

## City Council Work Session

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

August 3, 2020

At 6:31 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body 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 865 9650 7870, Passcode 872927, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, [www.berlinnh.gov](http://www.berlinnh.gov).

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

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

- 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 or e-mail at: [plaflamme@berlinnh.gov](mailto:plaflamme@berlinnh.gov)

- 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.

## Work Session

Present were: City Manager James Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Fire Chief James Watkins, Roland Berthiaume, Gary Croteau, and Barbara Tetreault, Berlin Daily Sun.

#### **Polling Hours and Locations for September Primary**

City Clerk Shelli Fortin requested that the Council set by motion the polling hours of 8:00 am to 7:00 pm for the September Primary and the polling locations of St Anne's Hall, Berlin Recreation Center, and Community Bible Church.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to approve the polling hours and locations for the September 8, 2020 State Primary. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

#### **Notice of FEMA SCBA Grant Award**

Fire Chief James Watkins advised the Council that the City has been awarded a FEMA grant in the amount of \$176,350 to replace SCBA's and the cylinders. This will include 25 packs, 50 cylinders, and a rapid intervention team pack, which would be used if a firefighter should run out of air. The City will be required to contribute \$8,397 toward the purchase, which is in the Capital Improvement budget. Chief Watkins advised that the equipment should last 15 years. City Manager Wheeler advised that it was Chief Watkin's idea to hire a grant writer, which contributed to the City being awarded the grant. Chief Watkins advised that the cost of the grant writer will be covered by the grant, so there ended up being no cost to the City for the service. Chief Watkins advised that they still have an application in for a grant to replace the fire engine. Councilor Eastman congratulated Chief Watkins for the grant and thanked him for doing a great job.

#### **Notice of Resignation and Position Request**

City Manager Wheeler advised the Council that Public Works Director Ben Hall submitted his letter of resignation with a three-week notice. Mr. Wheeler advised that in the short time he has been here, Hall has been learning and doing a great job. Mr. Wheeler advised this is the third time in a couple years that this position has been vacant, and he would like to take some time to look at the possible redesign of the structure of supervision in the public works department. Mr. Wheeler will work with the public works department for now. Mayor Grenier asked if the review will keep the position within the existing financial structure and Mr. Wheeler advised it would. Mr. Wheeler stated that the position has a very large scope of responsibility, and would like to make the job more manageable. Councilor Higbee stated that he fully supports taking the time to re-evaluate and applauds the decision to do that. Mayor Grenier reminded the Council that the City Manager is also currently overseeing the Finance Department as well. Mr. Wheeler advised that they do have a temporary Finance Director from MRI who works remotely, and they are interviewing this week for the Finance Director's position.

#### **Other**

Mr. Wheeler presented the Council with a draft tax agreement form for delinquent taxpayers to use to apply to waive interest charges during the Governor's State of Emergency. The agreement will have the following conditions:

1. If a taxpayer has paid interest and fees on the 2020 Tax Bill 1 between July 7, 2020 and July 21, 2020 (Council decision on July 20, 2020) then the City will credit the interest and/or fees against their account to be applied against future payments. The City will not issue reimbursement in the form of payment back to the taxpayer.

2. If a taxpayer has paid interest and/or fees on balance(s) accrued from a tax year other than the current tax year and they made such payment(s) prior to July 21, 2020 (Council decision on July 20, 2020) then the City will **NOT** credit the interest and/or fees against their account to be applied against future payments **NOR** issue reimbursement in the form of payment back to the taxpayer.
3. A taxpayer/sewer user must come current on all principal for all properties in the taxpayer/owner's name to take advantage of this agreement.
4. Authorization to enter into such agreements is only available during the State of Emergency and in accordance with the Governor's orders.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Morgan, to approve the process presented by the City Manager to implement the City Council's directive to waive interest on tax liens and property taxes during the pandemic. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

#### **Non-Public Session**

Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Higbee, to enter into non-public session at 6:57 pm per RSA 91-A:3II (d) consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community (e) Consideration or negotiation of pending claims (I) Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Councilor Berthiaume moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge to leave non-public session at 7:19 pm. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge, to seal the minutes of the non-public session indefinitely. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

#### **Non-Meeting**

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Berthiaume, to enter non-meeting at 7:21 pm per RSA 91-A:2 I (b) Collective Bargaining. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Councilor Higbee moved, with a second by Councilor Theberge, to leave the non-meeting at 7:34 pm. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

At 7:34 pm, there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Shelli Fortin  
City Clerk

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