

## **City Council Work Session May 15, 2017**

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Public Works Director Michael Perreault, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*

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

### **Finalize Tax deed List**

Mr. Wheeler distributed the updated tax deed list as of this date. There are two who have paid since the last update. The Council can withhold properties from tax deeding if there are environmental concerns. There is such a property on Hillside Avenue which encompasses three properties: 640 Hillside Ave (Map 127; Lot 15), Ramsey Street (Map 127; Lot 13) and Flint Street (Map 127; Lot 14) formerly owned by Robert Lavoie. We are looking at a program where we could get money to do a phase I environmental assessment and if that comes back without serious concerns, the property could then be taken. At this time the recommendation is not to take the property.

There is a property at 310 Wight Street that is in the process of being purchased by a neighbor. They thought the sale would have gone through by now; however there have been delays. The idea of delaying the tax deed was run by the City Attorney, Chris Hilson and he agreed that it is in the best interest of the City to withhold the tax deed in hopes of the sale going through in the next few weeks. Mayor Grenier questioned whether the repurchase penalty will come in to effect and Mr. Wheeler confirmed that it will not. Councilor Nelson questioned the Eagles Club not paying their taxes.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Remillard not to execute a tax deed due to potential liability from environmental contamination on ; 640 Hillside Ave (Map 127; Lot 15), Ramsey Street (Map 127; Lot 13) and Flint Street (Map 127; Lot 14). So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Rozek moved not to execute the tax deed on 310 Wight Street due to a pending private sale and pending payment of all taxes due; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried.

### **Purchase of Sidewalk Tractor**

Mr. Perreault explained that there is a 2010 used Holder sidewalk tractor from Portland, ME with attachments for \$40,000 available. A new unit with similar attachments would cost over \$100,000. There are funds in the current budget for the purchase. Councilor Rozek confirmed that we've had two Holder sidewalk tractors before. Mr. Perreault noted that there are 2090 hours on the used machine and he would send mechanics to look at the equipment before making the purchase.

Councilor Rozek moved to waive the bidding process and purchase a used Holder sidewalk tractor for \$40,000 from HP Fairfield pending a mechanical review; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried. Councilor Rozek confirmed that PWD continues to look for good used equipment

**Eversource Energy Agreements**

Ms. Laflamme reported that five City buildings have had energy audits to change lighting to LED through an Eversource program called Smart Start. The PD/REC, PWD, City Hall, Library and Fire Station will participate in the program which allows the upgrades to be financed with the energy savings. There is a one-time fee that will be covered by the Smart Start rebate, and there is an annual savings after capital costs. There are two payment options: 75% of the savings can be applied to the capital costs or 100% can be applied which will allow for a quicker pay back. Mayor Grenier stated that the option to pay back quicker is best for the City.

Councilor Rozek moved to go ahead with the Smart Start Program under option 2 with 100% of savings going to the cost of paying back the capital investment; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried. Councilor Theberge asked if installation is included and Ms. Laflamme confirmed that it is and Eversource chooses the contractor.

Mayor Grenier questioned whether the project can start with the Public Works garage since that will see the most significant savings. Ms. Laflamme stated that she would ask.

**Other**

Councilor Rozek established that legal fees are about 45% over budget and there are no pending law suits. He wanted to know if that could be reduced. Mayor Grenier stated that legal is used trying to protect the community. 45% over budget is about \$60,000 and that is little in comparison to what a legal battle could cost. Mr. Wheeler agreed adding that the outcomes of legal issues will affect the community for years to come. Councilor Rozek asked that when 100% of the legal budget is spent, that it come up on a Council agenda.

Councilor Theberge moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II(a) the dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Higbee moved to come out of non-public session; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved to seal the minutes until a new fire chief is hired as releasing them would render action taken ineffective; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

There being no further business in work session, at 7:40 p.m. Mayor Grenier moved to the Regular Session after a five minute recess.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Susan Tremblay  
Administrative Assistant