

City Council Work Session November 7, 2022

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

Others present: Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Lori Korzen, Micah Bachner, Amber Bachner and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30p.m.

Veterans Tax Credit

Ms. Laflamme discussed Mr. Warren's notes about the recent change in State law which requires the City to reauthorize the Veterans Tax credit which is presently authorized and offered by the City. There are no changes in the amount. The reapproval does not result in any additional credits, increases or decreases. It just ensures that status quo is maintained. A first read of the Resolution will be read during regular meeting this evening.

Tax Deferral Discharge

Ms. Larsen explained this was one of the properties that was tax deeded by the City. When this happens, the notice of discharge for deferrals from prior years comes forward and this is what this is. Ms. Larsen advised this property is City owned as of October 4, 2022. Mayor Grenier questioned if when putting the property up for resale, if the City will be able to recuperate the amount of \$24,455.13 listed in this discharge document. Ms. Larsen confirmed yes and all additional costs associated with the tax deed as well. Councilor Higbee moved to release and discharge the liens on the property known as Map 129 Lot 31, 356 School Street. Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Final 2022 MS-1

Mayor Grenier advised this document needs approval and signatures from Council. Once approved, it is sent to the State and is used for the tax rate setting. This item will be discussed further at the next meeting to go over appropriations, revenue surplus and carryover funds, etc. He commented the City gained value in this last valuation. The net value without utilities is \$536,963,734 which is what the School tax will be based on. The total value with utilities is \$713,636,534. This is a sizable increase in value for the City. He anticipates a significant drop in the rate.

Coos County ARPA Funds

Mayor Grenier announced he will not be running for Coos County Commissioner in the upcoming election after being in this position for 20 years. He advised Councilor Robert Theberge will be the incoming Coos County Commissioner. He informed there are ARPA funds leftover for district 1 in the amount of \$250,000. The City of Berlin was allocated funds for the engineering of the Route 110 Water & Sewer line extensions up to Jericho Lake. He asked the City Manager to apply for the remaining funds to go towards a new salt shed at the Public Works department. He commented it is a matter of time before the EPA requires we properly store salt and sand as the Dead River is close by and during rain/snow events the salt could eventually migrate into the river. This is an operational nightmare for Public Works to not have a proper salt/sand shed. Currently, the salt is stored in a run-down shed that wasn't designed for that purpose. The sand is stored underneath the Public Works garage which necessitates an operator to use a bucket loader to pull sand and salt, mix it on the ground and then load it into the salt trucks. This is not an optimal use of Public Works time. He feels this would qualify for the funds due to the environmental items. The approval of funds relies on County Commissioners and Delegation. Coos County administer these funds.

Street Closure Request – Parade of Lights 2022

Councilor Berthiaume discussed the request on behalf of the Chamber. She commented it was difficult to put this parade together due to lack of participation. She is hoping it is successful. She's hearing positive comments from the community. She commented small and big floats are welcomed. Councilor Higbee moved to allow the street closure at 6:30pm on November 25, 2022 for the parade of lights. Councilor Roland Theberge seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Other

Mayor Grenier advised City Clerk Shelli Fortin has a public announcement in regards to a ballot item. Ms. Fortin advised that the Coos County Superior Court ruled that Roger Sylvestre, because he is not an attorney, is not qualified to run for County Attorney. His name will be crossed off from all the ballots tomorrow. She commented there will be signs with explanation by the ballot carts and a copy of the court order at the poles. Councilor Higbee reminded that the Mayor and Councilors are supposed to be at the polls per the State Constitution. They can designate an individual if they can't be present.

Councilor Roland Theberge brought up issues with the Riverwalk. He commented there is a beaver causing some damages to trees close to the Heritage Park. Ms. Laflamme commented she will contact Fish and Game tomorrow. Councilor Roland Theberge also mentioned not plowing the Riverwalk in the winter so it can be used for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Ms. Laflamme responded it is Federally mandated that we plow it as Federal Funding requires that we keep the Riverwalk ADA accessible all year long.

Councilor Higbee commented he is disappointed in the political signs that were put up on the Riverwalk. He is unsure if there is an Ordinance that prohibits doing so on City property, but he would like to consider this prior to the next election. Ms. Laflamme stated she recalls there is something written in an Ordinance about the right of way versus the property. She will look into it. Mayor Grenier commented there is an agreement for the Veterans Park that if non-Veteran related items were found in the park they would be removed by municipal employees.

Ms. Laflamme reminded Council they had approved replacing the flags at Veterans Park but unfortunately, the flags are on back order and will not be delivered on time for Veterans Day. Mayor Grenier advised he contacted the Commander of the VFW and he was able to obtain flags for the Veterans Day ceremony.

At 7:03 p.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.