

**City Council Work Session
December 18, 2023**

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

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, Mayor-Elect Robert Cone, Councilor-Elect Steven Korzen, Councilor-Elect Mia Qualls, Jamie Welch, Gina Welch, Lucie Remillard, Shiloh Remillard, Joey Riendeau and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. He advised there would be three items under non-public session.

Notice to Municipalities – North of the Notch Brewing Company LLC

Mr. Warren advised North of the Notch Brewing Company LLC located at 2227 Riverside Dr., applied to the State of NH Liquor Commission for a Nano Brewery Restaurant/Retail Sampler license. Councilor Morency moved to send a letter to the NH Liquor Commission supporting North of the Notch Brewing Company LLC's application for a Nano Brewery Restaurant/Retail Sampler license. Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Set Polling Locations/Times

City Clerk Shelli Fortin requested that the Council set by motion the polling hours of 8:00 am to 7:00 pm for the January 23, 2024 Presidential Primary and the polling locations as follows;

PRECINCT 1 – Recreation Center, First Avenue entrance
PRECINCT 2/3- St. Anne Hall, School Street
PRECINCT 4 - Community Bible Church, Sullivan Street

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Roland Theberge, to approve the polling hours and locations for the January 23, 2024 Presidential Primary. So moved, the motion carried with all in favor.

Assessing Items:

Tax Warrants

Mr. Warren presented the following tax warrants;

1. Maurice & Natalie Croteau for Map 132 Lot 47 – Trudel Street purchased from the City of Berlin. Tax warrant amount: \$295.
2. New Berlin Properties Management, LLC for Map 135 Lot 225.10 – Turcotte Street purchased from the City of Berlin. Tax warrant amount: \$417.
3. Brenda Delaney for 15 Clarendon Street purchased from the City of Berlin. Tax warrant amount: \$844.
4. Leo JR & Jason Guerin for 12 Arlington Street, re-purchased after tax deeded. Tax warrant amount: \$500.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Robert Theberge to accept the tax warrants as presented. So moved, 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. **11 Clarendon Street (Map 137 Lot 85 L49)**, Corcoran Consulting Associates recommends approving the abatement for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$12,400 to \$5,900. Councilor Higbee moved to approve the property abatements as recommended by Corcoran Consulting Associates. Councilor Robert Theberge seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.
2. **Fourth Avenue (Map 110 Lot 58)**, Corcoran Consulting Associates recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$24,500 to \$4,200. Councilor Higbee moved to approve the property abatements as recommended by Corcoran Consulting Associates. Councilor Robert Theberge seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

2023 Equalization Municipal Assessment Data Certificate

Mr. Warren advised the median equalization ratio in 2022 was 100.4% as a result of the revaluation. The preliminary 2023 median equalization is at 90.3% indicating that real estate market values have risen by 10.1% in Berlin over the last year. There is no action needed at this time. If the median equalization continues to drop, he would recommend an interim adjustment.

Exempt Status Reconsideration

Mr. Warren advised NH Public Radio had not filed their exempt status in time. The City, consistent with NH law, removed said exempt status. They then filed and were denied due to not meeting the deadline. They are submitting a request for reconsideration. Ms. Hurley of Corcoran Consulting Associates recommends denying the reconsideration and keep the property as taxable for the 2023 tax year. Councilor Higbee moved to deny the request following Ms. Hurley's recommendations. Councilor Morency seconded and the motion carried by majority in favor with one recusal from Councilor Eastman.

Sewer Charge Abatement Request

Mr. Warren advised the letter received from Mr. Cone presented this evening is in response to the additional information requested in regards to the sewer abatement request discussed at the last Council work session. Mayor Grenier commented he feels a 50% abatement is fair due to lack of evidence. Councilor Roland Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Robert Theberge to deny the full amount request of \$3,620. So moved, the motion failed by roll call vote. Higbee – no, Roland Theberge – yes, Valerino – no, Robert Theberge – yes, Morency – no, Eastman – no, Grenier – yes. Councilor Morency moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to abate \$1,810. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee – yes, Roland Theberge – yes, Valerino – yes, Robert Theberge – no, Morency – yes, Eastman – no, Grenier – yes.

Non-Public Session

At 6:50 p.m., Councilor Roland Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to enter into Non-Public Session per 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. Three items were discussed in non-public session.

A discussion was held regarding the return of 121 Main Street to the City. Councilor Morency moved to authorize the City Manager to pursue reacquisition of 121 Main Street. Councilor Valerino seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

A discussion was held on the sale of City owned properties. No votes were taken.

At 7:14 p.m., Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Roland Theberge to come out of Non-Public Session. So, moved the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morency to add an item to the City Council meeting agenda under new business titled Rite Aid parcel. So, moved the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

At 7:15 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.