

City Council Work Session
March 13, 2017

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

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Health & Welfare Director Angela Martin Giroux, Debra Sheehan, Community Development Director Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Elaine Riendeau, Airport Manager Eric Kaminsky, Finance Director Patty Chase, and Barbara Tetreault *Berlin Daily Sun*.

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

Councilor Rozek moved to change the order of the agenda to accommodate guests and to allow the Airport Manager to present his budget first; Councilor Theberge seconded and the motion carried.

Gardening Grants

Debra Sheehan explained that she and Ms. Giroux want to apply for grants that would introduce youth to farming with the Youth Farm Outreach Program. The program would be for ages 8-12 and would promote year round gardening for a healthy lifestyle. Ms. Giroux noted that Berlin is a “food desert” meaning that fresh produce is not as available here as in other communities. This farming program would teach kids to be entrepreneurs growing their own produce to be sold in local stores. Ms. Sheehan noted that there is a lot of enthusiasm for the program in the after school program.

In response to Mayor Grenier’s question about what role the City will play in this, Ms. Giroux indicated that most grants do not require match and only the City’s support is needed at this time. The city would be the fiscal agent and they would provide the property to plant in. She added that the program could be self-sustaining by the end of the grant period.

Mayor Grenier confirmed that Health and Welfare will administer the grant. Councilor Remillard moved to support the Youth Farm Outreach Program; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded. In discussion Mayor Grenier asked if there would be an administrative fee to cover time and Ms. Giroux stated that it will depend on the grant. Mr. Wheeler indicated that as particular grants are applied for and received, a resolution will come to the Council. All voted in favor of the motion; Councilor Otis abstained. Ms. Giroux and Ms. Sheehan left the meeting at this time, 6:45 p.m.

Budget Session

65-434 Airport - Mr. Kaminsky reported that this year’s budget is similar to other years. The CIP projects are always 5% money. The City pays the bills ahead of time and then they are reimbursed 95% of the project costs. The electrical upgrade and hazard beacon is the current Capital project funded by the FAA.

The Jet A and 100 low lead line items are estimated each year based on sales from the previous year. Mayor Grenier asked how much inventory is in the tanks and Mr. Kaminsky noted there is approximately

2400 gallons of low lead and 4000 gallons of Jet A making it unlikely that any more fuel will need to be purchased in this fiscal year.

Mayor Grenier asked about the grass cutting that was being done to increase revenue. Mr. Kaminsky reported that he still cuts the grass for Public Works on the landfills; however BIDAPA no longer has any parcels at the industrial park to mow.

Councilor Remillard asked about heating oil and Mr. Kaminsky noted that in addition to heating oil, the budget amount is used to buy firewood.

Mr. Kaminsky reported that he will be stepping down from his position in the spring. The position will be advertised and there will be a hiring process to have a new manager by the end of the fiscal year. Mayor Grenier noted that the Balsams project has gained some momentum and he would like to see the Balsams' management working with Berlin Airport. Councilor Theberge asked what is needed to make the airport more profitable and Mr. Kaminsky replied, the airport needs more fuel sales in addition to maintaining the level of service that is there now.

Budget Memo

Mr. Wheeler distributed a cover memo for the 2018 budget that was distributed at last Monday's meeting. He noted that there is a summary for all budget items that shows the increase or decrease in cost. There are two major impacts with the first being funding the 20 SAFER grant positions in the entire budget. The other item is debt service for Route 16.

The projected tax rate in this budget is \$43.78 which is an increase of \$4.59 per thousand. This rate was achieved by using \$500,000 of unappropriated fund balance and \$190,000 that was budgeted for the fuel farm.

Councilor Nelson questioned the results of a fire department staffing task force and Mr. Wheeler indicated that the task force did not find a way to staff differently than what we currently do. The focus has now been shifted to emergency medical services.

01-402 - Administration

Mr. Wheeler went through the accounts indicating that there has not been much change. Workers Comp and retirement costs have resulted in a minor increase.

Mayor Grenier asked if the City Manager could identify \$50,000 to cut from this budget for consideration. Councilor Theberge asked to see what impact a reduction of \$100,000 would have.

01-416 IT

Ms. Laflamme reported that the computer software line item has an increase of \$20,000. After three years, the software licenses have to be updated. SNS has also been helping us address a critical storage issue. Updating the city's software which was out of date, forced us to upgrade the databases and that took up a lot of storage capacity.

Councilor Remillard asked if each department should contribute through its budget and Ms. Laflamme replied that it's easier to see what we are spending by having all IT in one centralized budget. Councilor Rozek mentioned that he wanted to see the mileage for the gas purchasing with the vehicle, mileage and driver identified.

Councilor Theberge asked if the printers are laser or ink jet and Ms. Laflamme stated that we have both. Departments purchase printers depending on the volume of what they print.

21 BIDPA

Ms. Laflamme reported that BIDPA's budget is identical to last year. They are waiting for the sale of land to North Country Growers to anticipate their next move. Mayor Grenier asked about putting up a spec building. In discussion it was determined that there are pros and cons to putting up a building. If a company is looking for something specific, it's possible to spend a lot of money on the wrong specs. Mr. Wheeler suggested coming up with plans that are ready to be built with utilities already planned. If a prospect comes forward, a metal building can be put up quickly.

01-425 Housing

The housing budget includes city owned property costs, mowing or plowing of city owned properties. Housing is no longer staffed. Three buildings were demolished in the fall. Once the sales study is available for review and the tax deed list is done, we can decide how much more effort needs to be put in to demolition. Ms. Chase stated that she does tax deeding in May and she will bring a list to the Council in April.

Funding for Wastewater Projects

Mayor Grenier distributed information that says two of Berlin's waste water projects that were delayed in their funding are in the budget to be funded.

Non-Public Session

At 7:40 p.m. Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 li(d) Land Matters. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Ms. Laflamme reported that Senator Hassan's office is willing to pay \$10.25 per square foot annually for space for an office at City Hall. There is a lease that would go for the six years of the Senator's term. They are willing to rent both spaces for \$320 per month. They will pay their own phone and internet.

Councilor Rozek commented that the space is the Mayor's office and if he is willing to give it up, then he would support. Mayor Grenier noted that the rent would pay for 25% of the building's heating costs. The consensus of the Council was to lease the space.

At 7:50 p.m. Councilor Rozek moved to come out of non-public session; Councilor Morgan Allain seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Council Nelson to adjourn the meeting at this time. So moved, the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant