

City Council Work Session

June 5, 2017

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Finance Director Patty Chase, Sylvia Poulin, Christina Lefebvre, and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*

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

Skate Park Project Update

Mr. Wheeler explained that Ms. Laflamme applied for a Tillotson grant to leverage the money we already have. There is \$50,000 budgeted; we have committed \$25,000 in-kind and the application to the Tillotson Fund is for \$75,000. We should hear whether the project has been funded in the next few weeks. Councilor Higbee stated that anything over \$100,000 will create a worthwhile project. Mayor Grenier confirmed that the skate park will still be sited on Community Field.

Veteran's Tax Credit

Mayor Grenier noted that some weeks ago there was a petition from local veterans who asked for changes to the City's veterans exemptions. There is an option in the law that allows an exemption to be given to all veterans and the option can be phased in over a three year period. Mayor Grenier suggested that the Board of Assessors recommend a course of action. Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Otis to remand the veteran's tax credit request to the Board of Assessors for review and recommendation. So moved, the motion carried.

Berlin Community Farmers Market Presentation

Sylvia Poulin addressed the Council regarding the Farmer's Market moving to Gorham. She mentioned that Roger Brooks, who is a consultant that specializes on Main Streets, suggested a market on Main Street. When it became clear that there would be no market in Berlin, Kathy Trumbull set up a board to work toward organizing a Berlin Community Market. Several locations were reviewed and Gill Park is most favored. Insurance can be provided under the Main Street Program umbrella.

Christina Lefebvre has some experience with the Farmer's Market and she explained that she is committed to helping develop a market for Berlin. In order to leverage vendors, the market will be held on Tuesdays. It will be a Twilight Market held from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. July 11 to September 12. The group is looking to pay an on-site manager to work six hours on the day of the market at \$20 per hour. It will be necessary to pay for marketing and signage, as well as directional signage. It is estimated that the costs would be \$3,200 for this year and to start next year.

Councilor Rozek questioned whether the market could be split up among the parks including Veteran's Park, WWI Park and Heritage Park when construction done. He also asked if the vendors are interested in coming. Ms. Lefebvre stated that there are twelve vendors confirmed. She indicated that people are more drawn to a cluster of vendors rather than dividing the vendors among the parks.

Councilor Rozek acknowledged that the City has already invested in the Farmer's Market and it walked away. The City is being asked to invest again and he confirmed that there is no guarantee. Ms. Lefebvre agreed that there is no guarantee. She stated that they will keep the sign up fees as low as possible to get as many vendors as possible.

Mayor Grenier asked if the funds can be appropriated in the July 1 budget. He preferred to create a new budget item rather than appropriate from Contingent. He asked if Councilors support an appropriation for the Farmer's Market. Councilor Nelson noted that she supports giving the funding but she would not want to provide it every year; eventually it should be self-sufficient. Councilor Higbee stated that WREN had \$6,000 to start up. He added that he would support funding and he will work to help the Market get 501c3 status so that they could then apply for SNAP benefits and grants. It will be called the "Berlin Community Market".

Councilor Otis commented that the Market creates commerce; it brings people to the downtown and he would support the funding request. Councilor Gentili stated that the Market creates a community feeling and it is part of the downtown. Mayor Grenier noted that when the budget gets approved in two weeks, we will need to add the appropriation by 2/3 majority vote.

Councilor Remillard agreed that the City cannot provide the money every year; however she justified the appropriation saying that the Market benefits everyone. Councilor Higbee disclosed that he has been working with the group to bring a market to Berlin. He added that there may be some sponsorships and the group will not need the entire \$3,200 from the City. Mayor Grenier suggested adding \$2,000 to the Main Street Program's appropriation for the Community Market.

State Revolving Loan Fund Sample Amortization Schedules for I & I Project

Mr. Wheeler stated that the Council had asked about amortization schedules for an I & I project. The schedules were provided by DES for a 15 year or 20 year term. The interest rate is at 2%. Councilors favored the shorter term. Mayor Grenier made the point that at the end of a 20 year term, it will be time to do another waste water plant upgrade. The project is in the design phase and will go out to bid as soon as possible.

Other

Account Clerk Position - Patty Chase asked to fill a position created when the Finance Account Clerk took the Payroll position. It is a full time position at the collections window. Councilor Nelson moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to hire a full time Collections Clerk in the Finance department. So moved, the motion carried.

Non-Meeting - Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Remillard to go into a non-meeting per RSA 91-A:2 I(b) Collective Bargaining. The motion carried unanimously by roll call.

There being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant