

City Council Work Session
May 3, 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 819 1225 0381; Passcode 465341, 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, Eastman, Theberge, Berthiaume, Morgan, Rozek, Higbee and Otis who acknowledged that they were alone in their respective rooms; Mayor Grenier was at City Hall with City Manager James Wheeler.

Others present: Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, Deputy Chief of Police Dan Buteau, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Assistant Public Works Director Mark Lapointe, SAU3 Superintendent Julie King, BES School Principal Tammy Fauteux, SAU3 School Board Members: Ann Nolin, Nathan Morin, Jeanne Charest and Matthew Buteau, SAU3 Business Manager Marion Moore, SAU3 Technology Director Autie Hamilton, SAU3 Buildings and Grounds Coordinator Bryan Lamirande, Berlin Public Library Children's Librarian Denise Torres, Berlin Public Library Director

Ann Brungot, Berlin Public Schools Social Worker Alana Scannell, BMHS Principal Michael Kelley, SAU3 Special Education Director Martha Miller, BES Assistant Principal Sandy Pouliot, Barbara Tetreault Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

Request for use of Tondreau Parking Lot

Mayor Grenier read the communication received from Roger Pelletier requesting the use of the Tondreau Parking Lot on October 23, 2021 for the Santa Claus ATV parade for Toys for Kids. Councilor Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Berthiaume to authorize the use of the Tondreau Parking lot on October 23, 2021 for the Santa Claus ATV parade for Toys for Kids. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

SAU 3 Budget Discussion

Superintendent Julie King discussed the FY22 budget process and updates to the FY21 budget. When the FY22 budget was originally presented, the requested amount was up \$1,290,000 and the revenues were projected to be down \$2,260,000. This is mostly due to last year's one-time aid from the State that was almost \$2,000,000. Mrs. King also stated that the school was able to recuperate some of the free and reduced lunch cost that were causing some of the reduced revenue. The school is continuing to collect applications and projects revenues to be up \$138,000-\$163,000. She also advised that there is a piece of legislature going through for the State funding formula to use the higher numbers from either last year or this year to not punish districts as everyone is receiving free lunch and not filing out applications.

Mrs. King also mentioned that based on the fuel prices that were locked in, this will increase the budget by about \$119,000. She believes the school will be able to absorb the increase by moving something out to grants. She does not anticipate requesting additional funds for that. She also stated they will be able to reduce the capital improvement items by about \$342,000. She now has more information on grant funds that have come in, are still coming in and how they can be utilized. At this point she feels confident that most of the items on the capital improvement list can be moved to grant funding. The exception that she is still working on is the elevator repair which she will request remains under the capital improvements.

Mrs. King gave an update as to where the school is at with Grants since the pandemic started. The first round of ESSER funds, the additional Governor's allotment and compensatory funds for special education services were received for FY21 totaling about \$800,000. Most of these funds have been expended and utilized for various things Covid related. She stated that on the record now the school currently has \$2,065,000 that was allocated under ESSER2 funds which has hit the grant system already and the school can utilize those funds. She also received information that there will be more funding coming under the ESSER3 funds and to project receiving 2.33 x the amount of ESSER2 (\$2,065,000) which is about \$4,800,000. She is also expecting more Special Education funding, but does not know the amount yet. She is expecting a little under \$7,000,000 of total funds to come in. All funds should be received by the end of May 2021. Mrs. King did explain that 20% of those funds being received must be earmarked for addressing learning loss in students, which can be utilized for things like summer programming or purchasing new programs that are needed for next year.

Mrs. King discussed the current FY21 budget. Revenues will be higher than budgeted, estimated at about \$240,000. Surplus funds will be higher and this is due to all the funding received for Covid and also due to the Health Insurance waivers offered to employees, which saved about \$100,000. There was also a reduction in cost for the following due to the pandemic: travel costs, conference costs, unfilled positions, fewer sports (elementary school), labor for bus drivers providing meals, cleaning supplies, etc. Factoring all increased revenues and surplus, this should represent about \$1,000,000 in savings.

Mrs. King informed council that the school is trying to form a building committee for many reasons but partly because funds are coming and there's opportunities for capital improvements. She explained that

last year they've learned, when trying to apply for State building aid, you can't even apply if you don't have an operating building committee. Mrs. King explained because SAU3 is a dependent school district and also because of their charter, the building committee must be made up of equal representation from members appointed by the School Board and members appointed by the City Council. At this time, the School Board has appointed seven members. She is requesting that the Council look at appointing an equal amount of members. Once the committee is complete, they will receive training from the DOE and form the committee to start looking at long range building plans and help guide through the utilization of the ESSER funds. Mayor Grenier addressed Council as to if they should be advertising the School is looking for members to form their building committee. Councilor Remillard responded that yes they should advertise in the paper.

FY21 Sewer Rate

City Manager James Wheeler discussed FY21's sewer consumption. It was down slightly this year reflecting a decrease in the commercial consumption and an increase in the residential consumption. Mr. Wheeler advised last year's sewer rate was \$8.66 per hundred cubic feet and is recommending an increase of 4.7% which would increase the rate to \$9.07 per hundred cubic feet. He also presented other options depending on the UFB amount applied. He commented that we continue to be under the State average. Councilor Otis moved with a second from Councilor Berthiaume to accept the recommended sewer rate of \$9.07 per hundred cubic feet. Councilor Eastman recommended that the rate remain at \$8.66 per hundred cubic feet. Councilor Remillard agreed and would like to see the rate remain the same. Councilor Higbee suggested a 2% increase would be a good compromise as it's half of the recommended 4.7%. Councilor Theberge agreed with the 2% increase. Councilor Remillard asked what the rate would be at the 2% increase. Mr. Wheeler advise the 2% increase would reflect a rate of \$8.83 per hundred cubic feet. Mayor Grenier advised there is an active motion and an active second. So moved, the motion failed by roll call vote. Higbee – no, Rozek – no, Berthiaume – no, Theberge – no, Remillard – no, Otis – yes, Morgan – no, Eastman – no, Grenier – no. Councilor Eastman moved with a second from Councilor Remillard to keep the rate flat with no increase. So moved, the motion failed by roll call vote. Higbee – no, Rozek – no, Berthiaume – no, Theberge – no, Remillard – yes, Otis – no, Morgan – no, Eastman – yes, Grenier – no. Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Theberge to set the sewer rate at a 2% increase with a rate of \$8.83 per hundred cubic feet. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote. Higbee – yes, Rozek – no, Berthiaume – yes, Theberge – yes, Remillard – no, Otis – yes, Morgan – yes, Eastman – no, Grenier – yes.

2 PWD Position Requests

City Manager James Wheeler advised he received notification that two public works employees are leaving their positions. He stated these are standard Laborer/Equipment Operator positions and is requesting permission to fill these positions. Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to approve the City Manager to replace two public works position. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Recess

At 7:18 p.m. there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Grenier recessed for a few minutes before moving on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Rioux
Executive Assistant

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