

City Council Work Session November 21, 2022

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

Others present: Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Captain Nathan Roy, Mike Caron, Lori Korzen, Micah Bachner, Amber Bachner, Representatives and Team Members of the Berlin Youth Hockey, Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

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

Extra Mile Proclamation Presentation

Mayor Grenier explained the Extra Mile Proclamation is an opportunity for the City to thank a special volunteer who volunteered a number of hours in the community at little or no attention to himself. An organization that has been serving the City of Berlin for over sixty years will also be recognized. Mayor Grenier read the [Extra Mile Proclamation](#) that was read during the November 7th Council meeting.

The City of Berlin thanks the following individuals, and organizations who go the extra mile to make Berlin a better place:

Mike Caron - has had a steady presence in Berlin for many years. He works quietly behind the scenes giving his time and resources with a goal of making Berlin better. From early work with the Berlin Planning Board to his current role as chair of Berlin Water Works, he has given the City a lot of his time and the City has benefited from his efforts. His work with economic development and chairing the board of the Berlin Industrial Development and Park Authority has led to successful relationships with many local businesses including Capone Iron and North Country Growers. He can be found at Chamber of Commerce events, helping out in the weeks prior getting things ready and being present and helping out with the event itself. His commitment to community is strong but he is never one to seek the spotlight yet he most definitely deserves it. As he attempts to slow down and enjoy time with family, he still continues to give to Berlin. Volunteers are what make a community better and without volunteers' communities would never grow. Mike is the epitome of someone who goes the extra mile without ever expecting something in return beyond trying to make Berlin a stronger community for all of us to live and work in and enjoy. Thank you, Mike, for your efforts to make Berlin a community we can all be proud of!

Berlin Youth Hockey - has been around since the 1960s when a group of local individuals started what has become more than just a way to learn a beloved local sport. It is viewed by those who have committed time and effort as a generational contract with young people to teach responsibility, commitment, and teamwork at a highly skilled sport. Here in what is often referred to as Hockeytown USA, parents and coaches have put in countless hours to give kids the opportunity to learn this cherished game. Thousands of kids have gone through this program and we are thankful to all of those individuals who started this program, coached in this program and the current board of directors and parents who keep it going. This year's recipient for the City's Extra Mile Recognition goes to the Berlin Youth Hockey board of directors and coaches. We appreciate all the work and hours that go into this program. We wouldn't still have hockey here in Berlin if not for all of our volunteers! Thanks for going the extra mile!

Plymouth State Student Presentation

Alex Ritchie who is a Consultant working for White Mountain Paper Company and a group of PSU students are attending via Zoom. Ms. Ritchie advised White Mountain Paper Company has been working with Plymouth State since the beginning of the year developing this course. The course premises were to have the students look into an appropriate redevelopment of the lagoon parcel if decommissioning is successful. The students began this effort at the end of August early September. They've been to the site, toured the facility, they've been working

on outreach and developing ideas. The presentation tonight is to let the students talk about their efforts and listen to the Council's feedback. The students introduced themselves and discussed their efforts. They advised they met with the Community to get input on the project and heard many proposals related to kids, sports, walking paths, outdoor recreation, etc.

Mayor Grenier questioned if the lagoons can get decommissioned, do you need to get the decommissioning from DES or the EPA. Ms. Ritchie responded this will be a big undertaking, they would have to work collaboratively with DES to develop a decommissioning plan. They have the most input and direction on it. In terms of funding for decommissioning, they would look at Federal funding through EPA. Councilor Remillard asked the students when they are expecting the results of their study to be completed. Ms. Ritchie advised the students are gearing up to present their findings to ownership of the mill and others on December 8th. The students discussed their findings and came up with six proposals they will be presenting on December 8th which include; an outdoor outfitter store with a gun store and shooting range, a brewery, walking paths with environmental benefitting gardens, solar panels with beehives underneath, outdoor/indoor recreation including fishing/hunting tours, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, etc. and bring the railroad back. Ms. Ritchie advised the presentations from the students on December 8th will be held at Plymouth State and extended the invitation to everyone as it is open to the Public and on-going feedback is welcomed.

White Mountain Paper Company Update – Alex Ritchie

Ms. Ritchie gave a general update in regards to the White Mountain Paper Company. She advised the mill continues to operate and remains committed to long term success. They continue to deal with the stabilization efforts related to the tissue machine and rectifying some issues from different maintenance that occurred under prior ownership, but continue to work through them. They have brought in Randy Rand who has 35+ years in paper making experience specifically related to working on the machines. He is management level but understands how to make a machine work. He joined the team in July to really focus on working through these outstanding issues to get the machine running to the level that it should consistently operate in. He brings a tremendous amount of knowledge on developing training programs not only for the existing workforce, but building future workers.

The biggest challenge that the mill is currently facing is the work force. Making sure the existing workforce is properly trained and the aging workforce with upcoming retirements. They are working with the Community College to develop training programs. The ARPA Grant for engineering work was received and a virtual kickoff with the engineers, the Mill and the City of Berlin is scheduled for November 30th and then an all-day on-site meeting with the engineers on December 13th. Mayor Grenier thanked Ms. Ritchie for her presentation.

Carry Over capital Appropriations

Mr. Warren directed Council to the Resolution that will be first read tonight during regular meeting. He advised Finance Director Holly Larsen is present tonight if there are specific questions. Mayor Grenier questioned the amount set aside for voting machines and if the machines will be replaced. Ms. Fortin advised she has been appropriating the amounts every year for when the Ballot Law Commission approves voting machines. Mr. Warren recommends approving the Resolution during regular meeting. Mayor Grenier advised that once an item has been appropriated for capital appropriations and is been voted on and approved by Council, to use those funds for something different requires a 2/3 vote.

Ms. Larsen advised the MS-1 has been submitted and DRA has received it. She verified today and the DRA is at 41% complete with tax rate setting Statewide. There is 96 complete out of about 234. The City is cleared of any hurdles and simply waiting on the DRA. Mr. Warren advised as soon as the information is available, it will be an agenda item. Ms. Larsen advised there is a list on the DRA website that shows all the Towns and Cities they have set.

2022 Equalization Municipal Assessment Data Certificate

Mr. Warren advised the City-wide revaluation brought assessments up to 98.8% of full market value for 2022. The median equalization ratio (general level of assessment compared to sales) dropped down to 54% which indicates assessments were 46% below market value. This time last year, the City's assessments were 73% of market value. Councilor Remillard moved to accept the data report and authorize the Mayor to sign on Council's behalf. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Non-Public Session

At 7:40 p.m., Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Roland Theberge to enter into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II; (a) The dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee. The motion carried unanimously by roll call.

The promotion/compensation of a public employee was discussed. No votes were taken.

At 7:49 p.m., Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Roland Theberge to come out of Non-Public Session. The motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Remillard moved to add, under new business of the regular meeting agenda, item 1A. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

At 7:51 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.