

City Council Work Session
June 5, 2023

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Remillard, Robert Theberge, Higbee, Eastman, Morency, Roland Theberge and Berthiaume. Councilor Morgan 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, Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Representative Corinne Cascadden, Mitch Yeaton, Eric Moran, Chris Emond and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

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

Tax Deferral Discharges

Mr. Warren presented two tax deferral discharges to Council. The first one is for Map 119 Lot 154 in the amount of \$20,201.64 and the second is for Map 118 Lot 208 in the amount of \$18,050.34. He recommends that Council accepts both tax deferrals as presented.

Councilor Remillard moved to accept the notice of discharges for tax deferrals as presented. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Timber Yield Tax

Mr. Warren presented a timber yield tax warrant to Council. It is for U.S. National Forest T.R. Dillon Logging/Ted Tichy, Agent at Map 408 Lot 1 in the amount of \$6,086.23. Councilor Remillard moved to approve the timber tax warrant as presented. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Property Tax Warrant – June 2023

Mr. Warrant presented the property tax warrant for period 1 of 2023. The total amount to collect is \$9,493,058.27. He recommends Council approve the tax warrant as presented. He commented the tax bills will go out in the mail this week with a due date of July 11, 2023. Councilor Remillard moved to accept the property tax warrant as presented. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

CDBG Application – 18 Peavey Lane

Ms. Laflamme advised this is a new CDBG application for housing. She commented that Mr. Kyle Lacasse has started a similar business to TKB. He has bought a few properties here in Berlin and owns a couple in Claremont. He recently purchased 18 Peavey Lane which is a four unit building that has been vacant for a number of years. He's been in there with contractors, has shared his financial plan and is very motivated to do this work. He has indicated this is the path he wants to take. Resolution 2023-25 that will be first read this evening during regular Council meeting is requesting up to \$500,000 of which approximately \$475,000 be subgranted to Brown Duplex LLC (Kyle Lacasse) toward the renovation of 18 Peavey Lane into approximately 4 units of primarily affordable housing units for low- and moderate-income households.

Ms. Laflamme advised the Public Hearing for Resolution 2023-25 will be on June 19, 2023 and Mr. Lacasse will be present. Mayor Grenier commented he would like Mr. Lacasse to attend the work session prior to the Public Hearing to ask questions. Ms. Laflamme will let him know.

Courthouse Discussion

Ms. Laflamme advised she has received many requests to visit the old Courthouse and individuals have shown interest in the property. She would like to put out requests for proposal and follow the same process as Brown School. The committee for Brown School included two Councilors, two Planning Board members, two BIDPA members and a neighborhood resident. That process went very well in terms of

input. The Courthouse is in worse shape than Brown School. It's been vacant for at least eight years now and has issues with mold, PCBs in the paint on the stairs in the basement and few other things. There is an environmental phase 1 report on this that can be shared with anyone interested in the building. Mayor Grenier asked about a time frame. Ms. Laflamme responded she would like to put out the RFP next week with the idea of having them back last week of June, first week of July. The interviews would start shortly after that.

Councilor Eastman commented if we follow this process it will not be put up for sale on the open market and he feels it should be with how the real estate market is doing at this time. Mr. Warren commented an RFP does not negate a cash sale. It gives the opportunity for the individuals to present their plan which might include compensation to the City. Ms. Laflamme commented that anyone has access to apply or put in a proposal whether it's the City doing it or a Realtor doing it. If a Realtor does it, there will be fees attached. Mayor Grenier commented the RFP process is a good idea as from past experience, the sale of municipally owned buildings in rough shape like this increases the risk of the building sitting as is for many years which is not fair to the community. He reminded Council they could always reject the RFP's. Ms. Laflamme asked if any Councilors were interested in being part of the review committee. Councilors Remillard and Robert Theberge were both interested.

Ordinance Amendments

Mr. Warren advised there are Ordinance amendments that will be first read this evening during regular meeting. He wanted to go over them prior. In regards to the procurement Ordinance, it was requested by the Federal Government and DOT that as we submit the grant for the RAISE program that we have language in there that ties the City to follow State and Federal guidelines for procurement. In the Ordinance amendment he is recommending to raise the competitive purchasing bid amount from \$15,000 to \$20,000 and raise professional services from \$10,000 to \$20,000 due to inflation.

In regards to the fireworks Ordinance amendment, he commented Chief Buteau had approached him with this proposal. First offense fine would be \$100, second offense \$250 and third subsequent offenses will be \$500 per offense and the rest would be raised from \$50 to \$100. He feels this is a reasonable amendment.

The third Ordinance amendment is for truck routes. Generally, this would go to Traffic and Safety if there was a substantive change. This was updated because of the Route 110 project. The streets that were included in the Ordinance were prior to the Route 110 project and needed to be updated.

