

## **City Council Work Session December 4, 2023**

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

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Dir. Of Strat. Initiatives and Asst. City Mgr. Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Finance Director Holly Larsen, Chief of Police Dan Buteau, Deputy Chief of Police Nathan Roy, Rep. Corinne Cascadden, Mayor-Elect Robert Cone, Councilor-Elect Steven Korzen, Lori Korzen, Jamie Welch, Gina Welch and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

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

### **CDBG Consultant Selection**

Ms. Laflamme advised that for the Boys & Girls Club CDBG Grant, a grant administrator was needed. She advertised directly to CDBG consultants and in the Union Leader which is CDFA's required newspaper of record for advertisement. One proposal was received from Donna Lane who has extensive experience with the City and CDBG administration and has worked with the Staff at the Boys & Girls Club of NH. She is recommending to the Mayor and Council that the City hire Donna Lane to administer the project for the City for the cost of \$19,500. Councilor Higbee moved to hire Donna Lane to administer the Boys & Girls Club of NH CDBG Rehabilitation Project Community Block Grant for a sum not to exceed \$19,500. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **Polling Locations**

Ms. Fortin reminded Council of the discussion held in regards to changing polling locations during the October 2<sup>nd</sup> and November 20<sup>th</sup> work sessions. It is up to Council to vote on changing the polling locations to the Berlin Recreation Center and the VFW. This would be effective next Fall for the State primary election. Councilor Robert Theberge moved to change the polling locations to the Berlin Recreation Center and the VFW effective next Fall for the State primary election. Councilor Valerino seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **2024 Proposed Budget Schedule (FY2025)**

Mr. Warren presented the 2024 proposed budget schedule for the FY2025 budget. He commented the proposed schedule is consistent with the charter and past practice. Councilor Berthiaume requested to move the Public Hearing from Tuesday May 28<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday May 29<sup>th</sup>. All were in favor of the change. Councilor Morency moved to set the schedule as presented with a change being Wednesday May 29<sup>th</sup> for the Public Hearing on proposed budget. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **Tax Deferral Discharge**

Mr. Warren presented a tax deferral discharge to Council. It is for Donald Lanteigne, 181 Collins Street (Map 120 Lot 222) in the amount of \$3,820.38. He recommends that Council accept the tax deferral as presented. Councilor Berthiaume moved to approve the tax deferral discharge as presented. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **Sewer Charge Abatement Request**

Mr. Warren presented the sewer abatement request received from Matthew Cone for 835 Third Avenue. It was determined there was a break in one of the lines due to a freeze up last winter.

Councilor Roland Theberge questioned if the City's building inspector visited the property. Mr. Warren responded he did not. Mayor Grenier commented a demolition permit should have been applied for if the interior of the house was stripped due to water damage. Councilor Berthiaume asked if there were any pictures of the burst pipe. Mr. Warren advise there were no pictures of the burst pipe. Mr. Warren asked Council if they wanted to delay this item so he could research if a demolition permit was obtained and see if the City's building inspector could visit the property. Councilor Morgan commented if an insurance claim was filed, there would be interior pictures of broken water pipes. Council agreed to delay the item till the City Manager obtains additional information and pictures of the broken pipe. Mayor Grenier asked Mr. Warren to find out when the power was shut off as well. This will be an agenda item at the next Council work session.

### **Tax Rate Setting**

Mr. Warren distributed documents to Council which included the tax rate breakdown and a spreadsheet showing the gross amounts for capital improvements by department for 2025-2030. The tax rate calculated is \$26.90 per thousand which is a decrease from the current \$27.26 per thousand. This decrease results from a combination of fund balance and a slight increase to our value in our MS-1. There were non-recurring revenue sources go into the fund balance which included monies collected and receivables the City was relieved of because tax deeds were paid off. Budgets were unexpended. The City had an original unexpended fund balance of over six million dollars. Two million of this fund balance was applied towards the tax rate which produced the \$26.90 per thousand tax rate. This results in a surplus of 15.9% which is \$4,359,471 of remaining fund balance.

He discussed the capital improvements and commented he would like to see the total capital improvements in the vicinity of two million dollars annually which he feels this is a manageable number. He is recommending Council approves the tax rate as presented. He advised that tax bills will be due January 10<sup>th</sup>. Councilor Berthiaume moved to approve the tax rate setting as presented and further authorize the City Manager to sign the tax warrant. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

### **Other**

Mayor Grenier requested to add to the agenda, under item C of the regular order of business, the minutes of the November 30<sup>th</sup> special non-public meeting. Councilor Higbee moved to add the minutes of the special non-public meeting of November 30<sup>th</sup> to the agenda. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor.

At 7:05 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.