

City Council Work Session

March 18, 2024

Present were: Mayor Cone, Councilors Higbee, Qualls, Korzen, Berthiaume, Theberge, Valerino and Morency.

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, Airport Manager Marcel Leveille, Paul Grenier, Richard White, Kathy Trumbull, George Bigl Jr., Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

Mayor Cone opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Interviews for Vacant Council Position

Mayor Cone thanked the applicants for their interest in Councilor Morgan's unexpired term. He reminded the Public there is no public comments during work session. Public comments will be accepted during the regular Council meeting.

Richard White

Mayor Cone invited Mr. White to introduce himself and discuss why he applied for the vacant Council position. Mr. Richard White of 628 Burgess Street commented he's been a resident of Berlin for about 6 years. He loves this community. The reason why he is trying again for the position is he feels there is an opportunity right now to move forward and he wants to be part of the change. He stated he's always been able to find creative solutions that actually work. He commented this is the team he sees that is actually going to make dramatic changes for the City of Berlin. This is the team he wants to work with.

Councilor Berthiaume asked Mr. White what he thinks is the biggest issue facing the City. Mr. White responded that the Burgess Biomass is probably the biggest issue. He thinks it will survive after the bankruptcy. He would like to see it move forward as it is a vital part to Berlin. He discussed the School Board's very daunting task of finding a superintendent. He commented finding a new superintendent is a very long process. The School Board will need the Council's support in their endeavors to finding the right person. Other than that, he feels things are moving forward and he has noticed a lot of improvements. He stated that with his work he talks with a lot of people and they are very hopeful with the new Mayor and Council. He is here to represent the people of Berlin and sees the Councilor position as a servant to the people. He considers serving as a Councilor an honor and privilege.

Councilor Morency asked Mr. White what he thinks the best thing about Berlin is. Mr. White responded the rich history and culture of Berlin which includes hiking trails and landmarks just to name a few. The people of Berlin are very kind and welcoming. He had more opportunities in Berlin than anywhere else, he is thankful for that. This is his way of giving back for the opportunity this City has given him.

Councilor Valerino asked Mr. White to discuss his strengths and weaknesses and what it would bring to Council. Mr. White advised his strength is his ability to find solutions. He does his due diligence and is not afraid to do some research to come to the solution. When it comes to budget, he can find the money. He commented that funds are usually found in other line items. He is not afraid to go through the budget line by line to find funds needed. His weakness is sometimes he can be stubborn and may not always see things as the other Council members but when proven wrong, he has no issue admitting he's wrong and apologizing. Councilor Theberge questioned Mr. White as to what he feels he would bring to the Council that is missing. Mr. White responded a fresh perspective. Councilor Theberge

asked Mr. White how long he's been in the City. Mr. White responded he's been here for 6 years. He is not inexperienced as he served in the City of Lewiston, Maine behind the scenes at City Hall. He was on the CDBG committee and also served on the School Board. He is very familiar with big City and school budgets. He was the Vice Chairman of the CDBG committee. Councilor Korzen commented he appreciated Mr. White's comment about having discussions with people and hearing them out. This is what actually motivated him to run for Council. He asked Mr. White what motivates him to run for Council. Mr. White responded he has always believed in public service. After having many discussions with people and seeing the current issues in Berlin is what motivated him. It's his opportunity to show what he can do for the people and City. Mayor Cone asked Mr. White how familiar he was with the City Charter and what a Council member's duties and responsibilities are. Mr. White responded that a City Councilor represents the people of the City of Berlin. A Councilor needs to listen to the people. He commented he has not read the Charter but is willing to read it and follow it. He takes his duties seriously. He is not looking for a position of power, he is looking to give back to the community.