Recovery Center Proposal

Councilor Morency discussed the opioid issue that is still on going. He commented Chief Buteau has taken steps to help address the problem. Chief Buteau stated last year was a rough year for overdoses. They faced about 68 overdoses with 11 of those resulting in suspected deaths. The enforcement efforts have been ongoing for a number of years. They really ramped it up last year by coordinating with Federal, State, County and local agencies bringing in grant money or continuing grant money with the substance abuse reduction initiative. Even with all the enforcement initiatives, the problem still remains. He commented they realized they couldn't tackle this issue with just enforcement alone.

A small focus group including the Police Department, AVH, Coos County Family Health, North Country Health Consortium and City Council was created last Fall and they've been discussing what more can be done above and beyond enforcement to help this issue and try to make more of an impact. After a few meetings, it was agreed that a recovery center or recovery housing is what is missing most in the area. There was a recovery center here in the past, but wasn't able to sustain itself and the effort fell short. They reached out to White Horse Recovery after hearing about them and they identified an opportunity with them. They're established, have a good reputation, very structured and have been operating successfully in

a number of different areas including Ossipee, North Conway and Littleton. Also, through the focus group's voice, Concord heard we are looking for funding to solve these problems. In working with David Mara, Governor's advisor on addiction and behavioral health, they were able to secure substantial amount of funds to get this up and going. He invited Mr. Mitch Yeaton, Founder and CEO and Mr. Eric Moran, Director for centers of White Horse Recovery to discuss further.

Mr. Yeaton advised White Horse recovery has been active since 2015. They do clinical treatment as well as peer resource centers which is what they are looking to do here. In 2016 they got a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services facilitated them by Harbor Care. They've become part of a network of resource centers, which currently has 19 centers. They have 3 centers of their own at this time. He commented that part of their success is because they have a big structure behind them. They are supported by the State of NH, DHHS and Harbor Care. In 2017, they were credentialed to provide full behavioral health services. They employ licensed mental health counselors as well as licensed drug counselors. Besides treatment, they also work with two hospitals, they are 24/7 responders for overdoses at Memorial Hospital in North Conway and Huggins Hospital in Ossipee. They are also part of NH's Rapid Response, Mobile response team for mental health. Most of their peers that are becoming specialists are dually credentialed to do substance abuse and/or mental health.

Mr. Moran, Director of the Resource Centers, talked about his personal background as a recovering individual himself. He is soon to celebrate his 10th year in recovery. He was fortunate to obtain help from the community and wanted to make sure this was available to everyone. He explained the resource centers are for people to go when they don't know where to go. Every single person that walks through their door is met with respect, kindness and love. They are very persistent in providing whatever resources they need. His staff goes above and beyond 100% of the time. They will accept anyone regardless of their ability to pay.

Mr. Warren commented this is the beginning of a discussion about a recovery center. A location has yet to be identified. Councilor Roland Theberge questioned what would be the ideal location. Mr. Moran responded a home is ideal and should be central. Councilor Morency thanked Mr. Yeaton and Mr. Moran for presenting tonight. Mayor Grenier commented he is in full support of a recovery center as our area needs the services.

At 7:30 p.m., Mayor and Council stepped out to the Council Chambers for the scheduled Public Hearing.

At 7:37p.m., Mayor and Council returned to the Work Session.

FY2024 Budget Amendment

Mr. Warren advised when he put the budget together he plugged in items in the segregated funds line that should have been in the capital improvement. It increases the budget in the amount of \$62,607 which includes; \$25,000 for the Fire Dept. roof, \$25,000 for the Heritage Park roof and \$12,607 for Fire Dept. radio replacement lease. Mr. Warren advised Resolution 2023-27 Adopting 2024 Budget being first read this evening during regular meeting includes the edits. Mayor Grenier commented that once a budget is submitted for Public Hearing, it is a different process to amend this budget. The first read this evening will be what was presented at the Public Hearing and then on June 19th, when it comes off the table, this is when the amendments will be made. He explained this process follows the Charter.

Other

Mayor Grenier commented he was approached by Al Duncan who is in charge of the Summit Salute Program. It's a retreat for Veterans of Coos County. The retreat is July 16th and they are looking for Municipal participation. Council agreed to add \$1000 for Summit Salute to the FY24 Budget when doing the amendments on June 19th.

Non-Public Session

At 7:46 p.m., Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Berthiaume to enter into Non-Public Session RSA 91-A:3 II; (d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. So, moved, the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

A discussion on two real estate matters was had. No votes were taken.

At 7:58 p.m., Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Berthiaume to come out of Non-Public Session. So, moved the motion carried by roll call with all in favor.

At 7:59 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.