

City Council Work Session
September 23, 2019

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

Others present were: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Police Chief Pete Morency, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Public Works Director Ben Hall, and Paul Robitaille from the Berlin Daily Sun

Polling Places/Polling Hours

Councilor Gentili moved to set the polling hours from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and polling places as the Recreation Center, First Avenue entrance; St. Anne Hall, School Street and Community Bible Church, Sullivan Street; Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried.

Comprehensive Right of Way Ordinance

In a follow up to last week's discussion, Mr. Wheeler referred to a communication from Kate Miller of Donahue, Tucker and Ciandella where she confirmed that the cost will not be more than \$1,000 which the city will pay from legal.

Public Works Equipment Update

Mr. Wheeler explained that there is more information on the loaders that were discussed at last week's meeting. Further review by John Deere resulted in three of the seven existing loaders passing the ROPES test meaning that we can use them in our snow operations. They will also be worth more if we trade them in. We had hoped to refinance a bond to pay for new loaders; however the Bond Bank has explained that in this form of refinance, we would not get the benefit of extending the bond until 2026 making that option unaffordable. Mr. Wheeler noted that there is justification for paying for one loader from the sewer fund.

Councilor Rozek stated that we should be leasing the equipment and every year, lease more so that there is constant turnover of equipment. We could look at subcontracting in the future. Mayor Grenier agreed, saying that he looked at what we spend on equipment maintenance and it's no wonder there is not time for preventative maintenance. The new machinery will be on warranty. He added that what we've been doing is not working; it's time to try something new. Councilor Rozek asked if we could get a price quote from another manufacturer. Mr. Hall reported that CAT has the four wheel drive vehicles but they need to be engaged in the stop position, where the John Deere can be engaged while driving.

Councilor Theberge asked when we would get the equipment and Mayor Grenier estimated at least eight weeks. Mr. Wheeler stated that this would be a big increase in service to the public and we will then have mechanics that can focus on the rest of the fleet

Armory Acquisition

Mr. Wheeler noted that the joint project to acquire the armory, between Fish and Game and the PD, has fallen through. He's been asked by the State if the city is interested in acquiring the building at no cost

other than filing fees. The State provided information showing a yearly cost of about \$41,000 to maintain the building.

Chief Morency spoke to his department's need for a new facility. The current building has issues with handicap accessibility; parking is bad; there is no meeting room, and only one interview room. The current facility would never become accredited because of the proximity to children using the recreation center. It does not mix well with police business. He added that this may be our only opportunity for such a building and he acknowledged that the timing is awful. For the City to build a 24,000 sf building, it would cost between \$9 and \$11 million.

Chief Morency went on to say that the furnace has been replaced in the existing pd building. There are issues with the sewer system that will be addressed by PWD. The department does not have \$41,000 in the budget to maintain the building. The real cost is moving the dispatching and technology. He will be looking at what the State has to offer for grant funding for a feasibility study.

Councilor Rozek suggested that the Armory could be a municipal building that would house city hall so that it would be handicap accessible. He asked how the armory compares in square footage with the current building and Chief Morency stated that the PD is 8,000 sf and the armory is 24,000 sf. Councilor Remillard asked if there are drawbacks to being on the outskirts of the city. Chief Morency replied that it is mostly perception; with the technology used today, it's not an issue. Councilor Remillard voiced that we should make sure we have the option to transfer the property after two years if a police station is not feasible. Mr. Wheeler stated that he didn't think there were any strings. Councilor Remillard said that this is a onetime opportunity and we can be sure that we won't be downsizing the pd.

Mayor Grenier said that we need to look at the whole picture and he asked what will be done with the old building if pd leaves. Unless there is a legitimate re use for the present building, he wanted to be cautious about taking on the armory. He would support moving very slowly. If a Legislative action is needed, it won't happen until the spring. Councilor Rozek wanted to be assured that there is no cost and that the future use of the building is not dictated if we acquire it.

Master Planning Grant

Ms. Laflamme reported that in early July she submitted a grant to Tillotson for master planning, not expecting to be funded. The \$20,000 was funded and it will contribute to Master Planning set for next year. In addition to the community planning work and the economic study that Camoin is doing, we expect that the entire cost will be covered.

With no items under "Other", Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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