

City Council Work Session
April 3, 2023

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

Others present: Dir. Of Strat. Initiatives and Asst. City Mgr. Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Deputy Chief of Police Nathan Roy, Library Director Ann Brungot, Health and Welfare Director Angela Martin-Giroux, Library Trustees Chair Denise Bergeron, Representative Corinne Cascadden, Paula Kinney of Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce, Don Bazzell of Northern Human Services, Tom McCue of the Berlin Main Street Program, Laura Boucher of Granite United Way, Margo Sullivan of A.V. Home Care Services, Brenda Gagne of Tri-County CAP, Gabrielle Flanders of The Family Resource Center, Ashley Brown of North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency, Richard King and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened up the meeting at 6:30p.m. He presented Mr. Robert “Bobby” Burlock with a [Proclamation](#) outside in front of City Hall. Mr. Burlock accepted the Proclamation with pride, surrounded by family and friends.

Budget:

Outside Agencies

Mayor Grenier advised that NHMA and North Country Council are membership driven. Their dues are based on population and equalized valuation. Representatives from different Outside Agencies were present this evening. They presented their requests to Council and discussed their services. The presentations were as follows;

Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce – Paula Kinney

Mrs. Kinney advised the requested amounts are the same as last year. She presented two requests, one for \$1,500 which is used for marketing to promote the area and events, and \$3,000 for the Journey to Jericho ATV Festival.

Northern Human Services – Don Bazzell

Mr. Bazzell advised the request is the same as last year at \$10,097. NHS provides mental health services to individuals of all ages. Mayor Grenier questioned if the municipal donation is used to obtain grants and if what is the amount of Berlin residents that receive free or reduced rate services. Mr. Bazzell confirmed yes, the donation is used to obtain grants and he does know there is a significant amount of Berlin Residents receiving free or reduced rate services, but doesn’t have the exact amount. He will obtain the information for Council. Councilor Morency questioned if the opioid crisis increased the caseloads. Mr. Bazzell advised they have seen an increase in services for substance abuse disorders. Councilor Eastman questioned if NHS coordinates with the Schools. Mr. Bazzell advised they do with the mental health program which works primarily with the elementary school. They also attend meetings at the schools and provide consultation.

A.V. Home Care Services – Margo Sullivan

Mrs. Sullivan advised the agency provides non-medical nursing, homemaking, personal care services. They are a licensed home care agency. They apply for grants intended to help vulnerable older Americans and individuals that don’t have resources and connections. They are the day to day care. She advised the agency increased their request to \$19,500 which is due to many factors including inflation and staffing shortages.

Tri-County CAP – Brenda Gagne

Mrs. Gagne advised the past few years have been challenging. The agency was administering the emergency rental program which never stopped. Unfortunately, the last bed night of the first round ended April 1st. As a result of this, there are a lot of individuals who don't know where to go. She commented this is where housing services are coming in and shelters are filling up. There were funds received from the State for Coos and Grafton Counties to be able to use warming funds in an instance of a cold weather event. She stated that over a third of Berlin's population received services from the agency whether it was for energy, emergency assistance, fuel, housing, transportation, senior meals and more. The agency is requesting \$23,563. Councilor Robert Theberge commented the amount requested is lower than the \$25,300 requested last year. He feels that given the increase in fuel, electricity and other expenses the requested amount shouldn't be decreased from last year's request.

Berlin Main Street Program – Tom McCue

Mr. McCue advised the Berlin Main Street Program is requesting level funding this year at \$15,000. The program continues with their efforts to work on beautifying Main Street. He thanked the City for the idea of moving an employee into Recreation and Parks to help with the downtown beautification. The program started with downtown, but has extended to other locations. He commented the program hires clients of Northern Human Services for clean up at Bickford Park which was donated to the citizens of the City by BIDPA.

