

**City Council Work Session
February 25, 2019**

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Public Works Director Eric Grenier, Claire Stiles, Superintendent Corinne Cascadden, Ralph Collins, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Mayor Grenier asked to add two items to the agenda: Communication from Governor Sununu and Communication from Business View Magazine

Councilor Rozek moved to add the two items; Councilor Otis seconded and the motion carried.

City Auditors Report

The auditors will reschedule for another meeting. Due to high winds, they were not comfortable making the trip.

School Department Update on Reorganization

Ms. Cascadden reviewed the planned reorganization of the schools, closing Brown School and adapting the Middle School to accept K-5 and the high school to accept grades 6-12. There will be video clips posted on Facebook that will keep parents informed.

The district was reorganized because of decreasing enrollment; loss of State aid, over capacity at Brown, under building capacity at the high school. By restructuring, there will be two school buildings. The high school will have 680 students. Grades 6-8 will be upstairs and 9-12 will be on the ground level. Title I will be consolidated for a combined program.

There will be two student support centers. These have a veteran teacher in a room and at risk kids having a meltdown can go to the student support center for help. This method has changed the course of discipline. Afterschool programs tailored to age groups will continue. Special education programs will be aligned to fit student needs.

There are still some things to iron out such as having four school nurses. Entrance and dismissal times for the high school are set to be the same; however that is still being discussed and is subject to changed.

There is not a lot of change at Hillside. Cafeteria workers from Brown School will be moved to the high school.

With regard to transportation, the proposal is to offer free transport to students through 5th grade who live .6 miles from school. After 5th grade, there is a fee of \$100 per year for transportation; the second child is \$50 and additional children are free.

Building upgrades will be needed to include restroom renovations and rubberized stairwells. An additional lower handrail and enclosed staircases are also planned. Playground fencing is also needed as there are some kids that are a flight risk.

Parents and students will be invited to visit their next year's classrooms before the end of the year. Room assignments have been distributed.

Ms. Cascadden informed the Council that the School Board is looking for a replacement superintendent, as she has given her retirement notice. She said that she is very hopeful that something will happen at Brown School to turn it into a new community asset.

Legislation on School Funding

Ms. Cascadden stated that we need to keep the pressure on the Legislature to make changes to education funding. She highly praised Mayor Grenier for his advocacy in Concord adding that his presence in Concord is being noticed. Ms. Cascadden noted that she has been asked to be on a Planning team for a community projects series that WMUR is doing.

Mayor Grenier thanked Ms. Cascadden saying that through consistency she has mended fences between the Council and the Board of Education. He feels strongly that her legacy will be to have finally fixed school education funding. He added that he will be forever grateful for the service to the community and to the kids.

Ms. Cascadden announced that Communication Specialist Scott Spradling has been hired through the Nellie Mae Foundation and he will craft a framework to keep the communication regarding education funding going after the legislative session.

Councilor Remillard and Rozek also thanked Ms. Cascadden for all the work she has done and for joining the Council's efforts to reduce the budget. It has not gone unnoticed that information is shared with the city council.

Governor's Letter

Mayor Grenier informed the Council that the Governor asked for a shovel ready project. With the help of Public Works Director Eric Grenier, a project was quickly put together that would pave Hutchins Street, taking out the old asphalt and doing an overlay. The governor's budget would fund \$300,000 if it goes through as presented. Councilor Rozek commented that this happens because the Mayor is connected and respected in Concord.

Business View Magazine

Mr. Wheeler indicated that Business View Magazine has been working with NHMA to focus on a community to do a set of articles. Things of interest to them are OHRVs, biomass, and what goes on in the city. They have a draft letter that would serve to sell advertising when the article runs. They seem excited to hear about the things we are doing.

Adjournment

There being no further business in Work Session, Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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