Councilor Berthiaume asked Mr. White to discuss one thing he would like to accomplish. Mr. White said he would like to see the Council moving forward. What he means by that is there are a lot of issues in play that need to be fixed. He realizes it is not going to happen right away, but feels Council can still move forward on the right path by building value with the tax payers. That is one thing he would like to see. He would like to see the Berlin Public Schools find a good superintendent. He mentioned he would like to see repairs to infrastructure and empty buildings filled. Councilor Berthiaume asked Mr. White as a Councilor how would he fill these empty buildings that are owned by private citizens. Mr. White responded he couldn't fill them as a Councilor but could make it more inviting by offering tax incentives and make it more interesting. Councilor Morency asked Mr. White what he would change to the tax incentive program currently in place. Mr. White commented he doesn't have all the answers but this is something he would like to work with Council on. Mayor Cone thanked Mr. White for his time.

Micah Bachner

Mayor Cone advised that Mr. Bachner removed his letter for consideration.

Kathy Trumbull

Mayor Cone invited Mrs. Trumbull to introduce herself and discuss why she applied for the vacant Council position. Mrs. Trumbull read a letter she prepared discussing her background which reflects some diverse interests that she has including working in the education field. She has held certifications in elementary education, special education, reading specialist and school psychologist. She also works in real estate, owning and helping to manage an Exit Realty franchise with offices in Berlin and Lancaster. She created a Berlin non-profit arts organization in 2018 called Tree City Arts. The vision was to enhance the community through art and create opportunities for people to engage with art experiences regardless of their income. The organization has held several art shows and the last one with participation of 21 artists. A few of the current projects include a podcast studio, Berlin Tale Trail where families with children can experience the outdoors while reading a book affix to stations along the trail, a fiber art studio where children and adults will be able to learn sewing techniques, monthly painting classes taught by a local artist and a soon to begin monthly open mic night for music enthusiasts. They've also held art classes for children.

Mrs. Trumbull has been a home owner in Berlin since 2010. She and her husband are vested in the downtown owning a commercial building on Pleasant Street. Over the past 8 years they've significantly invested in its renovation. They currently rent studio workspaces to artists who want a place to create away from their own. They've also created a third-floor apartment with an attached art studio

workspace for renters. She believes in the spirit of volunteerism and has contributed to Berlin through the Main Street Program as a member and volunteer each year at the Day of Caring in May. She's worked the hayrides for the Riverfire event. She joined the Coos County Botanical Garden Club and helped with the Laura Viger gardens. When WREN abandoned the Berlin Farmers Market, she rallied and put together an impromptu team who actually rescued the Farmers Market for several years. She's found herself serving other historical mill cities to see how they've evolved and transitioned. Since Berlin has a number of brick buildings, painted murals on sides of prominent buildings has been intriguing and there seems to be a growing interest in this sort of project here in Berlin. She ran for City Council 2 years ago and only lost by thirty something votes. She had people telling her for months after the election that they voted for her, some of which she didn't even know which was encouraging. She would like to be a contributor in Berlin's growth and rebound. She will work hard to participate in the decisions leading towards that and resolution of any issues presented to Council. She believes the best is yet to come for Berlin.

Councilor Berthiaume asked Mrs. Trumbull what she sees as the biggest issue facing the City of Berlin. Mrs. Trumbull responded dilapidated buildings. Councilor Berthiaume asked Mrs. Trumbull how she feels the Berlin Public Schools are performing right now. She responded she hasn't been involved in the Berlin Schools since 2008 so she can't really say. She commented she did short term rental to a family whose children attended Berlin Schools and had a great experience. Councilor Morency asked Mrs. Trumbull what she loves about Berlin. She responded she loves the old-fashioned neighborhoods and the friendliness of the people. She and her husband first came to Berlin to rescue a home they thought was becoming dilapidated and were quickly turned around on the charm of the City based on all of their neighbors and that's what really made them decide not to sell the house.

Councilor Valerino asked Mrs. Trumbull what her strengths are she can bring to the table and also her weaknesses. She responded she is analytical, she likes to weigh decisions carefully, she doesn't like to make rash decisions based on rumors or hearsay. She will look at things very carefully sometimes talking to various parties involved which is similar to what she did in her job as a school psychologist. Her weakness is she is probably slower than most people to go through the process. She is not the speediest person at some of this stuff, she will do what she needs to learn. She is more thorough and has been accused of being a perfectionist. Councilor Theberge asked Mrs. Trumbull what she feels she can bring to the Council that is lacking or missing. She responded new ideas that people may not be willing to look at. She thinks she is more open minded about some of the problems here, because a lot of what Berlin has done has been the same for a long time. She is not ashamed to look at other places for answers. She is more of a community minded person. She likes to see volunteerism, she likes to see people feeling free to speak their mind and agree to disagree at times. She thinks it's an important dialogue we need to protect.

