

City Council Work Session May 1, 2023

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

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Dir. Of Strat. Initiatives and Asst. City Mgr. Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Lori Korzen and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened up the meeting at 6:33p.m.

Deferral Request

Mr. Warren advised this is a tax deferral application and what is presented meets all the requirements of a deferral per Corcoran Consulting's due diligence. He commented this is a continuation of a deferral that has already been issued as presented in the tax deferral history. He reminded Council this cannot be handled administratively, it has to be handled by the Board of Assessors which Council serves as at this time. He is recommending Council approves the tax deferral for 286 Church Street. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the elderly and disabled tax deferral application for Mrs. Laura MacPherson as presented. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Land Use Change Tax

Mr. Warren advised this land use change tax was picked up by Corcoran Consulting Associates while doing a site visit at 177 Cates Hill Road. A barn was built and they've adjusted the true amount of what's in current use. It resulted in a land use change tax due in the amount of \$310. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the land use change tax for Daniel and Lynn Cotnoir of 177 Cates Hill Road in the amount of \$310. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Abatement Recommendations

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

1. **413 Alpine Street (Map 126 Lot 72)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$179,700 to \$162,600.
2. **97 Sweden Street (Map 127 Lot 139)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.
3. **127 Roderick Street (Map 119 Lot 358)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.
4. **20 Winter Street (Map 120 Lot 420)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$217,000 to \$211,400.
5. **110 Washington Street (Map 119 Lot 218)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.
6. **26 Demers Street (Map 121 Lot 46)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
7. **200 Cates Hill Road (Map 403 Lot 7)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.
8. **26 Goddard Hill Road (Map 126 Lot 70)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$400,900 to \$391,900.
9. **52 Bemis Street (Map 135 Lot 86)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.
10. **614 Lincoln Avenue (Map 121 Lot 83)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$229,700 to \$226,500.
11. **20 Charron Avenue (Map 111 Lot 125)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$261,600 to \$245,700.

12. **673 Third Avenue (Map 110 Lot 9)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$138,000 to \$119,900. Mr. Warren noted that the 2022 assessment value is listed on the letter as \$213,100. He will have assessing review, correct it and present again at the next regular work session.
13. **7 Smyth Street (Map 128 Lot 39)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement.
14. **134 Strafford Street (Map 130 Lot 226)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
15. **348 First Avenue (Map 112 Lot 21)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2022 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$213,100 to \$199,500.

Councilor Remillard moved to approve the property abatements as recommended by Corcoran Consulting Associates with the exception of 673 Third Avenue (Map 110 Lot 9) that will be reviewed at the next regular work session. Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Reallocation of Public Works CIP Funds

Mr. Warren discussed the resolution that will be first read during regular meeting this evening. Funds will be reallocated from the infrared equipment line item to the mechanical brooms line item. In his opinion, the infrared equipment is not a priority at this time with the road management program currently underway. The PWD requires a replacement tractor mounted sweeper for cleaning sidewalks due to the failure of the current sweeper.

Funds will also be reallocated to the hot top/cold patch line item for the rental of crack sealing equipment for a week. Mr. Warren advised the PWD were able to demo the equipment for free a few weeks back on Hutchins Street. The crack sealing equipment will be very beneficial to the City as it provides a permanent fix versus the temporary fix of cold patch. Councilor Remillard questioned the \$7,000 weekly rental charge and asked if it would be more beneficial to purchase the equipment. Mr. Warren advised the \$7,000 includes all the materials needed and purchasing this equipment would cost between \$70,000 - \$130,000. That cost doesn't include the materials. He would like to test the machine for a week and if beneficial to purchase, will budget the cost in future years. Councilor Robert Theberge commented he would like to see a cost analysis comparing the current cost of using cold patch and the cost of this new equipment. Mr. Warren advised he would be able to provide these figures after the new equipment is used for a week.

Budget Updates

Mr. Warren advised there is one budget update he discussed with the Mayor. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial at the Dead River Park has no illumination on it. A request came in from the Veterans group, they would like it to be permanently illuminated which he supports. We have a cost estimate from Vaillancourt Electric in the amount of \$6,000 to set up lighting. He advised there are no funds available in the current budget, but reminded Council they haven't used any of the funds from the Council Contingency line item. He is requesting Council approves using, not to exceed \$7,500 from Council Contingency to install the lighting. Councilor Remillard moved to approve a not to exceed cost of \$7,500 from Council Contingency to install lighting at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Cole Street. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Mr. Warren advised there are minor changes that have to be made to the FY24 budget. The plan is to have a list of changes ready for the May 8th Budget Work Session. He is hoping to have a better identification of the revenues by then. He will also have the information to set the sewer rate for that evening. Mr. Warren asked Council if they would object to updating the sewer abatement application form to include language stating sewer abatements are not granted for defective plumbing, filling a pool, watering the grass, all items that were brought up last year. It is the goal of the City Council to issue abatements when the calculation of the sewer usage is in error like a defective water meter for example. This would provide full disclosure

up front. All votes taken last year were consistent with that statement. Council agreed to adding language to the form.

Non-Public Session

At 7:35 p.m., Councilor Roland Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Morgan to enter into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II; (a) The dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee. So, moved, the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

A discussion was held on compensation for Department Heads. No votes were taken.

At 8:08 p.m., Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Morency to come out of Non-Public Session. So, moved, the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

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.