

April 24, 2017

City Council Work Session

Present: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Nelson, Theberge, Gentili, Rozek, Morgan Allain, Remillard and Otis; Councilor Higbee was absent.

Others present included City Manager James Wheeler, Finance Director Patty Chase, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Public Works Director Michael Perreault, Waste Water Superintendent Henry Noel and Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*

Present for the Volunteer Tree Presentation were family and friends of Norman Gagne who received the Volunteer Tree Award; members of the Coos County Botanical Garden Club who also received the award.

Volunteer Tree Awards

Mayor Grenier read a tribute to volunteers John Frechette, Norman Gagne and the Coos County Botanical Garden Club who were recognized for extraordinary volunteerism for the benefit of Berlin residents.

Tax Deed List

Ms. Chase reported that there are 76 properties that received a tax lien and are in danger of being tax deeded. Four from the list paid today. There are two properties from 2013 that are included this year because they were in bankruptcy and one had environmental issues at the time of tax deeding last year. The list will continue to shrink as people pay in the final days. Ms. Chase suggested e-mailing the Council the updated list every Friday and she will come back to the Council May 8th to discuss whether there are properties to be withheld from tax deeding. Councilor Theberge asked about a property on Hillside Avenue whose owner is deceased and he expressed his concern about the condition of the building. The City will review if we take ownership.

Councilor Rozek affirmed that Ms. Chase's estimate of how many properties the City will end up with is 15 or 20. Councilor Rozek asked if the tax deferral process is an efficient system and Ms. Chase stated that, in her opinion, it is not. When a property receives a deferral year after year and is then tax deeded, it is thousands of dollars behind. The condition of the building is often such that the City has to tear it down. The Board of Assessors is the ultimate authority on who gets the deferrals.

Councilor Nelson confirmed that the Eagles Club is on the list. Councilor Otis confirmed that the 2014 taxes, interest and fees have to be paid prior to May 19 to avoid tax deeding. If the property is in the 2013 list, then both 2013 and 2014 have to be paid.

Peavey Lane Bump Out Discussion

Mr. Wheeler referred to an excerpt from an e-mail that came from Jay Poulin who could not be here tonight. HEB has given Peavey Lane a close look and there are several reasons for leaving the 8 ft bump out north of Peavey and removing the one at the south end. They are recommending leaving the Peavey north bump out at 8 feet and eliminating the south bump out. Councilor Remillard suggested we

stick with what we have or eliminate both. Councilor Nelson noted that there has been some damage to the granite on Peavey and on Maple.

Councilor Rozek moved to eliminate the southern bump out and bring the northern bump out to 5 feet and everything else discussed at prior meetings remains the same; Councilor Remillard seconded.

In discussion, Councilor Theberge said that this is an effort to make the city more beautiful and if we take everything away, we will lose ground. Everything further up is 7 feet and Cambridge and Success Street bump outs will be 5 feet. Councilor Nelson confirmed that, in this motion, the southern bump out stays. Councilor Rozek withdrew his motion; Councilor Remillard seconded.

Councilor Rozek moved to remove the South side bump out at Peavey; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried. Councilor Otis was opposed

Councilor Rozek moved to reduce the northern section bump out to 5 feet; Councilor Remillard seconded.

Councilor Nelson noted that this was already moved at a previous meeting. Mayor Grenier made the point that, from an aesthetic stand point, the street will not look symmetrical. Councilor Theberge agreed that there is room for the efforts to beautify the city. Councilor Remillard agreed that the Council voted to reduce Peavey to 5 feet and 7 feet the rest of the way north; this new motion is not needed. Councilor Rozek withdrew his motion; Councilor Remillard seconded.

Councilor Otis moved to alter the design as recommended by HEB; Councilor Theberge seconded.

Mayor Grenier suggested starting at 7 feet and tapering to five feet. Council members agreed that this would work; however Mr. Perreault stated that it may affect the catch basins that have already been installed. Mr. Wheeler suggested having Jay Poulin come back next week. Councilor Rozek affirmed that there is agreement for the southern end of Peavey. We would want to know where the catch basins are for the northern section and we don't want to be moving the ones that area already installed. Councilor Morgan Allain confirmed that there is no drainage affected by removing the southern bump out at Peavey.

Councilor Otis withdrew his motion; Councilor Theberge seconded.