Councilor Korzen asked Mrs. Trumbull what motivates her and how will that motivation help her in this role. She responded she is not afraid to venture out in the community and look for additional help from either another community, municipal organization or attorneys that work for the municipal organization, whatever the entity is that she thinks might have information to help. It will be hard work to obtain answers, basically research to bring to the team and help team gather what is needed for improvement. She feels like fresh ideas are needed and she is willing to work hard to do that. Councilor Morency asked Mrs. Trumbull if she's ever read the Charter and understands the role of Council. She responded she did read it a long time ago, but not recently. She would need to review it. Mayor Cone thanked Mrs. Trumbull for her time.

George Bigl, Jr.

Mayor Cone invited Mr. Bigl to introduce himself and discuss why he applied for the vacant Council position. Mr. Bigl commented he was born in Berlin in 1970. Both his parents were factory workers. They moved away to find work. He returned to Berlin and worked for the Dept. of Corrections. Following 23 ½ years with the dept. he decided to retire. Being bored at home ended up going to work for Aubuchon Hardware. He started there as an associate and worked his way up to store manager. When he took over as the manager of the store, he wanted to bring back the sense of community in the store as it got lost somewhere along the way. The reason he applied for the Councilor position is because he wants to be part of the change and wants to give back to the community. He knows where the community was at one point and he would like to see it back. He knows it takes hard work, commitment and team work. He reminisced about how Berlin used to be with Main Street businesses all decorated at Christmas time, carnivals and fairs in empty parking lots. Now it's all gone. We really need to get back to where we were once upon a time. We're still a community and need to work together to get all that back.

Councilor Berthiaume asked Mr. Bigl what he thinks the biggest issue the City is facing right now. He responded lack of business. He used Main Street as an example. Once upon a time every store front was filled and every business was booming, now not so much. There is a lot of vacant buildings with people leaving and not returning. There is a lot the community and area can offer. We need to be able to get businesses up here to support the ATV festival, seasonal sports or anything along that line. If we don't have the infrastructure to help support some of those needs, where does that end us. Councilor Berthiaume asked what is an accomplishment he would like to achieve as a City Councilor. He responded it's hard as even though he talks about bringing things back to the community and making it better, he knows it can't all happen at once, it's baby steps. The smallest things we can do to make a difference to show people we care. Not just hearing what people are saying but actually listening to what they're saying. As far as an accomplishment, he would really like to see the community to where it once was.

Councilor Berthiaume asked Mr. Bigl what his thoughts were on the Berlin School system. He is not really familiar with the school system as his children are older. He is recently remarried and his wife has a special needs son. He doesn't have a child in the school system now so doesn't know much about it. Councilor Morency asked Mr. Bigl what he loves about Berlin. He responded he kind of looks at it as a blessing and a curse. Like he said, he works at Aubuchon Hardware and it's still that sense of community because whether he is out for dinner or shopping, customers will recognize him. With a lot of the people, it's still that community-based feeling, talking and reminiscing about different things from past years. This has been home for him, what he's known most of his life. It's the small things that brought him back to the area. Councilor Theberge asked Mr. Bigl what he can bring to the Council that is missing. He responded fresh eyes, fresh perspectives. The fact that he is willing to do whatever work needs to be done. He comes from a background where there's no I in team. It's all about team work. There might be disagreements along the way, but as long as you're respectful, there is not too many things as a team you won't be able to overcome.

