

City Council Work Session
April 29, 2019

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, NCC Planner Alex Belesnz, Police Chief Pete Morency, Assistant Chief Dan Buteau, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun

Regional Transportation

Mr. Belesnz addressed the Council saying that he represents North Country Council, which is Berlin's regional planning commission. NCC is ready to help with traffic counts, studies, mapping, technical assistance, infrastructure, bicycle and pedestrian path planning, transportation plans, and special projects.

He went on to talk about the regional ten year plan which is updated every 5 years. He wanted to discuss the needs, issues and opportunities for the community and for the region including the Route 110 and 16 corridors.

The State Ten Year Plan is mostly federally funded and NH is last in the country for federal surface transportation funding. There should be a formula for distributing funding.

The projects that NCC is aware of include:

- NH 16 rehab and sidewalk improvements
- NH 110 rehab reconstruction & OHRV access
- NH 110 access management
- Bicycle and pedestrian improvements
- Cates Hill roadway condition
- Cleveland Bridge repair
- Hutchins St high truck traffic
- East Milan Rd; DOT wants to transfer control to the city
- Intersections identified for safety
- Cole/York Streets
- East Mason/Burgess Streets
- Hillside/Willard Streets
- Bridge/Hutchins Streets

Mr. Belensz asked what the issues are along 16 or Route 2, to get to the city?

Mayor Grenier mentioned that Route 16 cost estimates were provided to the DOT along with our proposal for Route 16. Our estimates were scoffed at by DOT; costs were tripled and we were not given the opportunity to clarify or to obtain an explanation. DOT used cost estimates from a previous project at \$8 million per mile and they would not hear that we are not seeking full reconstruction. Mayor Grenier went on to say that we have the worse stretch of Route 16 in the State. Berlin does not need planning and engineering from NCC; however NCC needs to step up when we need something.

Mr. Belenz said that when the proposal was received from the city, there was not time to provide guidance. He suggested that NCC and the City engage early and bring the project to DOT as part of the process so that everyone will be on the same page. The City will be eligible again in two years. Ms. Laflamme added that DOT has been the roadblock here; it did not make a lot of sense to use Route 110 numbers for the project. Mayor Grenier questioned what the City gets from NCC for dues we pay.

Councilor Rozek made a comparison between the money that goes into the CT River Valley for road improvements and the Androscoggin Valley River Corridor. The Androscoggin River Valley is not given a fair shake.

Councilor Remillard asked what NCC has done with the list of projects and what the City has gotten from the North Country Council. Mr. Belenz stated that he is not aware of what was followed up on. He added that NCC gets a project into the Ten Year Plan in a systematic manner and then follows up on it.

Mr. Belenz mentioned a meeting that was held at the Community College regarding a culvert assessment project. There is a field crew that is assessing stream crossings using a state wide database. The goal is predicting if the culvert is likely to fail in a rain event. Councilor Theberge indicated that he went to the meeting and heard about streams and bridges and corridors of brooks coming into the river. Mr. Belenz concluded by saying that NCC can help with funding for environmental and potential funding for roadway infrastructure. They rely on information from Cities and Towns for community and regional planning. Mayor Grenier asked that Mr. Belenz radiate the City Council's frustration with DOT to Concord. Mr. Belenz left the meeting at this time.

FERC Relicensing for Great Lakes.

Mr. Wheeler noted that the City was asked to submit a survey for the relicensing of Great Lakes hydro. With no objection from the Council Mr. Wheeler indicated that we would file the survey and engage saying that we have information important to licensing. There will likely be more information forthcoming

Berlin Armory

There is a request for the City to respond by May 6 if they have interest in the Armory building. BIDPA toured the Armory and was impressed with the building; however due to zoning challenges, they did not see a need for the building. Last Friday, the PD, school, and college viewed the building and they have differing interests in it. There are multiple agencies that see a need. There is potential to use the building as a police facility. Mayor Grenier said that there is a possibility of working with Fish and Game for partial use of the building in conjunction with other agencies such as the Sheriff's office, and School for a bus garage.

Councilor Remillard said that we should not lose the opportunity. Councilor Gentili commented that the City's CIP has a new police facility for the year 2025 and there \$135,000 of repair to go into the existing building. The Armory would provide training rooms, secure records storage, and office space. There would be a secure sally port, an indoor firing range, and vaults for weapons. There are 16 storage units that could be rented and the building is ADA compliant. He did not want the opportunity to go by without an effort to acquire the building.

Chief Morency added that having the PD across from a park has never been ideal. Bouncing basketballs make it difficult to concentrate on doing reports and kids are exposed to the sound of prisoners rattling

cages. The current police station is 3969 sf and the Armory has 20,000 sf. Chief Morency stated that he has been looking at regional dispatching and this could be an opportunity to see it through. He agreed that it is a good opportunity; however we cannot base a decision on whether to acquire the building on other agencies bringing the checkbook.

Councilor Remillard moved to forward a letter expressing interest in the Armory building by the May 6 deadline; Councilor Gentili seconded.

In discussion Councilors were concerned about the process. Mr. Wheeler stated that he will contact Mr. Normandeau from Fish and Game, explore an extension and if those fail, we can send a letter. In the vote that followed, all were in favor of the motion.

Non-Public Session

There being no further business in work session, Councilor Morgan Allain moved to go into nonpublic session per RSA 91-A:3 II (d) Land Matters; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Land matters were discussed.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to come out of non-public session. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved to seal the minutes of the non-public session as releasing them would make the action taken ineffective; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting ended at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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