

City Council Work Session
March 18, 2019

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Kate Miller, Donahue, Tucker & Ciendella, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Claire Stiles, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*, Steve Bissonnette, *Berlin Reporter*

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

He asked to add HB592 to the agenda and Councilor Higbee so moved; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried.

Non-Meeting

Councilor Theberge moved to go into Non Meeting under RSA 91 A:2 (b); Councilor Remillard seconded and all voted affirmatively by roll call.

Councilor Theberge moved to come out of non-meeting; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried. Ms. Miller left the meeting at this time.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (d) Land Matters. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Land matters were discussed. No decisions were made.

Councilor Theberge moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to come out of non-public session; so moved, the motion carried unanimously.

Economic Development and Marketing Strategy Update

Ms. Laflamme reported that Camoine Associates was chosen as the firm to conduct the BIDPA driven Economic Development and Marketing Strategy. On April 4, they will be in Berlin for their first site visit. There will be a Steering Committee of BIDPA and internal stakeholders that will meet during the day and in the evening, there will be a community workshop for asset gathering.

BIDPA wanted the strategy to be based in data, such as demographics, sociographic and national data. Camoine will review the real estate market and what is going on in rural economic development. Their focus has been on communities that are similar to us and they will be looking at best practices to identify what works overall and what would work for Berlin.

They will be looking at land use policies and incentives and how those work for or against us. Our regulations are less restrictive than those of southern NH; however they are more restrictive than some of the local rural towns north of us. The group will also look at workforce data, and they will create an action map that will be our tool to use. They will come up with a marketing budget, and work plan as well as tools to assess what we are doing, and how to evaluate ourselves. BIDPA went into this

knowing there is more work to do after the strategy. Mike Caron, BIDPA Chair wanted the board to be ready to spend the money to take the next step.

Starting on Monday, there will be bi-weekly phone calls to keep the project on track. Councilor Remillard asked if the group will be looking at attractions for Main Street. Ms. Laflamme noted that they will look at the overall community and measure that with trends that are working in other communities. We don't want them to pigeonhole their focus; however Camoine did make note of the downtown as they arrived in Berlin.

Councilor Remillard confirmed that this is totally funded by BIDPA. Ms. Laflamme reported that the City's Master Plan will be ten years old next year. We will be able to implement much of the information gathered here as the economic development chapter of the master plan.

Community Profiles Update

The UNH Community Profile program provides an opportunity for communities to affirm strengths, identify opportunities for change, envision a vibrant future, create action plans, and develop local leaders and action groups to pursue this vision for the future. One of the major outcomes of the Community Profile is more citizen participation in the community. This is also being done as a precursor to master planning. People have been invited to a community meeting to hear about the process. People from all different walks have been invited. An effort was made to engage individuals who are not on board with what we do. The Chair and Vice Chair of the planning board are involved. The information gathered will be used as data and UNH will come up with a document that will be included in master planning.

Scenic Byways

Mr. Wheeler stated that, less than a year ago, Carl Martland, Chair of the NCC Scenic Byways Committee came to a Council meeting and from him, we learned that a section of Rt. 110 had been redesignated and reassigned to Route 16. The City supplied letters to NCC and to NHDOT asking that Route 110 be designated as its own scenic byway.

Scenic byways come with signage requirements that the City has to pay for and we are now questioning whether we really want to put that designation on Route 110. It is now time to apply for redesignation and because Route 110 is developed, it will take a lot of work to convince the DOT that it is a scenic byway. There is the consideration of what we would get from the designation since traveling scenic byways is not the way people travel these days. Reapplying would mean holding public hearings; if approved we would have to conform to restrictions on signs and in the opinion of staff, there is no actual benefit. If, in the future, we find that there would be a benefit, we could apply then.

Alex Belenz from North Country Council has offered to come and talk about the process. Councilor Berthiaume moved to suspend the request until the study with Camoine is complete; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried.

Mr. Belenz will come to Council in the near future to talk about the 2020 TAP submission and transportation issues. North Country Council is also working with the placement of traffic counters that would capture the atv count. Berlin would be a test community. Mayor Grenier would like North

Country Council to speak to the City's projects on the Ten Year Plan in a joint meeting with the Planning Board and Council.

HB 592

Mayor Grenier reported that he got a call from Buddy Dion from the NH Off Highway Vehicle Association regarding HB592. There has been a lot of discussion in the House Transportation Committee about 12 year olds on ATVs. Berlin is seen as a pilot since we implemented an ordinance that in order to ride on City streets youth have to be accompanied by someone 21 years or older. Mr. Dion asked if Berlin would be willing to contact the Transportation Committee to recommend an amendment to HB592. Council members suggested that 12 to 16 year olds have to be with a parent, grandparent or legal guardian. This would be a compromise by the atv community to add another layer of responsibility.

There being 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.