

City Council Work Session
December 4, 2017

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Coos County Family Health CEO Ken Gordon, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Assistant Police Chief Dan Buteau, Police Chief Pete Morency, Superintendent of Schools Corinne Cascadden, and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Opioid Use Disorder Treatment Program

Mr. Gordon explained that Coos County Family Health provides health services in Berlin and Gorham as well as a dental clinic in Berlin. In response to the opioid crisis, they are starting a medication assisted treatment program. Additional resources are being used for expanded treatment options and medical providers are recognizing addiction as a medical illness. Drug addiction can affect anyone and there is an obligation to help those who are sick. Mr. Gordon reported that in 2016 there were 93 children born in Berlin and 13 of them had neonatal abstinence syndrome due to drugs. The proposed program will target pregnant women, new moms and their partners. It is expected that 10 to 24 people will be treated in the first year. This program will be for people who live in the community and participation will require substance abuse counseling; mental health treatment; social work support; and medication to help support those in recovery. Vitriol and Suboxone stave off the effects of narcotics.

Participants will have to sign off on a treatment agreement, attend regularly scheduled medical appointments; receive counseling, and be subjected to drug screens and pill counts. If it is confirmed that a patient is diverting or selling their medication, they will be removed from the program and reported to police. The program is expected to get started in January. Mr. Gordon stated that if everything goes well, the program will expand to include existing patients who are traveling to get medication.

Mayor Grenier asked if the program will be administered to someone who is arrested in lieu of dealing with the arrest. Mr. Gordon replied that it may be a part of the sentence; not instead of. Mayor Grenier asked Chief Morency to comment. Chief Morency said that there have been people on suboxone for many years without a plan. When they fail to get medication at one clinic, they move on to a different clinic. These drugs are not harmful if used as directed; however many don't use as they should. Councilor Gentili applauded the effort saying that if we do nothing, we are sure it won't work. Mayor Grenier noted that Mr. Gordon is also looking for a letter of support. Mr. Gordon added that federal funders require that they re-apply for funding every 5 years and this is their time.

Coos County Family Health FQHC Letter of Support - Councilor Nelson moved with a second from Councilor Rozek to send a letter in support of Coos County Family Health Services re-application as a federally qualified health center to be signed by the City Manager on behalf of the City Council. So moved, the motion carried.

Commercial Scale Solar Zoning

Ms. Laflamme indicated that this is an ordinance that came to the Council in August and there were concerns about including Commercial Solar in the Jericho Gateway Zone. There was further discussion with Planning Board members about where appropriate places for commercial solar might be. It will not be allowed in the Jericho Gateway Zone; however all of industrial business will allow commercial solar. Ms. Laflamme explained that it would be allowed in a large unregimented southwestern section of the City, and off of Route 110, all of which will be depicted in an overlay zone. A project would have to go through the Zoning Board for a variance and through the site plan review process which would give people several opportunities to voice their concerns. Mayor Grenier noted that Planning Board members were cognizant of protecting Jericho Gateway and recognize the potential of the recreational area.

Final Rules Approval AVRRDD

Mr. Wheeler stated that he has developed a new set of rules incorporating the comments on fees for tires discussed at a previous meeting. Councilor Rozek questioned the need to pay an additional fee for a motorcycle or atv tire. He added that the Council had agreed to include all tires 19" and under. Mr. Wheeler stated that he would check with the District and reflect the change in the rules.

SRF/SAG projects

Mr. Wheeler reported that the time to apply is now. The City can apply for I & I projects and if funding comes through, it can be considered or denied. Council conceded that it is a good idea to apply.

Request to Fill Department Head Positions

Mr. Wheeler informed the Council that Henry Noel has given his retirement notice effective March 31, 2018 and the Public Works Director is retiring in July. He would like to start the hiring process on both positions. Councilor Rozek stated that he has no problem with the Treatment Plant Supervisor; however he wanted to review the Public Works Director job description. Councilor Rozek wants to see a position with less money. Councilor Remillard added that when people retire, that is the time to see about eliminating the position. Mr. Wheeler said that given all that the position entails, we need the best candidate we can find to be Public Works director. Mayor Grenier added that the salary was bumped up when duties from the Recreation Department were taken on. Mr. Wheeler explained that in the Department Head contract there is no starting pay designated, so the starting pay can be lower than what the current director is making. Councilor Otis stated that a director is needed in the department. He asked if there is a level of streamlining that can be done with other management positions in the department. Mr. Wheeler noted that the foreman positions have been developed to cover for each other; at least 4 are needed in the call rotation. Councilor Nelson asked if the Primex hiring process would be used and Mr. Wheeler stated that is the intent. Councilors asked for a list of responsibilities and rate of pay for Public Works management and information on what other PW Directors in comparable communities make. Councilor Theberge warned that too much consolidation is not good either. Councilor Rozek commented that we have a declining population, a high tax rate and we cannot continue to do things the same.

Councilor Nelson stated a concern that shifting of salaries may have inflated some of the pay rates. She questioned the department head in the closed health department getting the same salary. Mr. Wheeler explained that housing has been added to the job.

Councilor Nelson moved with a second from Councilor Rozek to replace the Waste Water Treatment Supervisor position. So moved, the motion carried.

Non Public Session

Councilor Rozek moved to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3II (d) land matters; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Discussion took place regarding the Beth Israel Cemetery.

Councilor Rozek moved to come out of non-public session at 7:35; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Morgan Allain to seal the minutes until the Mayor and City Manager deem it appropriate to release them as releasing them would make the action taken ineffective; so moved, the motion carried.

With no further business in work session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the regular meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the City Council by motion.