

City Council Work Session

Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Section 8 and Emergency Order #12, Section 3

March 30, 2020

Present were: Mayor Grenier at City Hall; via Zoom Councilors Remillard, Otis, Higbee, Eastman, Theberge, and Morgan were present; Councilor Rozek and Berthiaume were absent.

Others present: At City Hall City Manager Jim Wheeler; via Zoom Superintendent Julie King, Fire Chief James Watkins, Police Chief Pete Morency, Deputy Chief Dan Buteau, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, PD Communications Manager Jen Cloutier, Finance Director Patty Chase, Jamie Welch, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*.

At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened by stating: as Mayor of the City Council, due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 City Council is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 670 673 382, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website.

- b) *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:*

We previously gave notice to the public of how to access the meeting using Zoom, and instructions are provided on the City of Berlin's meeting agenda.

- c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:*

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587

- d) *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting*

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Councilors Remillard, Otis, Higbee, Eastman, Theberge, and Morgan were present and stated that there was no one else in the room; Mayor Grenier was present and in the room with Jim Wheeler.

Suspension of Tax Lien and Tax Deed Process

Ms. Chase reported that the tax lien process is set to conclude with tax deeding April 8. Many banks are closed and with the stay at home order, how does the Council want to proceed? Mayor Grenier noted that he does not want to continuously change the date; it would be best to delay out to June or July. Ms. Chase stated that if the liens are not completed tomorrow, then a new lien process will need to begin and 378 parcels of mail resent. Councilor Remillard suggested suspending until the Governor's order is suspended.

Councilor Remillard moved to suspend the tax lien and tax deed process, in light of COVID-19, and come back to Council at a later date when the emergency is cleared; Councilor Theberge seconded and Councilors Remillard, Otis, Higbee, Eastman, Theberge, Morgan and Mayor Grenier each voted in agreement by roll call.

COVID-19 Update

Mr. Wheeler reported that he created a summary of what has been done to date. There is a Public Safety Task Force consisting of Fire Chief Jay Watkins, Communications Manager Jen Cloutier, Police Chief Pete Morency, Assistant Chief Dan Buteau, and Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme that has been meeting to implement the Emergency Operations Plan. The group is kept active with meetings three times per week.

Reaching out to the seniors and to susceptible population was one reason for the community phone call done last week. Shelli Fortin will be collecting contact information from volunteers.

It has been determined that emergency services and City Departments have the PPE's needed for now. Mr. Wheeler indicated that the primary concern is to protect staff and the public. Conforming to the stay at home order, we have been rotating staff in and out of buildings. We are not taking payments at the window at city hall. Registrations can be done by credit card, e-check or mail. There is very little traffic at city hall.

There was an early desire for a mobile testing site in Berlin; however it does not appear to be warranted at this time. The task force is working on an offsite "surge" location should it be needed.

Communication regarding the pandemic is relayed through the City web site, Facebook, newspaper and phone as well as NHPR. Mr. Wheeler reported that so far in Coos County, 51 have been tested and there have been no positive results.

Chief Watkins reported that he is in on several conference calls regarding COVID-19 per day. Chief Morency acknowledged that 90% of everyone's day is being consumed by this. He added that the primary concern is exposure for officers; however they continue to respond as necessary.

There was some concern for the return of people who winter in Florida or Arizona. They should be encouraged to self-quarantine.

Mayor Grenier mentioned the distribution of food at the Arena by the food pantry and though the intentions were good, every recommendation for social distancing was disregarded. He proposed that if another such event were to occur in this time of COVID-19, there may be a need for a permit to be sure that there is enough staff present to keep people safe.

Mayor Grenier noted that Governor Sununu is holding a virtual Mayor's meeting every Monday. Mayor Grenier intends to come to City Hall and to include Mr. Wheeler so that nothing is missed.

Councilor Morgan moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to adjourn. So moved 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.