

City Council Work Session
March 1, 2021

At 6:30 p.m. Mayor Grenier opened the meeting. Due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04 this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;*

We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656, meeting ID 820 5450 0256; Passcode 931939, or by clicking on the City Council agenda on the City's website, www.berlinnh.gov.

- b) *Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:*

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have been provided on the City of Berlin's website of the Council at City Council-agendas

- c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:*

If anybody has a problem, please call Pam Laflamme at 603-752-8587 or e-mail at: plaflamme@berlinnh.gov

- d) *Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting*

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. By roll call, each member is to state their presence, and whether there is anyone in the room during this meeting, which is required under the Right to Know law.

Present at roll call were: Councilors Remillard, Higbee, Eastman, Theberge, Berthiaume, Morgan, and Otis who acknowledged that they were alone in their respective rooms; Mayor Grenier was at City Hall with City Manager James Wheeler. Councilor Rozek was absent at roll call; however he entered the meeting at 6:44 p.m.

Others present: City Manager Jim Wheeler, Community Development Director Pam Laflamme, JD Girard, School Board Member Nathan Morin, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, School Department Finance Director Marion Moore, and Dan Whittet

FY22 City Manager's Budget Submission

Mr. Wheeler noted that the binders are available at City Hall. The projected tax rate increase is \$8.27 per thousand. Education funding is still an unknown. There is \$2 million less in school funding and a budget request increase of \$1.8 million resulting in \$3.2 million that can be attributed to the schools. This equates \$6.76 per thousand in itself.

There are several capital projects including a Fire Department ladder truck and some critical equipment for Public Works. These were left in the budget because it is up to Council to prioritize the capital projects. The NHRS employer contribution is going up \$634,000; and there is a substantial County tax increase that make up the increase.

In prior years every .25 equaled \$100,000 on the budget; it is now .20 for every \$100,000

Mayor Grenier reported that there is a lot of work to do. Councilor Rozek entered the meeting at this time 6:44 p.m. Councilor Eastman stated that he is anticipating and assuming that all department heads will prioritize. There is a lot of work to do. Councilor Rozek asked if there is a line of communication with the Governor and Mayor Grenier confirmed that there is not. He added that he won't put the burden on the taxpayers. It's important to get new business in Berlin to help with the tax base. Mayor Grenier said that there are 14 weeks before the budget is passed. Thursday, the Board of Education will present their budget.

Pending Legislation

Mr. Wheeler explained that HB446 is to establish a study committee to study ATV use on class 5 & 6 roads. The report would be due in November of 2021. Most public streets in the urban compact in Berlin are Class 5. Representative Eamon Kelley is on the committee that is hearing the bill. Councilor Eastman questioned the intent and Mr. Wheeler said that it is to study the effects of vehicles on the roads. Mayor Grenier added that a number of residents have fought having recreational vehicles on their roads. We need to be aware of possible back door restrictions.

Councilor Remillard said that fear gets people to team up and they sometimes get a result. Councilor Higbee said that he hopes open minded people will be on the committee and that they will come up with recommendations that can be used.

Sewer Task Force

Mayor Grenier indicated that he met with George Bald, Beano Lamontagne, the Town of Gorham and the Management of Gorham Tissue mill. The mill has significant plans to reduce operational costs. One of the ideas is to reduce the cost of effluent discharges used in the process. They want to put a committee together to see what is possible. Mayor Grenier nominated Mike Perreault, Henry Noel and Jon Goodreau who would be good reps of the city with no political end game. Recommendations would have to come back to council and to the Town of Gorham for review. Councilor Rozek moved with a second from Councilor Higbee to accept the Mayor's nominations of Mike Perreault, Henry Noel, and

Jon Goodreau on the Sewer Task Force representing Berlin. So moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Other

There were no items in Other.

Nonpublic Session.

Councilor Theberge moved to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:(d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community and (e) Consideration or negotiation of pending claims. Councilor Morgan seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Council discussed a particular property. There were no motions made in non-public.

Councilor Higbee moved to come out of nonpublic session; Councilor Rozek seconded and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

At 7:25 p.m. 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