

**Proposed FY 2024 City of Berlin Budget
Public Hearing – May 30, 2023**

Mayor Grenier opened the duly scheduled and advertised public hearing at approximately 6:32 p.m. Present were Mayor Grenier, Councilors Eastman, Robert Theberge, Higbee, Morgan, Remillard, Morency, and Roland Theberge. Also present: City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr, Finance Director Holly Larsen, Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Police Chief Daniel Buteau, Assistant Police Chief Nathan Roy, Dispatch Supervisor Jennifer Cloutier, Administrative Assistant Kimberly Bijeau, Cpl. Noah Dumas, Fire Chief James Watkins, Recreation Director DJ Johnson, Library Director Ann Brungot, Health and Welfare Director Angela Martin-Giroux, Airport Director Marcel Leveille, Rep. Corinne Cascadden, Business Administrator Marion Moore, Jeanne Charest, Margo Sullivan, Lori Korzen, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Mayor Grenier advised those in attendance that this hearing is an opportunity for the public to comment on the budget. Mayor Grenier advised that the House of Representatives has included \$800,000 in state aid to education for Berlin in their budget, however the Senate included only \$413,000 in their budget. Mayor Grenier advised that this is a significant source of revenue that could be used if passed.

City Manager Warren reviewed the highlights in the FY2024 budget. Mr. Warren advised that the total budget is \$40,320,798.00, which is an increase of \$1,357,101.000 from the FY2023 budget. Mr. Warren stated that an additional \$16,000 was added by the Council, which is not included in this total. Mr. Warren noted that the goal is to ensure that the City can deliver the services that it presently offers while being fiscally conservative. Mr. Warren stressed that underfunding Capital Improvement items is not sustainable on items such as retaining walls, drainage, and Police Department and Fire Department Capital Improvements. Mr. Warren advised that local, state, and federal revenues will allow the tax rate to remain flat, with the use of fund balance. Any additional revenues received will be used to offset the amount used from the undesignated fund balance. Mr. Warren stated that the estimated revenues in the FY2024 budget are \$18,685,724.00, which is not from taxes, but from fees and registrations. The expenses as presented are \$40,304,377.00, which leaves \$21,677,000.00 to raise. They will use \$2.03 million from the fund balance, which leaves \$19,647,000.000 to be raised through taxation. Estimating the MS1 valuation to increase by 1%, the tax rate would be \$27.26, which is the same as last year's rate.

Mayor Grenier read the Proposed FY2024 Budget into the record, and advised the public that they could comment on any section presented.

TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT	\$ 2,273,303.00	\$ 2,600,104.00
TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY	\$ 6,895,313.00	\$ 7,074,498.00

Mayor Grenier advised that recruitment in public safety is a challenge, as the state is requiring employees to work longer and pay more for retirement, which makes a career in law enforcement less attractive. Mayor Grenier noted that we are lucky to have a strong police force.

TOTAL HOUSING DIVISION	\$ 96,016.00	\$ 92,909.00
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TOTAL CODE DIVISION	\$ 126,114.00	\$ 130,048.00
TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS	\$ 3,138,666.00	\$ 3,480,047.00

Mayor Grenier advised that Public Works includes AVRRDD fees, street maintenance, equipment for Public Works, and increases in fuel and oil.

TOTAL COMMUNITY SERVICES	\$ 872,947.00	\$ 932,307.00
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Mayor Grenier noted the strong relationship between the City Welfare Department and Tri-County CAP, which has helped to keep the city welfare budget down.

TOTAL CITY DEBT AND CIP	\$ 1,887,072.00	\$ 1,397,285.00
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Mayor Grenier noted that they have a couple of years left on a bond from the Route 110 project, and once this is paid they will be able to do more work on the city streets. Mayor Grenier also noted that the city's debts are low.

TOTAL SCHOOL GENERAL FUND	\$ 21,215,921.00	\$ 22,108,300.00
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Mayor Grenier advised that the Board of Education is returning \$1 million to the city from the current budget which will be used to keep the tax rate down. Mayor Grenier noted that the relationship between the Board of Education and the City Council has been phenomenal and thanked School Board member Jeanne Charest, who was in attendance, for the work that the Board has done.

01-407 COUNTY TAX	\$ 2,388,686.00	\$ 2,500,000.00
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Mayor Grenier advised that the County Tax is an estimate, as the DRA will not have rates until September. Mayor Grenier noted that Berlin's portion of the County Tax has started to rise, from about 19% years ago to 22-23%, however Berlin is about 50% of the county's tax burden.

01-414 TRANSFER OUT	\$ 69,659.00	\$ 5,300.00
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TOTAL CITY GENERAL FUND	\$ 38,963,697.00	\$ 40,320,798.00
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OTHER CITY FUNDS

FUND 10 SCHOOL EDUCATION GRANTS	\$ 8,751,273.00	\$ 7,975,273.00
11-464 SCHOOL FOOD SERVICES	\$ 747,244.00	\$ 755,772.00

Mayor Grenier noted that the food services help students from needy families, and that about half of the students in Berlin get free and reduced lunches.

19-438 RECREATION ACTIVITY FUND	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00
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Mayor Grenier advised that the Recreation Activity Fund is for fees from activities.

21-402 BERLIN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT	\$ 333,444.00	\$ 335,684.00
FUND 30 GRANT FUND	\$ 1,221,406.00	\$ 404,613.00

Mayor Grenier noted that grants will include the new fire truck and pumper.

60-432 SEWER FUND TOTAL	\$ 3,518,056.00	\$ 3,692,436.00
63-437 CATES HILL LANDFILL	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00

Mayor Grenier advised that the landfill account is for monitoring of the Cates Hill Landfill, which closed years ago.

65-490 BERLIN AIRPORT Total w/ Capital	\$ 549,074.00	\$ 317,909.00
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Mayor Grenier advised the Airport total does not include revenues, just expenditures. Mayor Grenier also advised that the National Guard will be training this coming weekend.

Jeanne Charest asked if the City had any plans to look at solar power. City Manager Warren advised that the Androscoggin Valley Energy Committee has been looking at providers, and they have considered installing them on city buildings or city property. Mr. Warren advised they would put out Requests for Proposals to get the best deal.

There being no further comments, Mayor Grenier thanked everyone for attending. Mayor Grenier declared the public hearing closed at 7:01 p.m. Mayor Grenier advised that the final vote on the budget will be held on June 19, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shelli Fortin
City Clerk