

City Council Work Session
March 8, 2021

At 6:30 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 820 5450 0256; Passcode 931939, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, 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

- 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.

Present at roll call were: Councilors Remillard, Higbee, Eastman, Theberge, Berthiaume, Morgan, and Otis who acknowledged that they were alone in their respective rooms; Mayor Grenier was at City Hall with City Manager James Wheeler and Airport Manager Marcel Leveille. Councilor Rozek was absent.

Others present included City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Executive Councilor Joe Kenney, BIDPA Chair Mike Caron, Fire Chief Jay Watkins, Airport Manager Marcel Leveille and Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*

Update on Route 110

Ms. Laflamme reported that Northern Borders opened its 2021 grant round today. Congresswoman Kuster informed that there is a new waiver for communities who have not spent down a previous grant by 75% if that was caused by delay due to COVID. EDA also has funding which is tied to job creation.

The first steps are to finish the Economic Development Strategy plan. The TIF District process with Stu Arnett is in for next step stages 2 & 3. There are other grant sources to look into more carefully such as USDA that may be used for technical assistance funding. EDA also has technical Public Works funding that we were made aware of.

Mayor Grenier informed the group that he forwarded the communications regarding decreasing the speed limit on Route 110 to Councilor Kinney. Executive Councilor Kinney stated that he spoke with the DOT commissioner about their decision of not allowing the reduction of speed on Route 110. Councilor Kinney suggested, in the name of public safety, getting support from the Police Chief, the Sheriff's Office and Troup F. With their support, the job would be made easier. Mayor Grenier noted that he would like to resolve in time for the May 23 opening of the trails.

Councilor Kinney added that there is the potential of an additional \$2 million in Northern Borders money because other communities could not come up with their match. Coos County was shut out in the last round. Mayor Grenier asked what the local match would be and Ms. Laflamme indicated that Congresswoman Kuster informed that this round may waive matching funds for certain counties.

Councilor Kinney asked for a synchronization matrix update from time to time to draw a picture of the funding. Councilor Eastman asked if engineering needs to be done ahead of applying for grants. Mr. Wheeler replied that Northern Borders would not make money available until next year and we would want to apply to get the engineering paid for. Engineering is usually 15% of the cost of the project.

Mr. Wheeler added that we have a gravity sewer line engineering document that was done in 2009. He estimated that it would cost \$5,000 to \$7,000 to update the document. He acknowledged that there was less going on in terms of economic development on Route 110 in 2009. Mike Caron stated that there is nothing done regarding water from Jericho Motor sports up; the project would have to be engineered and has potential for needing a pressure tank.

Councilor Eastman asked if the pump station is currently working and Mr. Wheeler confirmed that it is; however it is woefully inadequate to serve a high capacity. Councilor Kinney mentioned DES Drinking Water Funds. He added that the 10 year plan will start again in the spring. The Governor has asked for a wish list for shovel ready projects and such projects will be prioritized. Mayor Grenier thanked the Councilor for attending the meeting.

Fire Department Planning

Alba Architects has been working on the design and structural improvements at the fire station. We tore down half of the building south of the fire station and preserved the lower half for storage. The lead architect Stuart Anderson asked if the city would consider a prefabricated building on a slab. It may

be less expensive than adding a new roof, doors, and windows. The cost to have Alva do a comparative study is \$3,400 and Mr. Wheeler noted that it would be wise to look at. Further decision could be made depending on the cost of the floor and upgrade to the storage building. Mr. Wheeler added that reinforcing the floor at the fire department is essential and the cost is expected to be in line with what was estimated. The reality is that the work has to be done no matter what. Mayor Grenier stated that it won't hurt to find out if it's more cost effective to move one way or another.

Councilor Eastman said that in general, renovations are cheaper than building from scratch. Mayor Grenier added that we are not in a position to do both. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to spend up to \$3,500 to do conceptual drawings of the Fire Department building update. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call. Councilor Theberge said that the FD does more than fight fires and their quarters should be able to accommodate EMS.

BIDPA

Mike Caron, BIDPA Chair explained that the budget is much like last year. Mayor Grenier asked if BIDPA owns any buildings at the industrial park and whether there are plans to build a spec building. Mr. Caron stated that BIDPA does not own any buildings at this time and there is still space available in the City. Mayor Grenier noted that BIDPA is one of strongest boards and we are lucky to have the dedicated professionals on that board.

Airport

Marcel Leveille indicated that the budget is basically the same. There was a reduction in aviation gasoline from \$20,000 to \$15,600. Staff at the airport is committed to getting four beacons that were out running. The recent tree cutting was good for the airport netting about \$9,000 and getting much needed brush clearing done.

Administration

Mr. Wheeler stated that there is a lot lumped into admin: City Manager, Finance, Assessing, City Clerk, Community Development, Planning and IT. He went on to call out budget that have a substantial change such as the contract with Corcoran Associates, for cyclical update. Retirement and Health Insurance have increases of \$15,608.62. There has been a lot of activity with cyber security. Ms. Laflamme added that we will be adding written policies and training. The City would be better served if this were done by a consultant. She noted that we are also working on new software for the Finance Department because MuniSmart is no longer supported. There are also changes with the Vision software and after July 1 Berlin will have tax cards on line.

Mr. Wheeler announced that Dawn Laflamme has applied for and accepted a position as the public works clerk.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (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. The motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Council discussed additional time for the option agreement with Brookfield

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

In public session Councilor Higbee moved to extend the option agreement for Brookfield to purchase land behind the Service Credit Union until April 30, 2021; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call

Councilor Morgan moved to adjourn; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call. The meeting ended at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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