

City Council Work Session September 3, 2019

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Gina Welch, Jamie Welch, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun* and public

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m. Mr. McIntyre is delayed and the issue of sports wagering will be discussed when he arrives.

Helicopter Rides at Riverfire

Councilor Berthiaume explained that helicopter rides were offered at Riverfire last year and there were no problems. The Chamber would like these to operate the same as last year, taking off from Horne Field. Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Allain to allow helicopter rides from Horne Field on October 19, 2019 for Riverfire. So moved, the motion carried.

Election Ordinance

Ms. Fortin reported that she checked with the Secretary of State's Office and confirmed that elections have to be run the same throughout the State. Berlin's current law says a candidate has to file for candidacy in person which is more restrictive than State law. The proposed ordinance would bring Berlin's law in line with the State. Ms. Fortin affirmed that she called other municipalities and they allow filing for election by mail and some by e-mail. She also presented a form with a notary statement that could be used by Berlin and comply with State law. Mayor Grenier indicated that he is comfortable as long as the form is notarized. He added that the ordinance will need to be removed from the table and amended to add the provision for a notary's signature.

Segregated Funds

Mr. Wheeler stated that there is an annual resolution to bring reserved funds forward into the new budget. All items in the resolution are capital improvement items. The resolution will be read for the first time this evening.

Fire Engine Letter Request

The State Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has available a 2006 American LaFrance engine that it is accepting letters of interest for. Berlin's primary engine is a 2006 and everything else is older. We sent a letter expressing how the engine would be a benefit to the city. Mayor Grenier added the apparatus was a fire engine at Otis Airforce base. It is military surplus with 40,000 miles, and a 4 person cab; the color is red. Mr. Wheeler said that there will surely be others interested and he will keep the Council informed.

Princess Theatre

Mr. Wheeler referred to a multi-page report done by Jason Ross at HEB regarding the stability of the Princess Theatre. In addition Mr. Ross estimated that putting a roof over the building would cost approximately \$114,000. There is brick on the right side of the building that is jutting out and something has to be done to stabilize it. The big decision is whether we want to preserve the building or take it down; either comes with a big cost and it is money we don't have. Councilor Rozek noted that the building is full of mold and cannot likely be saved without removing all the timber. He

questioned whether we should get a price on removing timber. Councilor Berthiaume asked if there is anything preventing us from putting the building up for sale. Councilor Otis suggested getting an estimate for demo. There was some question on whether it could be taken over by someone for the value of the brick. The consensus was to offer the building through an RFP with criteria for both redevelopment and demolition with the city having the right to refuse any and all offers. Councilor Allain stated that she would hate to see the project be delayed through the winter months because of the hole in the roof. Mr. Wheeler assured that we can get something out quick.

NH Lottery Sports Wagering Charlie McIntyre

Mr. McIntyre reported that it is the Supreme Courts' opinion that sports betting is legal. In this case, NH Lottery is the regulator and there is a bid out for sports betting partners which will come with proposals and they will identify locations that are suitable. If Berlin were to vote this in, it would be available as a location. Mayor Grenier asked, if the public in Berlin supports sports wagering, how would the operator be chosen. Mr. McIntyre stated that regions will be identified and the business would have to go through the regular business licensing for Berlin.

The Council's only function is to agree or disagree with putting the question on the ballot for the November election. Mr. McIntyre noted that these will be first rate facilities like a high end sports bar. Councilor Berthiaume asked if this will hurt the charitable gaming that goes on in the City. Mr. McIntyre said that it may make sense to go with existing licensees, so it could help. Councilor Higbee confirmed that this is a for profit business that would pay taxes. Mr. McIntyre said that no more than ten locations will be allowed in the State and they are expected to be spread out. Councilor Rozek asked how the city would benefit. Mr. McIntyre said that all the money goes to education and with Keno, the fund grew by 22%. Businesses that offer Keno have seen an increase in business. Mr. Wheeler said that the Council could vote to put the question on the ballot or postpone a decision to another meeting. In either case, there would need to be a public hearing on October 7.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Remillard to put the question on the November 5 ballot with the question being, "shall we allow the operation of sports book retail locations within the City" and hold a public hearing on October 7. So moved, the motion carried. Councilor Higbee commented that this vote gives the citizens the opportunity to decide.

UNH Collaboration Request

Eshan Dave is a professor at UNH and he was contacted some time ago regarding potential synergies on snowmelt. He is drafting an application to the National Science Foundation and he asked if the City would be a collaborator. There is no cost to the city. As a collaborator, we would provide community needs, participate in discussions about defining a research project, review the findings and support research demonstrations pending City Council approval. Their program is called Smart Walk. Mr. Wheeler recommended going forward adding that we may be able to turn this into something that benefits our de-icing project.

Councilor Rozek moved to authorize the City Manager to sign a statement that the City will collaborate in a proposal entitled Smart-Walk: A Safe, Energy Efficient, and Community Connected Pedestrian Mobility System for Cold Regions at no cost to the City, if it is selected for funding; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried.

CCFHS Riverfire 5K Event

Mr. Wheeler noted that this is CCFHS' annual request to conduct a 5k race at Riverfire. There is a map showing the proposed route. Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to authorize the 5K Family Running Event. So moved, all voted in favor.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Berthiaume moved to go into nonpublic session per RSA91-A:3 II (b)Hiring and (d) Land Matters; Councilor Allain seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

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

Councilor Gentili moved to seal the minutes as releasing them would make the action taken ineffective; Councilor Berthiaume seconded and all in favor.

Votes following the non-public session: Councilor Gentili moved to fill the fire chief position with the Committee's selected candidate; Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried.

Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Rozek that the City Manager is hereby authorized, indefinitely until rescinded, to offer for sale at the earliest appropriate opportunity, the properties listed below by sealed bid with conditions as indicated and other such conditions as he deems appropriate:

224 Madigan - (sell for a minimum bid of taxes and fees)

Map/Lot 114-55 (vacant) - (sell for a minimum bid of taxes and fees)

Map/Lot 114-56 (vacant) - (sell for a minimum bid of taxes and fees)

Map/Lot 114-57 (84 Corbin) - (sell for a minimum bid of taxes and fees)

So moved, the motion carried.

There being no further business in the 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.