

City Council Work Session

March 27, 2017

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Public Works Director Michael Perreault, Health & Welfare Director Angela Martin Giroux, Library Director Denise Jensen, Jay Poulin (6:45 p.m.) and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Budget Meetings

Library – Denise Jensen reported that there was something in the newspaper about people not using the library and she distributed statistics that are contrary to that. In one year, there were nearly 25,000 people who came through the door. The library is less than ½ of a percent of the city budget.

The Library has the ability to interchange books with other libraries using the State's Inter-library loan service; the books are delivered among libraries by a State-run van service. The Library is also used by DHHS as a safe place for supervised family visits. Family research can be done using Heritage Quest Online from the Library and from home.

Ms. Jensen reported that there is a need for 978 hours of per diem services to cover for vacations and sick time. There are two staff members on the main floor and one in the children's department. The request remains the same for supplies and building maintenance. Downloadable books are very popular among patrons. The request for books in the budget has been the same for six years. Ms. Jensen mentioned that Gorham's book budget is 3 times the amount of Berlin's. Magazine subscriptions have gone up slightly. There is a \$25 charge per year per family for use of the library by non-residents. Mayor Grenier suggested asking the Library Trustees to increase the non-resident fee. Mayor Grenier acknowledged that most increases in the budget are personnel related; however non-resident fees have not gone up in ten years. Referring to Ms. Jensen's comment about Gorham's book budget, Councilor Rozek questioned what Gorham pays in wages.

Health & Welfare - Angela Martin Giroux reported that the Health Department budget provides for the Medicaid audit which is required by the end of November. Mr. Wheeler clarified that the reference to Worker's Comp in the Health budget is from the previous year's payroll and we will ask Primex if it is appropriate to remove. The Health Department Clerk and the Health Officer were rolled into the welfare budget.

Mayor Grenier confirmed that as the Health Officer, Ms. Giroux would still take care of health complaints, restaurant inspections, bugs, and health related building issues. Mayor Grenier mentioned that in the Health Department Revenues, restaurant inspections are zeroed out. Mr. Wheeler noted that there should be \$3,250 in the line item. Mayor Grenier asked about the vehicles that were used by the nurses, adding that if any of them are junk, we should get rid of them.

There is a line item for communicable disease and Ms. Giroux stated that there is enough money to start the process of setting up a treatment center if the need arises.

Councilor Remillard asked about the welfare assistance budget and Ms. Giroux stated that she spends a lot of time finding alternative measures to assist those in need. Councilor Remillard asked for statistics such as the number of families assisted and how the amount spent up to now, \$22,500, compares to last year. It was noted that the amount spent last year was approximately \$45,000. Mayor Grenier commented on electricity and board & care which are over budget. Ms. Giroux noted that there was a change to the rules on electricity by the PUC where it used to be that paying one month on a delinquent bill would get electricity turned on but now 10% of the overall bill has to be paid. Board and care is over budget because a family had to be put up in a hotel for almost 2 months.

Lowes Grant - Ms. Giroux informed the Council that she will apply for a Lowes grant from their education foundation for gardening. Mayor Grenier confirmed that the Council is not opposed to the application.

Route 16 Bump-Out Discussion

Jay Poulin reviewed the project in general saying that it is currently in winter shutdown; however the contractor wants to mobilize in mid-April and is anticipating full completion in September. The utility reconstruction is ongoing and on schedule. Mayor Grenier observed that some of the older poles are still standing alongside the new ones. Mr. Poulin stated that the old poles will be removed before the sidewalks are built. Councilor Theberge asked about drainage on the upper end of Riverside Drive and Mr. Poulin clarified that drainage was not part of this portion of the project, only paving.

Mr. Poulin went on to open the discussion on bump outs which were installed to improve safety by increasing site distance at intersecting streets and to improve streetscape. They also prevent cars from parking too close to the intersection, have advantages for crosswalks; they are traffic calming, and improve streetscape. The Council had agreed to evaluate how the bump outs worked over the winter and consider them again in the spring.

