

**City Council Work Session
November 4, 2019**

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

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Chair of AVCOC Board of Directors Mark Belanger, Executive Director of Berlin Housing Authority Mary Jo Landry, Richard Laflamme, Jamie Welsh, Gina Welch, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center

Mark Belanger, Chair of the Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce presented a concept for having a visitor center that would be owned and operated by the Chamber. He asked if the Council would consider gifting the property where Sunny Rooms was located to the Chamber. The proposed visitor center would pay taxes. The Chamber would seek to build using grant money and they would vacate their current location. The building would be staffed and would be the new office. The proposal is contingent on funding.

Mr. Wheeler noted that the property has been put out to bid twice with no bidders. Councilor Remillard moved to donate the land at 1051 Main Street to the Androscoggin Valley Chamber of Commerce with the understanding that they will build a welcome center; Councilor Rozek seconded the motion.

Mayor Grenier gave Mr. Belanger credit for leading the group that is creating an economic subset in the City. He noted that there are 15 people to thank who get little or no recognition. In the vote that followed, all voted in favor of the motion; Councilor Berthiaume abstained.

Other

Mr. Wheeler reported that, in an order, the BTLA is giving the city until 11/18 to supply them with a list of material and they have a hearing scheduled in Concord for December 9. The hearing will address allegations made in a letter to the BTLA dated 7/22/19 from Steve Dion. The BTLA is directing the City Manager and members of the Board of Assessors to go to the hearing. Councilor Higbee commented that the BTLA seems focused on why we did the statistical evaluation in the first place. He asked if that is a concern. Mr. Wheeler replied that the City took every reasonable step prior to initiating the update, including getting the approval of the DRA.

Non Public Session

Councilor Morgan moved to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II(d) Land Matters; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Land matters were discussed.

Councilor Higbee moved with a second from Councilor Morgan to come out of non-public session. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Remillard moved to seal the minutes as releasing them would make any action taken ineffective; Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried.

There being no further business in work session, Mayor Grenier moved on to the Regular Meeting, after a 5 minute break.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

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