Councilor Korzen asked Mr. Bigl what motivates him to run for the position. He responded he wanted to be part of a difference. He wanted to be able to help the community he lives in. Councilor Valerino asked Mr. Bigl what his strengths are that he brings to the table and also his weaknesses. He responded for strengths he brings leadership, dedication and loyalty. As far as weaknesses, he commented he is probably not the most articulate person you will ever come across. It's an area he is trying to get better with. He stated that in all honesty he wears his emotions on his sleeve. Other than not being articulate,

not taking the time to step back, smell the roses and realize there's more to life than just eat, sleep, work. Councilor Morency asked Mr. Bigl if he's read the Charter to understand the role of Council. He responded he has not. Mayor Cone thanked Mr. Bigl for his time.

Paul Grenier

Mayor Cone invited Mr. Grenier to introduce himself and discuss why he applied for the vacant Council position. Mr. Grenier of 492 Champlain Street commented he was born and raised in Berlin. He is a 1973 graduate of Berlin High School and raised his family here. He served in some capacity within City Government for 32 years. He was a City Councilor for 16 years and Mayor for 14 years. He's been present and involved in significant key developments in Berlin including Burgess Biopower, North Country Growers and the Raise Grant. He commented he applied for the position as he feels he has a lot to give with the knowledge he has based on many years of experience. He feels he can guide the City into areas they might not want to go. He stated he will not be around forever and sees this has an opportunity to help the transition to a younger generation to make sure their government works well and stays well. He is a big believer in public education. He is proud of the Berlin Public Schools and proud of the work they do. He also does volunteer work. He is the business manager at the Notre Dame Arena. He is also the treasurer on their board of directors and runs the learn to skate program. It is a passion for him.

Councilor Berthiaume asked Mr. Grenier what in his opinion, is the biggest issue facing the City right now. He responded he thinks the biggest issue facing the community is the perceived challenges from people that don't understand how far down the City has been and how we're starting to climb out of that hole. He feels that Berlin's self-image needs to improve. He's noticed a lot of people new to the area speak of Berlin in a negative way. The property taxes are high in New Hampshire but we don't have a sales tax, an income tax or taxes on our savings which results in local government having to divide its income only one way. He commented he reviewed the FY2025 budget at a glance and already can see there's an opportunity for \$0 tax increase.

Councilor Morency asked Mr. Grenier what he loves about Berlin. Mr. Grenier responded he loves that he can feel safe, the friendliness of the people and available sports. This is his hometown. Councilor Valerino asked Mr. Grenier what his strengths and weaknesses are. Mr. Grenier responded budgeting is his strength. It has always been his strength no matter which entity he's been involved with whether it's been youth hockey, the arena, City Government, County Government. He always makes it work.

Councilor Theberge addressed Mr. Grenier and commented that in regards to his application letter it seems as he is proposing that members of the Council are not fully qualified. He also noted that Mr. Grenier said he had a unique set of experience. He questioned Mr. Grenier as to what sets does he think he has that other members of the Council don't have. Mr. Grenier responded that with all due respect he asked Councilor Theberge to point out where in his letter he insinuates that members of the Council aren't qualified. Councilor Theberge read a section of the letter as follows; "Being a city councilor would be a welcome role for me as I can help newer folks adapt and understand the role of the city council". Councilor Theberge commented the Council can do that. Mr. Grenier responded he remembers when he first walked through the doors as a City Councilor, it took him 6 months with coaching to understand the complete role of a City Councilor. That is all he meant by that.

Councilor Theberge asked Mr. Grenier what unique set of experiences does he bring that none of the other Council Members have. He responded that he was able to bring Capone Iron to Berlin, He's worked hard since 2015 with North Country Growers to be able to get this project across the finish line.