The Family Resource Center – Gabrielle Flanders

Mrs. Flanders advised the FRC is going into its 25th year this year. They offer a variety of programs to the community which are divided in two sections. The first one is the preventative side and the second is the reunification and recovery side. The preventative side is more for parents or caregivers who are looking for parenting education, community resources or supports. On the recovery and reunification side DCYF can be involved, they might be helping people in reunification in that aspect or helping them through their recovery training. She commented in this past year, FRC supported over 500 Berlin residents. They've had an increase in referrals. Just this last month, their Strength to Succeed program received 63 referrals. They had to start a wait list for the Comprehensive program which is their preventative program for parenting education as there were 43 referrals. This is a first for the FRC. They also have a program called Raising Strong Families which all the local agencies are working together on. It is only available to Androscoggin families. This program allows the families to communicate with one individual and obtain the resources needed. The amount requested is \$2,500 which is the same as last year. Mayor Grenier questioned if the requested amount is used to match State and Federal grant opportunities. Mrs. Flanders responded it was.

North Country Home Health & Hospice Agency – Ashley Brown

Mrs. Brown advised NCHHA has medically trained staff including physicians, nurse practitioners, social workers, a variety of nurses, home health aids and housekeeping. They work closely with A.V. Home Care when it comes to their home health program. Last year they had over 5000 home health visits and this does not include the hospice program which is pretty significant right now at around 35 caseloads. The \$10,000 funding request goes to offsetting the cost of insurances. They accept patients with or without insurance. Mayor Grenier questioned if the funds requested are used as a match to attract Federal and State funds. Mrs. Brown responded she asked the office manager who stated no. The only time they received funding was during COVID for medical supplies and staffing shortages.

CASA

No representative present.

Granite United Way – Laura Boucher

Mrs. Boucher commented she presented earlier this year and discussed some of the agencies they fund. She commented the City of Berlin employee campaign has decreased over the years. She is requesting \$1,000 in funding to get that campaign back up. Those funds are for their allocable pool that go to local agencies that apply for funding, including some present tonight.

Feeding Hope Food Pantry

No representative present.

Housing/Health/Welfare

Ms. Martin-Giroux commented her salary is divided equally between the Housing and Health & Welfare budgets. The increases are mostly for electricity and oil. Ms. Laflamme advised that Brown School officially sold last Monday which will help reduce cost. She commented that Mr. Warren's intent is to take down 745 Main Street and 5 Birch Street. She is trying to lump the two properties, contract wise, with the houses she is taking down with the BEA funds this summer to hopefully get better pricing. Ms. Martin-Giroux commented she maintains a good relationship with different agencies to keep everything moving forward and help Berlin residents receive services they need.

Library

Mrs. Brungot discussed the FY2024 Library budget presentation that was linked to the agenda. She talked about the different services provided and the resources available at the library. She commented the housing crisis has also affected the library as it is a safe space for families to reunify. This past year a new toy library was added and it has been great for kids and parents to test out toys prior to purchasing them. This was made possible through a grant from the NH Toy Library. The increases in the budget are primarily due to inflation. Councilor Robert Theberge asked if last year's targeted areas for capital improvements have been addressed. Mrs. Brungot advised they are still the same, but she has been working with City Hall to find funding through grants to get these items corrected. Councilor Eastman asked if the capital improvements are prioritized, especially the roof. Mrs. Brungot commented there was a building assessment done in 2018 which we received in 2019. In reviewing the assessment, the roof itself, the drainage points and use of proper materials are prioritized. Ms. Laflamme advised the thought is to pursue a community block grant this July. However, there are funds being administered by the community development finance authority allocated for community centers and organizations that act like community centers that we will also pursue. Mrs. Brungot commented that this past year, even with restrictions, they were able to provide 66 different programs and over 2000 people attended those programs.

Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment

Ms. Laflamme advised she will talk about this briefly tonight and will discuss again at the next work session in two weeks as she wants all Councilors well informed. She commented the Planning Board have spent quite some time discussing this issue before it reached a consensus. Over the last several years we've had many inquiries for manufactured homes. These homes are built indoors and brought to the site to be placed on a slab foundation or in some instances anchored down with skirting. The Planning Board's recommendation will be for the slab foundation. The difference between a modular home and a manufactured home is that modular comes in more than one piece and doesn't come on wheels which the manufactured comes in one piece and on the wheels (Chassis). Riverside Heights is an example of the modern manufactured homes. At this time our zoning is set up to only have the manufactured homes in Northwoods Mobile Home Park or Riverside Heights.

