

City Council Work Session

January 6, 2020

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

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Councilor Elect Mark Eastman, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Wastewater Superintendent Jon Goodreau, Public Works Director Ben Hall, Fire Chief James Watkins, Fire Inspector Pete Donovan, Library Director Ann Brungot, Richard Laflamme, Jamie Welsh, Gina Welch, Representatives of the AV Fish & Game Association Bob Rodrigue, Paul Lafleur, and Mitch Dumont; Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun* and public.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

He asked to add HB683 to the agenda. Councilor Rozek so moved; Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried.

Review of Investment Policy

Mr. Wheeler noted that the Council reviews and approves the City's investment policy annually. The primary objective is the safety of the principle. The City's investments are managed by the City Treasurer through the finance director. Councilor Gentili moved to adopt the investment policy for 2020; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried.

Part time Library Clerk

Library Director Ann Brungot reported that she has an open position at the Library for Monday and Friday which will replace the position she vacated when taking the Library Director position. Councilor Remillard confirmed that this is not a new position. Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Rozek to hire a part time clerk. So moved, the motion carried.

Wright Pierce Contract for Capital Work

Mr. Wheeler noted that there is an engineering contract for Wastewater improvements covering design through bidding. The Council will be asked for a motion to enter into the contract. Jon Goodreau explained that the existing pump stations have flow meters with the exception of the Napert Village pump station. These flow meters are a great trouble shooting tool. The conduit is there for a flow meter and the cost is about \$15,000.

There is a system to bypass pumping stations in the event of overflow that would prevent the overflow from going into basements or the river. The contract would also cover fencing and ejector pumps. The entire project is estimated at \$405,000 which includes engineering cost. Mr. Wheeler said that this contract would take the project through to bidding and the Council would need to vote again when the contract is awarded. He added that this is capital work and the Sewer fund can handle it. Councilor Rozek asked if there will be a gate and Mr. Goodreau confirmed that there will be a vehicle gate. Mr. Wheeler confirmed that Bill Hounsel is aware and DES has approved the project already so that if SAG money becomes available, we will be able to apply. Councilor Rozek concluded by saying that what the treatment plant does is critical and it is essential they have the funding to keep the separation of dirty and clean water.

Councilor Rozek moved to authorize the City Manager to enter into an agreement with Wright Pierce for \$86,900; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Propane Inspection Fees

Fire Chief Jay Watkins reported that they were asked to look at the propane drop inspection fees; it costs \$75. for the inspection when a homeowner changes company and has the tank changed from one company to another. There have been no complaints about the fees that he's heard.

Chief Watkins and Fire Inspector Pete Donovan confirmed that propane is highly flammable and it can easily be ignited. The goal of the FD is to intercept any problems before they occur. Councilor Rozek clarified that the propane companies are not allowed to pull tanks until the paper work is done. Chief Watkins stated that he is not concerned about the fees charged for the inspection; the inspection is a safety issue.

Councilor Remillard questioned why these cannot be inspected ever 3 to 5 years. Pete Donovan established that it is important to inspect the tank drop to make sure it's right. Mayor Grenier said that he is not in favor of eliminating the inspections. He questioned how much revenue the fire department gets from propane inspections? Chief Watkins noted that they use discretion when charging people and work hard not to take advantage of people. Pete Donovan added that they work with the propane companies. Mayor Grenier said that once the additional information is received, the Council will discuss again on January 27th for a final determination.

DRA Correspondence

Mr. Wheeler explained that the DRA does this for any appraisal and we now know they approved the statistical update that was done last year.

Councilor Rozek commented that he has an issue with the DRA wanting to look at 3 homes and go through all the rooms. He said they will not be using KRT's appraisal and he doesn't know why the DRA is involved when the BTLA is the authority. He reported that he wants to wait until after the hearing in February. Mr. Wheeler stated that the DRA is a separate State agency and goes by the law and their rules. Councilor Remillard asked what the intent is with the information they gather and Councilor Rozek noted that they are not saying. Councilor Rozek commented on the expense and said that the DRA is overreaching. He asked Mr. Wheeler how many times he's been in contact with Phil Bodwell and Mr. Wheeler replied very infrequently, perhaps two. Councilor Rozek expressed concern that he is not represented by an attorney.

House Bill 1421-LOCAL

This bill deals with the median ratio of abatements and states that the median ratio when the abatement is filed will be in place throughout the abatement including in a settlement. Mayor Grenier stated that the City should strongly support the bill.

Councilor Rozek stated that the BOA should review and make a recommendation. Mayor Grenier said that this could be shared with the BOA; however if they don't meet on the issue, the Council will deal with it on January 20.

Princess Theater update

Mr. Wheeler showed pictures of the Princess Theater where an upper portion of the brick is loose. He states that the City had HEB do a study on the building and we put it out to bid and did not get anyone

to respond. The power lines are 5 feet away from the loose brick. Jason Berry, Vaillancourt Electric went up in a bucket truck and worries that taking away loose bricks will make the structure more unstable. Mr. Wheeler noted that he contacted Primex and there is a possibility that we could get some coverage from them. There is also a call in to DES about the flat roof money. We need to get the building down. Mr. Wheeler will get more information about funding and cost. The building next door is separate from the Theater and there is liability if we damage it during demo.

Set Polling Hours/Places

In a memo from City Clerk Shelli Fortin the Council was asked to set polling hours for the February 11, 2020 Presidential Primary at 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Polling places are Precinct 1 Recreation Center; Precincts 2 and 3 St. Anne Hall; Precinct 4, Community Bible Church. Councilor Rozek so moved; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried.

HB 683

Mr. Wheeler distributed copies of HB683 that would take away local control of ATV rules from municipalities. The Chamber of Commerce sent information and an opinion letter drafted by Ted Bosen was also distributed. The Legislature will be meeting Wednesday to discuss this retained bill. Mayor Grenier stated that we should show strong opposition. Councilor Rozek moved to send a letter to the Coos County Representatives encouraging them to stand in strong opposition to HB683; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried unanimously. Senator Starr will be included in the mailing.

Other

Mr. Wheeler stated that the 9th amendment with North Country Growers has been signed. They have until the end of February. They have made non refundable deposits in the amount of \$80,000 so far.

There being 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.