These are big accomplishments he's played a major role in. He's been involved in a lot of different little things that are very specific to moving Berlin forward, generating taxable properties and more importantly generating jobs for the people that live here. Councilor Theberge commented he doesn't deny that but what Mr. Grenier fails to acknowledge is that he alone is not responsible for those accomplishments, there are State officials behind those accomplishments that really made it happen. Even in the paper he never admitted this. Mr. Grenier responded that he will not get into an argument with Councilor Theberge and that he is very proud of the work he has done for the City. Councilor Theberge commented that Mr. Grenier has repeatedly come after him and he has concerns that if he becomes member of this Council he will continue doing so. He stated that when Mr. Grenier was Mayor he supported him. He admires what he's done, but he's afraid that this continual attack upon his character will be disruptive. Mr. Grenier responded that this is in a different purview. He spoke to the Mayor at length last Friday and the conversation included his full support of the Mayor's endeavors. He is here to help the Council move forward. He will continue working hard for the City regardless of Councilor Theberge's feelings against him. Councilor Theberge said he is very pleased with Mr. Grenier saying he will be supporting the Mayor. Councilor Theberge commented that in the past election Mr. Grenier paid not only for his own political signs but those of members of the Council that were running for election. He asked Mr. Grenier why he did that. Mr. Grenier responded he does not need to answer this question and will not.

Councilor Qualls commented that when she read Mr. Grenier's letter referring to the welcome role comment, she took that as he knows what it is to be on City Council and would be an added benefit in helping newer Council members learn their new roles. She questioned Mr. Grenier if her interpretation is correct. Mr. Grenier responded that she is correct. Councilor Korzen commented that he's talked to a lot of people as he loves conversations. From those conversations, he found that a lot of people felt they didn't have a voice in the City. He commented that he's felt this way in the past. He gave an example of Mr. Grenier's comment about newcomers trashing the City. He stated that maybe they're coming in looking for something better and you may take it as trashing the City, but it may be just a different perspective. He thinks in an effort to be more inclusive of ideas and thoughts it would be important to consider those things. He asked Mr. Grenier moving forward as a City Councilor how he could foresee his role in making sure those things line up, that people will have a voice. Mr. Grenier responded that Government in Berlin is open, people have the opportunity to attend meetings and speak their voice. They have the ability to send emails to either the Mayor or any of the Councilors and the City Manager. It's a wide-open Government. Even after 2 months of not being on the Council, he still gets calls. He commented that if he thought for one second, he would be a problem to the Council, he would have stayed home. Mayor Cone thanked Mr. Grenier for his time.

Mayor Cone opened the discussion for Council to discuss the candidates and maybe bring the list down to two candidates. Councilor Berthiaume commented that tonight was hard. There was a lot of good activity at the table. If she were to whittle this down to two candidates, she would take it down to Paul and George. Councilor Valerino stated he concurs with Councilor Berthiaume. Councilor Berthiaume commented that she was really inspired and refreshed by Mr. Bigl and hopes that if he doesn't get chosen tonight, runs for Councilor in the future.

Councilor Theberge commented he has the same feeling in regards to Mr. Bigl. He apologized to Council and stated he didn't mean to attack Mr. Grenier but he greatly appreciated the fact that Mr. Grenier said he was not going to undermine the Mayor and is not here to disrupt that. Councilor Berthiaume commented that no matter how or who gets picked tonight, we need to leave this stuff with you, addressing Councilor Theberge, and Mr. Grenier separate as it needs to stop. It is not productive and it

is not how she wants to move forward. Councilor Theberge commented that he agrees and he is not pursuing it. He has always been respectful to the Mayor and Council. He reassured Council that If Mr. Grenier becomes a member of this Council, he will support him, he will not attack him, he will work with him, the Mayor and the entire Council.

Councilor Morency commented that we can agree to disagree on things and move forward without turning into personal attacks, we will learn from each other, work together and do what's best for each other. He commented Mr. Bigl did a great job, he's a great guy and offers a lot. His concern is that he is still young to the process. He's received many calls over the weekend and people feel very strongly that giving up the institutional knowledge Mr. Grenier brings would be a mistake on the Council's part.

Mayor Cone commented that for him the two candidates that stuck out were Mrs. Trumbull as she brings a very unique perspective to the Council, something that is missing, with the school psychology aspect of it and working with the schools. The other candidate is Mr. Grenier as the skill set that he brings is unrivaled in that aspect.