Sewer User Capital Projects

Mr. Wheeler referred to a six year capital projects plan for the waste water treatment plant. The plan shows total reserves and estimated project expenses. The projects at forefront are:

Phase 2 - I & I Reductions – \$1.5 million of work has been identified on the east side of the city. The focus is to eliminate I & I to benefit the line that Burgess Biopower uses. We could use the DES loan/grant program for \$848,620 and take advantage of the \$106,033 forgiveness. Mayor Grenier stated that the I & I has to come out. Mr. Wheeler noted that he will come back to the Council with a resolution and Mayor Grenier asked him to attain the final numbers for the resolution.

Dead River Pumping Station

Mr. Wheeler established that the Dead River Pumping Station is on the right side of the Bass Shoe property. It was built in the late 70s and most of the flow was from the factory. There is only one house being served by the station. There will soon be a campground and they should be able to tie into the pump station. Without any other consideration, the city should invest in that station. The estimate is for about \$500,000 for engineering and construction.

Thinking ahead about the potential development on Route 110, most is not serviced by city. If we are going to spend \$500,000, perhaps we should look at what it would cost to build a new pump station further out. A new station would allow service to everything south as well as service to the City line. The point was made that there is no water service out there yet.

Mr. Wheeler reasoned that \$500,000 could be put on a new station; then a connection fee could be collected for new users to tie in and help pay for the infrastructure improvement. Mayor Grenier confirmed that the current campground developer will not be asked to pay the fee. He suggested that the Water Works be asked to take part as well.

Mr. Wheeler noted that, depending on how fast the campground develops, there may be a need to make improvements to the existing pump station. Councilor Rozek asked what makes the pump station not suitable and Mr. Noel replied that there are two pumps that have not worked to capacity in 20 years; the electrical is 1970's vintage and not up to code. The control panel is antiquated; the transfer switch does not work and there is structural work needed around the wet well and building. The engineer's evaluation will specify what is needed. Mr. Wheeler noted that the six year plan previously introduced does not include a new pumping station.

Aeration Blower Improvements

Mr. Wheeler explained that during design of the treatment plant upgrade, a decision was made to go with 100 hp aeration blowers. This decision was reviewed and accepted by the design engineers, DES, and the value engineering firm. Mr. Noel added that we've learned that it is difficult to match the output of air and the amount of air needed. The recommendation is to change out the aeration blower to one with lesser power. The design specs met the mandate to design the plant for growth that is 20 years out. Councilor Remillard asked what the down side is if we keep the current blower and Mr. Noel stated that it is more difficult to keep bugs and there is additional electrical cost. Councilor Rozek speculated that something was missed in the design; however Mr. Noel noted that he does not believe there was an oversight since they were designing to state specs. Mayor Grenier asked that an estimate of electricity savings be included.

Councilor Rozek moved to go forward with contracts with Wright Pierce for the Evaluation of Sewer Service Alternatives for Route 110/Dead River Pump Station at a cost of \$36,500 and the Aeration Blower Replacement Project at a cost of \$13,800 for a total of \$50,300 to be paid from the sewer user capital fund; Councilor Nelson seconded and the motion carried

Waste Water Treatment Request for Operator Position

Mr. Wheeler said that the request for a position at the waste water treatment plant was to be brought back after the sewer rate was set. Mr. Noel stated that the group of six works as a team on

maintenance and the lab person doing the testing. It takes a long time for operators to learn the basic layout and individual processes of the plant. Operators need to be able to make decisions to run the plant. The position is in the budget.

Councilor Rozek moved to hire for the position July 1; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried. Councilor Nelson clarified that the position could be advertised so that a hire is ready to start working July 1. All voted in favor of the motion.

Other

Mayor Grenier indicated that he read about the Farmers Market going to Gorham and he wanted to hear why they are moving. Mr. Wheeler said that it is his understanding that WREN was looking for another location due to the concerns of vendors. The location on Pleasant Street is not typical, not green, and hot with no shade. Once the Riverwalk is built, it will afford a nice location and the Market could potentially come back. Councilor Remillard added that it was discussed at the Planning Board meeting as well and Ms. Laflamme worked with WREN on numerous sites in Berlin and there were none that met their needs. Mayor Grenier noted that Laura Jamison was a great advocate for Berlin when she was in charge of the market.

There being no further business, Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Council Theberge seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant