

City Council Work Session
February 4, 2019

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Public Works Director Eric Grenier, Claire Stiles, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun* and public

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Sidewalk Tractor Funding

Mr. Wheeler noted that there is a resolution for first reading regarding the down payment for a sidewalk tractor. The tractor will have the attachments we need including the sander and planer. Funding will come from selling the 06 Holder, \$9,000; Re-appropriation, \$6,727.00 from Rec Equipment Purchase, and \$1,947.00 from Sidewalk Replacement. These re-appropriated funds, together with the existing capital appropriations, \$25,301.00 from PW Equipment Replacement; \$10,504.00 from a Segregated PW Equipment Replacement will achieve the total down payment of \$44,779. The yearly payment will be \$28,027.

We are currently renting the equipment and the \$6,000 per month cost will be deducted from the purchase price. Councilor Berthiaume asked if the department is happy with the equipment. Mr. Grenier indicated that the new sidewalk tractor is working well and able to open snowbanks that have been plowed onto sidewalks. Councilor Remillard confirmed that the second sidewalk tractor will be operational by the end of the week. Councilor Rozek stated that Whitefield runs a regular tractor with a snow blower and that may be a reasonable alternative for a future purchase.

Mayor Grenier asked for an update of why the snowbanks on Main Street were not picked up. Mr. Grenier reported that the 2006 snowblower hit a rock and broke the driveshaft. Snow was being picked up on Main Street using the alternate snow blower attachment and it broke down very early into the operation. The attachment should be working again by Wednesday.

Solar Farm RFP

Mr. Wheeler stated that he is looking for support for the idea of creating an RFP for a solar farm. NH Clean Energy Association has a sample rfp and we will ask for development options on several sites in the City. The Brown Farm site has two large users, the municipal well and wastewater treatment plant. Other sites include the East Milan Landfill and Cates Hill Landfill; both have proximity to power lines. In addition there has been thought about the airport; however there is a concern about glare; and it may need to be sited so far away that the cost of connecting would be prohibitive. The last thought is the schools.

The RFP will site all the locations and, the city can choose what project they want to do and can choose the combination of respondents that work best. Mayor Grenier confirmed that under current law, we would have to site something under 1 MG that would be used as opposed to sold. Councilor Rozek suggested the roof of the wastewater treatment plant. Council offered continued support for the RFP.

Legislative Updates

House Bill 352 SAG

There is a companion bill to the House Bill 352 which will appropriate funds to the department of environmental services for the purpose of funding eligible wastewater projects under the state aid grant program. Representative Henry Noel testified on our behalf and gave the House Committee a great perspective of the necessity of the bill. Councilor Rozek moved to authorize the City Manager to submit a letter supporting the House version of HB 352; Councilor Berthiaume seconded and the motion carried.

Current Legislative Proposals

HB 591 relates to OHRV's and snowmobiles requiring safety related equipment, head gear, and allowing no alcohol. It's not in the City's interest to take a position opposing all bills. No action was taken.

HB 592 requires OHRV riders to be licensed to drive. The age is now 12 when the driver has passed a training course and when accompanied by an adult. It also requires those under 18 to wear a helmet and eye protection. Councilor Theberge said that he agrees because there are too many kids who are driving. Councilor Higbee noted that the law would not prevent crossing roads and it is at the request of the Bureau of Trails. Mayor Grenier suggested asking for an interim study as there is no fiscal note showing the effect of the bill on the economy in Coos County.

Councilor Berthiaume moved to send a letter asking for an interim study; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried. Councilor Higbee was opposed.

HB 498 prohibits OHRV operation on class V ways. Mr. Wheeler clarified that Berlin does not have Class V roads; most of ours are Class IV. Gorham's side streets are Class V. Councilor Berthiaume reasoned that approval of this bill would destroy Ride the Wilds. Councilor Berthiaume moved that the City opposing this bill; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried. Mayor Grenier commented that any bill that takes away the local authority is not a good bill.

HB 683 relative to the rights of property owners abutting certain highways and rail trails will be reviewed next week

HB 699 relative to discounts for OHRV and snowmobile registration discourages club membership. Clubs do all the maintenance and creation of trails. Over time this bill would be detrimental to trails. Councilor Berthiaume moved with a second from Councilor Rozek to send a letter opposing HB 699. So moved, the motion carried.

Mr. Wheeler also noted that we are watching HB 392 that would require the northern New Hampshire correctional facility to make a PILT payment to the City and HB 635 enabling a payment in lieu of taxes for a combined heat and power agricultural facility. NC Growers, Mayor Grenier and the City Manager went to the hearing for HB 635 and it went well.

There are several education bills and there seems to be a consensus on freezing further loss of stabilization funds. Mayor Grenier said that he's taken a position that not only should the reductions be frozen, they should be restored to the level before the 4% reductions. That would give us back

\$879,000. Ms. Cascadden added that she and School Board Chair Nicole Plourde will attend the House Finance Committee to testify and students will also present their petitions. WMUR has asked for an interview. Mayor Grenier said that we cannot let up the pressure; we have too much to lose. He added that there are 12 or 13 school districts that have made presentations. Whatever they come up with has to make sense or the Governor won't sign. Mayor Grenier said that this will be his 8th trip to Concord. Ms. Cascadden noted that there is a lot of information on the Reaching Higher NH web site.

HB 700 relative to valuation of utility company assets for local property taxation which is the bill that came out of the ASB recommendations is another bill we are watching. Mayor Grenier informed the Council that the Governor and Council will be reappointing him to the Assessing Standards Board and Mr. Wheeler is his designee.

Ms. Cascadden stated that the School Department Budget public hearing is Thursday, 2/7 at 6:00 p.m. in the High School Library.

With 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.