Councilor Korzen stated he feels he is here to represent the City of Berlin. He has a philosophical issue with voting in Mr. Grenier as 66% of the community said they wanted to go in a different direction. He feels by saying yes, he would only be agreeing with 34% of the people of Berlin. He's a great guy and brings more to the table than any other candidates, but he just can't as he feels he would be undermining the vote of the people. He liked Mrs. Trumbull a lot as she had a lot of background and thought George was okay too. Obviously, Paul has got the credentials, but he just can't vote for him for the reasons discussed.

Councilor Higbee commented his concern with Mrs. Trumbull is that 4 or 5 years ago she was coming to Council meetings and every single week she was bad mouthing the schools, saying how bad they were and tonight she said she loves the schools and says they're fine. He thought that was an interesting turn around.

Mayor and Council agreed to bring it down to three candidates. Mr. Grenier, Mrs. Trumbull and Mr. Bigl.

Mayor Cone called for a show of hands for Mrs. Trumbull.
Councilors Korzen and Theberge raised their hands.

Mayor Cone called for a show of hands for Mr. Bigl.
No votes were offered for Mr. Bigl.

Mayor Cone called for a show of hands for Mr. Grenier.
Councilors Berthiaume, Morency, Qualls, Valerino, and Higbee raised their hands. Mayor Cone did not vote.

With all Councilors having voted, Mr. Grenier was appointed to the Council by majority vote of 5. Mr. Grenier was issued the Oath of Office by City Clerk Shelli Fortin to take his seat at the Council table.

Mayor Cone moved on to the next work session item.

Budget:**Administration/Funds/IT**

Mr. Warren discussed the different funds under Administration. He advised the increases for Mayor and Council (401) are due to audit costs and personnel costs which include salaries, benefits and health insurance. It is the same for Administration (402) which encompasses the Finance Department and also the City Clerk. Then there's Elections (403) and again the increase is due to personnel costs. For City Buildings (404), there is an increase of \$18,000 and this is due to the City assuming ownership of the Cates Hill Communication Tower. The City now pays a lease, the electricity and maintenance for the tower. For Insurances – Other (406), there is an increase of \$129,000 which is based on both external and internal forces. This is the City's property liability insurance. The County Tax (407) is slated to drop down by \$200,000. The Central Services (408) increase is due to postage. The increase in Personnel Administration (410) is due to health insurance. The Executive – Mayor and Council (411) which is Council's contingency is at \$10,000.

Councilor Grenier commented that the Executive Salaries line item was moved from Administration (402) to the Mayor and Council (401). He asked which executive salaries were moved. Ms. Larsen advised the positions moved were the City Manager, Assistant City Manager and the City Manager's Executive Assistant. Councilor Grenier asked the reason why it was moved. Ms. Larsen advise the DRA's RSA states these positions need to be in what they call Executives and the change took place when we moved over to the new financial software. Mr. Warren advised the changes were done to align our chart of accounts with DRA so we'd have seamless reporting. Councilor Korzen asked if the fund title could be changed to Executive instead of Mayor and Council. Mr. Warren advised yes, it could be changed in the future. Councilor Morency questioned if the \$18,000 increase in the Cates Hill Communication line item is different than the \$25,000 included in the CIP for the Cates Hill Communication Tower. Mr. Warren advised that the money put aside for the tower is now for capital improvement as it should be. When the tower needs capital improvement, instead of having a recurring budget item come from a non-recurring funding source capital improvement. It is where it should be as we now own it. Mr. Warren advised for IT (416), there is no expansion in services, the increase is due to the cost of doing business. Mr. Warren discussed the Cates Hill Landfill fund which is very small. It is based on a closure agreement done at the time of closing.

Airport

Mr. Warren introduced Airport Manager Marcel Leveille who will be discussing the Airport budget this evening. Mr. Leveille advised he has a budget amendment to make. He omitted to include an amount to the appropriations line item Credit Card Processing Fees. This should be at \$6,000 which will increase the total operating budget for the airport to \$225,000. The airport budget includes increases to the Salaries line item in the amount of \$3,900 and the Salaries – Other Personnel line item in the amount of \$3,864. There is also an increase of \$200 in the Telephone/Internet line item. The Unemployment Compensation line item was increase by \$518. This is it for changes, everything else remained the same as far as operating costs.

