. Also, SB401 which appropriates money for bridges and highways is

listing Berlin's share as \$202,553.66. He was informed by the School District's Business Manager that the tuition revenue from sending school districts is being increased by \$100,000.

Mayor Grenier proposed adding \$300,000 to the expenses line for street repairs. He commented by adding all the above-mentioned revenues and the added expense for street repairs into the budget, we are looking at about a \$0.90 tax increase under the old values. He thinks the new tax rate will be way under \$30.00 per thousand as the property values have climbed so much. Mr. Warren stated the values don't rise and fall together. They rise and fall by classes so with residential booming, this is where your value will rise, but won't see such a rise for commercial. He commented that just because residential properties are going up in value, doesn't mean the City gets more money. The tax rate is based on the amount to be raised by taxation that comes out of the budget. Take all revenues, apply them towards the budget and whatever is left is the amount to be raised by taxation. That amount then drives the calculation of the tax rate against value. Mr. Warren recommended to Council to amend line item 01-430-435-2000 Hot Top Cold patch from \$80,000 to \$380,000 during the regular meeting. This would adjust the total budget figure to \$39,263,697.

Unlicensed Dogs

City Clerk Shelli Fortin distributed a list to Council which included 356 dogs that have not been relicensed since last year. Per the RSA, they have till June 20 to do so which is today. She reminded Council that last year they had voted to issue a warning letter giving them until July 15 to register their dogs and if not registered by that time, a civil forfeiture letter will be served. Last year, 23 individuals paid fines. Councilor Eastman moved to issue warning letters to delinquent dog owners giving them until July 15 to register their dogs. Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Abatement

Mr. Warren advised this is an abatement request for BHA St Regis Apartments Limited Partnership. The reason for this abatement request is because the taxes went in prior to processing of the exemption. The total amount is for \$28,846. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the abatement to BHA St Regis Apartments Limited Partnership in the amount of \$28,846. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Tax Deferral Discharge

Mr. Warren advised this is a tax deferral granted on real property in the amount of \$11,043.08 to Ronney Sr & Joyce Lang, nka Joyce Kovak of 105 Granite Street. He is recommending Council approve this discharge of tax deferrals. Councilor Higbee moved to approve the tax deferral discharge. Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Other

Mayor Grenier advised a communication was received from Lori Korzen and Christy Langlois concerning use of Community Field for a summer lunch program here in Berlin. Mayor Grenier commented he was approached by Mrs. Korzen asking if she found a sponsor if the City would support it. The NH Food Bank agreed to be the Sponsor and the Eagles Club is donating the use of their kitchen. Mrs. Korzen would like to set up the summer lunch program and use part of Community Field Monday through Friday. Mayor Grenier commented the only concern he had was to obtain an insurance binder listing the City as co insured only because it's not a City sponsored activity. He was assured by Christy Langlois of the NH Food Bank that an insurance binder listing the City of Berlin as additional insured will be provided tomorrow. He thanked Mrs. Korzen for putting this together and facilitate this program. As Mrs. Korzen

was present, Mayor Grenier directed a question directly to her which was if she was personally protected. She commented she is not; however, she and others are taking the NH Safe Food training course tomorrow. Once she takes the course, she will be covered under the NH Food Bank. Councilor Robert Theberge moved to allow the NH Food Bank to sponsor a summer lunch program at Community Field as long as the City of Berlin has a certificate of insurance on file. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

At 7:22p.m., 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.