

City Council Work Session

August 15, 2022

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Morgan, Higbee, Morency, Robert Theberge, Remillard and Eastman. Councilor Roland Theberge was absent. Councilor Berthiaume entered the Work Session at 7:12 p.m.

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Finance Director Holly Larsen, Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Cheryl McCormick, Ted McCormick, Beth Rancloes, Kathy Trumbull, John Trumbull, Richard King, Steven Korzen, Lori Korzen, Jan Zicha and Paul Robitaille, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. He requested to add an item to the Work Session agenda for the BHS Backers's officials to present and discuss their request which was originally scheduled to be discussed during the regular meeting. Councilor Remillard moved to add the item to the Work Session agenda. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

New Mileage Reimbursement Rate

Mr. Warren presented the new mileage reimbursement rate from the U.S. General Services Administration effective July 1, 2022. He recommended to Council that instead of voting yearly on this to vote that the City will reimburse individuals consistent with the current GSA mileage rate. Councilor Remillard moved to have the City reimburse mileage for privately used vehicles consistent with the GSA established rate. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Land Use Board & Building Permit Fee Review

Ms. Laflamme advised that part of HB 1661 included a lot of riders related to land use and planning. One of those is the publication of fees. Effective August 23, 2022, all communities are required to put their fee schedule together and place them in easy to find places. She presented the current fee schedules and provided examples of fee schedules from other communities. The fees are already published on our website. She is working on consolidating them and will place them in an accessible place on the website.

While working on this, she noticed how low our fees are. She gave an example of a Zoning Board variance. We currently charge a flat fee of \$50, we are required by law to send notices to abutters by certified return receipt mail which averages \$7 per mailing. We are required to do a public notice in the newspaper which is about \$40 and then any staff review time which includes the Building Inspector, Planning and the Fire Department occasionally. There is definitely a loss of money each time a Zoning Board application is processed. Mayor Grenier commented this is a function of the Planning Board to establish the fee schedules. He would like a recommendation from the Planning Board. Councilor Remillard moved to ask the Berlin Planning Board to make a recommendation on building inspection and construction fees. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Land Sale Request

Mr. Warren presented a communication between the Trumbull's and the City. They are willing to purchase a City owned lot (Map 119 Lot 35) that abuts their lot (Map 119 Lot 36) in the amount of \$2000 with the condition that it would be merged with their abutting lot. Mayor Grenier commented this is in the best interest of the City as it will promote development. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the sale of Map 119 Lot 35 to John and Kathy Trumbull in the amount of \$2000 with the condition that the lot is merged to their abutting lot. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor. Mayor Grenier commented this was an item discussed in Non-Public session on August

1, 2022 and would like to have the Non-Public minutes released as it's no longer relevant. Councilor Higbee moved to unseal the minutes from the Non-Public Session where this item was discussed. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

RAISE Grant - Update

Ms. Laflamme advised she received an official award email last Friday for the 19.6 million dollars. This particular application covers downtown reconstruction which includes; streets, sidewalks, public parking lots, infrastructure including water, sewer and drainage as well as heated snow melt infrastructure. This is part of a public partnership with Burgess power who will provide the waste steam to heat the water for the heated snow melt infrastructure. This project will connect the work started from St Anne's north along with the application currently in with NHDOT and the ten-year plan to do from the Gorham town line up to the Cleveland Bridge. This is also an opportunity to apply for energy grants related to the work that will be done. Wilson Engineers who have been working with Burgess Power are on the hunt for additional funds to do more work while working downtown including placing wiring underground on the Main Street side and looking at a few other enhancements like car charging stations. There is no cash match required from the City. Part of the match will be for Berlin Water Works to replace water lines downtown and Burgess is providing \$50,000 for permitting and engineering. She commented this is an extraordinary amount of money to invest in downtown without the City having to match funding.

Mr. Warren commented Ms. Laflamme deserves a lot of credit for this project. It wouldn't have happened without all her hard work and perseverance. He advised this is a full depth reclamation of Main Street which includes a snow melt system. It is not the other way around. The snow melt is an integral but small piece of the whole project. There are two choices here; 1) Accept the Grant with thanks, proceed with the work, benefit from the contagiousness of improvements and possibly receive additional Grants as Ms. Laflamme stated. 2) Refuse the Grant, do not improve downtown and possibly put the City in jeopardy for receiving any other Federal Grants in the future. Mayor Grenier commented the snow melt part of the project was to get full depth reclamation. Mr. Warren commented it is not just putting in a snow melt system, it's replacing everything.

BHS Backers Request

Mrs. Cheryl McCormick, Treasurer, Mr. Ted McCormick, Liaison teacher and Beth Rancloes, Secretary for the Backers were present to discuss updating the BHS Backers homecoming plans. Mrs. McCormick advised the event was originally going to be held at the Heritage Park, but there was a wedding booked over a year ago. They are looking for other options where to hold the even and are asking for suggestions from Council. She mentioned Tondreau Park or Community Field. Electricity will be needed as there are 6 to 8 food booths set up to raise funds. Mr. Warren suggested Tondreau Park as Community Field has had a lot of maintenance done to have it in this condition. He suggested using a generator to supply electricity to the booths. Mayor Grenier requested the cost to install a temporary electrical service. Mr. McCormick commented they are still looking for locations to build floats. They only have two sites confirmed and need four. Mayor Grenier stated he would look into the electricity supply issue and additional building float sites. Councilor Remillard moved to allow the parade route to be altered from lower Glen Avenue to Tondreau Park and allow for the bonfire at Tondreau Park. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Non-Public Session

At 7:14 p.m., Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to enter into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II; (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 and (I) Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel. So, moved, the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

Mayor Grenier advised he would be present for the first item discussed but would recuse himself for the second item.

The sale of City owned property was discussed.

Mayor Grenier left the Non-Public Session.

The consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel was discussed. This item will be made Public as an agenda item in the near future. No votes were taken.

At 7:28p.m., Council and Staff came out of Non-Public Session. Councilor Remillard moved to seal the minutes of the first non-public session item until the sale matter has been resolved; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

At 7:30 p.m., there being no further business in Work Session, Council moved 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.