Councilor Theberge asked Mr. Leveille to address the potential increase in revenue for the airport regarding the lunar eclipse. Mr. Leveille advised he's received numerous calls for small aircrafts. The airport doesn't charge landing fees for small aircrafts, but the fuel sales could potentially increase if they fuel their aircrafts. With the larger aircrafts they can charge \$200-\$300 for landing fees or they'll buy a couple thousand dollars' worth of fuel. He commented the airport can take 200 aircrafts. For the eclipse day, he will only allow 2 large jets, 1 smaller jet and 4 twin engine aircrafts. He's met with the Boston FAA and everything has been mapped out. Councilor Korzen asked for an update on the

National Guard. Mr. Leveille advised they've been at the airport twice about a month ago to do an agriculture study. They've done other studies as well including wildlife and environmental studies. Their plans include building a hangar that will hold two Blackhawks. They will only be training once a month on a weekend. They did some training last summer and that brought in about \$40,000 in fuel sales. Councilor Korzen questioned the time frame for completion. Mr. Leveille responded he was told when the project first started it would take 3 years and we're about 2 years in now. He feels the airport will be self-sufficient when the project is complete and operating.

Councilor Morency asked if committees former Councilor Morgan served on would be assigned. Mr. Warren suggested discussing at the next meeting of April 1st so Councilors can consider changes if interested. Mayor Cone agreed to discuss at the April 1st meeting.

Investment Policy Review

Mr. Warren advised Council is required to review the investment policy on an annual basis. He commented it is very straightforward and doesn't see any reason to make any changes to it. He suggested Council approves with a motion to reaffirm the investment policy as is. Councilor Morency moved to accept the investment policy as is for 2024. Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Abatement Recommendations

Mr. Warren discussed the following abatement recommendations received from Ms. Monica Hurley of Corcoran Consulting Associates;

1. **699 Fifth Avenue (Map 110 Lot 102)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$123,100 to \$110,300.
2. **331 Pleasant Street (Map 119 Lot 88)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$360,700 to \$313,300.
3. **83 Spruce Street (Map 128 Lot 83)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$138,400 to \$137,000.
4. **10 Charon Avenue (Map 112 Lot 75)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$297,000 to \$236,600.
5. **118 Willow Street (Map 119 Lot 275)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$226,900 to \$135,600.
6. **374 First Avenue (Map 118 Lot 67)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$63,700 to \$37,600.
7. **36 Pleasant Street (Map 118 Lot 134)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$103,500 to \$90,200.
8. **414 Champlain Street (Map 130 Lot 338)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$126,300 to \$76,700.
9. **275 School Street (Map 119 Lot 81)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$362,200 to \$297,500.
10. **Riverside Drive (Map 404 Lot 23)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$44,300 to \$18,600.
11. **608-610 Burgess Street (Map 129 Lot 127)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$181,900 to \$144,600.
12. **122 Willard Street (Map 119 Lot 191)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.

13. **22 Gerrish Street (Map 118 Lot 52)**, Ms. Hurley recommends denying the abatement application.
14. **1219 Main Street (Map 127 Lot 253)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2023 tax year and reduce the assessment from \$36,600 to \$25,500.
15. **400 Hillsboro Street (Map 130 Lot 206)**, Ms. Hurley recommends approving the abatement application for the 2016 through 2022 tax years for a total amount of \$182.77.

Councilor Higbee moved to approve the property abatements as recommended by Corcoran Consulting Associates. Councilor Korzen seconded and the motion carried by all in favor.

Tax Warrant

Mr. Warren presented a tax warrant for James Q and Deborah Dellofano for 811 Sixth Avenue (Map 110 Lot 147), It was re-purchased after tax deeded. Tax warrant amount: \$1,780.

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second by Councilor Morency to accept the tax warrant as presented. So moved, the motion carried with all in favor.

Gravel Tax Warrant

Mr. Warren presented a gravel tax levy for Arnold Drouin in the amount of \$12.00. Councilor Berthiaume moved to issue the gravel tax levy as presented. Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

At 8:35 p.m., there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Cone 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.