The Planning Board has spent quite some time discussing with the NH Community Loan Fund which oversees the resident owned community programs for the State. They provided the videos sent to Council and also linked to the agenda. They also provided pictures and handouts which are also included in the packet. Offering affordable options will just better the community. Mayor Grenier requested that Tom

McCue, Vice-Chair of the Planning Board, discuss at the next meeting in two weeks the Planning Board discussions on this. He feels this is a good opportunity to resolve housing issues in the community. Councilors Remillard and Eastman expressed their support in allowing manufactured home in the community.

Waiver Request

Mrs. Laflamme explained that traditionally Council does not grant waivers for tax deferrals. In reading Mrs. Dube's letter, Ms. Laflamme doesn't think Mrs. Dube understands the deferral versus a lien or a tax deed situation as she is offering to pay the interest. There is no issue with her paying toward the deferral, but feels that someone should explain to Mrs. Dube what the deferral is and what it means. Mayor Grenier requested that upon City Manager Warren's return, he meets with Mrs. Dube and her daughter to explain the deferral process. Councilor Remillard moved to deny the waiver request and that the City Manager meets with Mrs. Dube and her daughter/son to discuss the deferral process. Councilor Morency second and the motion carried with all in favor.

Abatement Recommendations

Ms. Laflamme discussed the following abatement recommendations received from Ms. Monica Hurley of Corcoran Consulting Associates;

1. **60 Bemis Street (Map 135 Lot 84)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
2. **723 Third Avenue (Map 110 Lot 18)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$167,700 to \$65,100.
3. **428 High Street (Map 120 Lot 264)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$181,800 to \$152,600.
4. **267 Church Street (Map 120 Lot 307)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$260,100 to \$223,400.
5. **767 Second Avenue (Map 119 Lot 406)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$145,600 to \$71,600.
6. **800 Second Avenue (Map 119 Lot 437)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
7. **101 Poplar Street (Map 128 Lot 36)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$192,200 to \$167,700.
8. **302 Church Street (Map 120 Lot 340)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$116,300 to \$115,000.
9. **295 Howard Street (Map 138 Lot 20)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$180,000 to \$174,100.
10. **121 Harding Street (Map 111 Lot 51)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$319,400 to \$229,300.
11. **49 Whittemore Avenue (Map 127 Lot 51)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
12. **24 Pine Crest Avenue (Map 137 Lot 129)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$211,500 to \$192,300.
13. **87 Pine Street (Map 119 Lot 268)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$79,900 to \$63,300.
14. **24 Twelfth Street (Map 125 Lot 99)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$202,200 to \$190,300.
15. **101 Maple Street (Map 128 Lot 235)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
16. **11 Arlington Street (Map 137 Lot 85 L11)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
17. **103 Harding Street (Map 111 Lot 47)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.
18. **176 Madigan Street (Map 110 Lot 22)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.

19. **34 Peavey Lane (Map 128 Lot 171)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$238,900 to \$214,100.
20. **28 Bisson Road (Map 403 Lot 17)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
21. **163 Denmark Street (Map 127 Lot 96)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application. Mayor Grenier suggested explaining the deferral process to the taxpayer.
22. **691 Fourth Avenue (Map 110 Lot 51)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application. Taxpayer will also be explained the deferral process.
23. **9 Industrial Park Drive (Map 140 Lot 16)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
24. **733 Marble Street (Map 133 Lot 17)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$122,100 to \$113,000.
25. **544 Hillsboro Street (Map 130 Lot 190)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$130,500 to \$127,500.
26. **2002 Hutchins Street (Map 137 Lot 88)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$277,900 to \$277,600.
27. **249 Howard Street (Map 138 Lot 12)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement recommendation.
28. **50 Haven Avenue (Map 137 Lot 116)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$258,700 to \$230,100.
29. **171 Wight Street (Map 109 Lot 51)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$144,600 to \$126,500.
30. **140 Poplar Street (Map 128 Lot 60)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
31. **154 Summer Street (Map 128 Lot 63)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$260,700 to \$209,800.
32. **20 Jordan Avenue (Map 128 Lot 46)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$182,400 to \$166,100.
33. **19 Charron Avenue (Map 111 Lot 132)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$220,400 to \$195,100.
34. **249 Finland Street (Map 126 Lot 2)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$208,000 to \$203,700.

Councilor Remillard moved to approve the property abatements as recommended by Corcoran Consulting Associates. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

At 8:46p.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.