Mr. Poulin reviewed potential modifications to the Cambridge Street and Peavey Street bump outs. It had been suggested that the Cambridge Street bump out be reduced from 8 feet to 6 feet. Councilor Rozek commented that the bump outs are not a problem if the roadway is straight; however at Cambridge Street, it veers to the left. In the winter, there is a loss of about 20 inches due to ice and snow accumulated on the edge of the roadway. He said that removing 24 inches from the Cambridge St bump out would be good in the summer but in the winter, it is not enough. A minimum of 3 feet should be removed.

Councilor Gentili commented that he would like to eliminate the bump outs totally on curves. Councilor Nelson agreed. Mayor Grenier agreed that they need to be cut down; however they should not be removed completely. Councilor Theberge wanted to know how it was to maintain the bump outs through the winter and Mr. Perreault stated that it was a challenge but the crew adapted.

Ms. Laflamme pointed out that safety is improved for cars and pedestrians who can be seen when crossing the street. There is an important balance of making lanes as wide as possible and achieving safe crossing for pedestrians. Mr. Wheeler stated that he paid attention to Cambridge Street and experienced the ice buildup. He suggested not removing the bump out altogether as it is an improvement to safety.

Councilor Rozek moved to cut 36" from the bump outs of Cambridge Street north and south and Peavey Street north and south; Councilor Nelson seconded and further discussion ensued.

Mr. Poulin was concerned that it would look awkward to have 8 foot bump outs and then come to Cambridge and Peavey and have a sudden reduction to five feet. Councilor Otis stated that he likes the bump outs and suggested that the Cambridge Street one be made longer. Councilor Rozek called to move the question and in the vote that followed, Councilors Remillard, Gentili, Morgan Allain, Rozek, and Nelson voted in favor of the motion and Councilors Otis, Theberge and Mayor Grenier voted against.

Mr. Poulin mentioned that trees will be planted on some of the bump outs and Councilor Rozek expressed concern about visibility. Mayor Grenier stated that Success Street could be reduced by two feet so that the bump outs are symmetrical. Mr. Poulin said that the rest of the design has 8 foot bump outs. He proposed using pavers on the surface of the bump outs, leaving grass only on the ones in areas close to where we mow parks. There was no opposition to the pavers.

Mayor Grenier asked if reducing the bump outs to 7 feet would have an effect on the overall cost. Mr. Poulin theorized that the cost would be close to the same. Seven feet all the way up would accomplish the aesthetics and safety.

Councilor Nelson asked about 12th Street Bridge and Mr. Poulin said that the project will establish a formal turning lane and there will not be a bump out there. Councilor Rozek confirmed that pavers have a long life expectancy.

Mr. Poulin noted that there are houses on corners with driveways off of a side street. On most, there will be one parking spot on street; however there is one house on Heritage Lane with no on street parking. Councilor Remillard stressed that it is important to make an adjustment for on street parking. Councilor Nelson confirmed that the landowners will be notified.

Just north of Twelfth Street, there will be no curbing. Councilor Rozek suggested marking the sidewalk area by painting lines. Councilor Theberge asked about "School In" signs and Mr. Poulin affirmed that a solar powered, rapid flashing beacon that is programmable from the sign location is included in the project.

Mayor Grenier established that there have not been any serious issues necessitating the use of contingencies. Mr. Poulin reported that there will likely be multiple crews working on different aspects of the project. Mayor Grenier asked if any sifted sand could be bought from the airport and Mr. Poulin noted that the project calls for mostly crushed rock.

Non-Public Session

At 8:35 p.m. Councilor Morgan Allain moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3(e) Pending Claims; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

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

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Nelson to seal the minutes until the case is adjudicated. So moved, the motion carried.

There being no further business in work session, Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant