

## **City Council Work Session January 3, 2023**

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

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Dir. Of Strategic Initiatives and Asst. City Manager Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Micah Bachner, Sylvia Poulin, Henry Noel, Jeffrey Quackenbush, Dan Whittet, Ann Morin, Melissa Elander, Henry Herndon and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:34p.m.

Mr. Warren requested to add an abatement item under other. Councilor Remillard moved to add the abatement item under other, Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

### **Main Street Program Discussion – Sylvia Poulin**

Mrs. Poulin, former chair of the Main Street Program, advised she requested to meet with Council to discuss the possibility of hiring a qualified individual for the summer to help with all the tasks. She suggested sharing this individual with Parks & Recreation Department to help with Parks clean up. She commented the Public Works Department has been very helpful in assisting. The Main Street Program now covers the Cleveland Bridge, Bickford Park, Route 16, all of downtown, all of Route 110 up to Rudy's Market and will have the Riverwalk next Summer. The program has many volunteers which they are grateful for, but with the additional tasks associated with the added locations, they will need a consistent individual to assist through the Summer. Mayor Grenier advised he is not opposed with hiring summer help, but would want this person to be shared with Parks and Recreation Department. Councilor Higbee suggested reaching out to the UNH Cooperative Extension as they have a master gardening training program. Mr. Warren advised if this position is added to the new budget, we could reach out to the UNH Cooperative Extension to assist in hiring a qualified individual. Mrs. Poulin commented she is only in the area for the holidays, but will be back when Budget season starts.

### **Community Power Coalition Discussion**

Mr. Henry Herndon, Consultant, is here on behalf of the Community Power Coalition of NH (CPCNH). He commented he is here today as a follow up to the discussion had with Council back in October 2021. He advised the CPCNH is a new nonprofit established in October 2021 and formed by NH Municipalities to work on their behalf to supply electricity to those communities through Community Power Programs. These are programs recently enabled by State Law where the City of Berlin would create Berlin Community Power and then bulk buy electricity for all residents and businesses who would get the discounts associated with bargain purchasing and then upgraded choice where to purchase power from potentially contracting local generators or developing new local generators. This Statewide Coalition has been in start up for the past year and is getting ready to launch the first dozen programs this coming April. There has been a lot of progress growing the membership from 14 to 28 Cities and Towns just in the first year. He advised he is here to extend an invitation, on behalf of the Community Power Coalition, to the City of Berlin.

He discussed what membership would be like. Essentially each member appoints an individual to sit on the Board of Directors to represent that Community. The actions recommended by the Committee are; the Joint powers agreement which is the governing document in the bylaws of CPCNH, appointing representatives to represent the City of Berlin. He noted that the way it is structured, every member gets a seat on the Board up until there are 21 Members. He discussed what joining would entitle including; no financial commitment, moving forward with forming a committee which would approve a plan, enter into a service contract, collect revenues from customers on the City's behalf. The CPCNH reserves the funds on behalf of the City. Down the road, revenue bonding would

become available. Councilor Higbee questioned what's in it for the citizens. Mr. Herndon commented the citizens would be sent a letter from the CPCNH comparing rates. He commented citizens will have the choice to opt. out if they wish to. Councilor Remillard expressed concerns about board members being maxed out at 21 and the member representing Berlin not being picked. Mr. Herndon advised that it is possible that the City would not have a seat on the monthly standing board and would be represented by attending annual membership meetings to elect that board. Then it would be a question of who would represent the North Country. He thinks this is why it is beneficial to have a regional committee to develop a plan. Councilor Robert Theberge questioned if this would affect individuals who receive State assistance. Mr. Herndon replied they would still continue to receive their discounts. Mr. Warren advised the board is similar to NHMA where they look for diversity on their board, but we all are members. We would be able to attend board meetings and asked questions as members.

Mr. Warren advised Mr. Bachner sent an email and what they are looking for tonight two proposed resolutions for Council to act on. One is to Authorize the City Manager to enter into the Joint Powers Agreement of CPCNH and the second is to appoint Jeffrey Quackenbush to serve as Berlin's primary representative and Henry Noel to serve as an alternate. He advised he has attended multiple meetings and observed meeting minutes and he supports the two proposed resolutions. The first read of the resolutions will be during the January 17 Council meeting.

### **Special Warrants**

Mr. Warren advised these special warrants are for properties purchased from the City that didn't get prorated, one is a correction of the tax bill where the building value didn't transfer and wasn't included in the bill and some are repurchased properties after tax deeding. Mr. Warren reviewed all warrants as follows;

1. Alpine Machine Co., Inc. in the amount of \$38 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
2. Alpine Machine Co., Inc. in the amount of \$98 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
3. Birchwood Homes LLC in the amount of \$2,587 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
4. Nicholas and Rondi Houle in the amount of \$1,607 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
5. Big House Studios, LLC in the amount of \$194 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
6. Kristopher Saunders in the amount of \$1,222 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
7. Kristopher Saunders in the amount of \$84 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
8. Phaedra Poliquin in the amount of \$229 (purchase from the City, Prorated taxes)
9. Wendy Haynes in the amount of \$3,437 (Correction for tax bill #2, bldg. value did not transfer and was not included in bill)
10. Charles Haynes in the amount of \$294 (repurchased after tax deeding)
11. Anne Falardeau AKA Anne Swanson in the amount of \$2,405 (repurchased after tax deeding)
12. Steve Meehan in the amount of \$1,888 (repurchased after tax deeding)
13. Christovalante Giannos in the amount of \$2,195 (repurchased after tax deeding)
14. Stephen Allbee in the amount of \$2,389 (repurchased after tax deeding)

Councilor Remillard moved to approve the special tax warrants as presented. Councilor Robert Theberge seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **Fire Department – Ladder Truck, Engine Bids**

Mr. Warren advised we received a number of bids for the ladder truck and the engine. They are being reviewed by the Fire Department now. There was quite a diversity in pricing and technical specifications. The bid received for the ladder truck was about \$1,200,000 and the engine was about \$830,000. He doesn't have the exact amounts as the bids are at the Fire station being reviewed. He advised the City had approximately \$720,000 on hand with the grant to purchase the fire engine. There aren't enough funds to purchase the fire engine, but it was always the intent to do lease purchase payments for the ladder truck. He is recommending rolling the excess amount which is undetermined at this time into the financing for the ladder truck. Mayor Grenier commented there is already \$150,000 in the budget for this year's lease payment for the ladder truck. Mr. Warren

commented there is also \$80,000 prior that was put in for the engine. All those funds have been rolled over. Mayor Grenier advised this wouldn't affect the budget as those funds have already been factored in anticipation. Mr. Warren will have the figures at the next meeting.

#### **Other**

##### **Abatement**

Mr. Warren advised this is an abatement in the amount of \$123 for Norman and Jeanne Roberge which is a result of the improvement for disability exemption adjusted to reflect the current % off the assessment. Councilor Higbee moved to approve the disability exemption for Norman and Jeanne Roberge of 565 Hillside Avenue. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

##### **Non-Public Session**

At 7:26 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. So, moved, the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

A discussion to release Non-Public Session minutes was had. No votes were taken.

At 7:35p.m., Council and Staff came out of Non-Public Session. 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.