

**City Council Work Session
November 18, 2019**

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

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Finance Director Patty Chase, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, Richard Laflamme, Jamie Welsh, Gina Welch, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Proposed Tax Rate

Mr. Wheeler brought up the DRA's web portal to show the proposed tax rate. Using \$800,000 of the City's UFB would bring the tax rate to \$39.82. Mayor Grenier explained that the County tax went up from the budgeted amount which was triggered by the equalization rate. The County raised the same amount as last year.

Councilor Rozek asked how the revaluation, to be done in 2020, will affect these numbers. Mayor Grenier replied that the reval will be reflected in the second tax bill which will be about this time next year. Councilor Otis asked how this fits with recommended standards. Berlin's UFB will be 3.55% which is \$300,000 less than what the DRA recommends. Councilor Higbee commented that he is accustomed to seeing a UFB of 5% and he hopes that it will be built up in coming years. He added that he will support this because he sees the significance of going over \$40 per thousand. Mayor Grenier commented that if funding comes in as proposed, there would be an additional \$2 million next year and the City would be able to address school issues and Hutchins Street.

Councilor Rozek noted that the Council has not seen how much money was saved by closing Brown School. He questioned whether it is reasonable to ask. Mayor Grenier proposed asking this School Board before the turnover to a new Board occurs in January. He also proposed that when Brown School is sold, the revenue should go to the School Department for Capital Improvements.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to authorize the City Manager to contact the DRA and confirm a tax rate of \$39.82. So moved, the motion carried.

Resolutions

Mr. Wheeler explained that \$112,665.42 is needed for plow equipment. In Resolution 2019-29 the City would be re-appropriating that amount from the account created for Hutchins Street. Money for an administrator and a school nurse at the school is also proposed to be re-appropriated from a Public Works Capital account to the schools. Resolution 2019-30 affirms that the City will continue to standardize plow equipment with John Deere. Resolution 2019-31 authorizes paying for a loader from the sewer fund. Councilor Higbee confirmed that the sewer budget can afford this purchase.

Transfer of Land to AV Fish & Game Association

Ms. Laflamme explained that the City was granted the property on East Milan Road from the Conservation Fund in May. York Land Services was hired to survey and carve out land for Androscoggin Valley Fish and Game Club who will continue to use it as a gun range. The property was leased to them until the Deed was prepared. If the Club should want to dispose of the property, they have to give the

City the right to first refusal for the same consideration; then offer it to State Fish and Game. If neither the City or Fish and Game want the property, it could sell. Mr. Wheeler asked for a motion to authorize him to sign and transfer the parcel to the AV Fish and Game Association. Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Otis to authorize the City Manager to transact a deed transfer for a portion of land donated to the City by the Conservation Fund to the Androscoggin Valley Fish and Game Association.

Non Public Session

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

Land matters were discussed.

Councilor Higbee moved to come out of non-public session; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried.

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

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

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.