




Memo

To: Berlin City Council
From: Jim Wheeler, City Manager
Date: 03-5-2018
Re: City Manager's Report

1. We received two bids on 650 Blais Street with the high bid of \$22,100 from Vivian Kenison. The bid tabulation sheet is attached. There were no bids on 723 Third Avenue or 340 Church Street.
2. There was a Skatepark Design Workshop Thursday, February 22nd beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Berlin High School Cafeteria. Spohn Ranch conducted the workshop which was attended by interested youth and adults. Spohn Ranch will continue taking public input through a Facebook page located at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BerlinNHskatepark/>
3. A Minor Subdivision plan was heard at the Milan Planning Board Meeting on March 1st to accommodate a sale of land from the BAA property to Mr. Bob Chapman. The plan was approved and we are currently awaiting recording information. This is expected to be one of the final steps before closing on the sale.
4. We are looking for nominations for the Berlin Volunteer Award Tree. If you know someone in the community that is making a difference with their volunteerism, send in a nomination by March 16th to Terry Letarte at tletarte@berlinnh.gov. Here is a link to the [nomination form](#).
5. There will be a lecture and book signing on Wednesday, March 14th (which is a new date as March 7 was postponed due to snow) at 6:00 p.m. at the White Mountains Community College. Ty Gagne will be there to sign his book "Where You'll Find Me". This event is sponsored by the College and the Berlin and Gorham Public Libraries.
6. Berlin EMS sent in their Annual Report. Attached is the discussion portion of their report. The audited financials are not included simply to reduce the bulk of this report,
7. The Hillside Avenue Bridge is out for bid at this time with bids due March 15th. A copy of the ad is attached.
8. The City has RFPs out for services to conduct a Study to Determine the Feasibility of Fire Services and Emergency Medical Services Integration and Consolidation; Engineering Services for a City Hall Elevator and Engineering Services for a Downtown Snowmelt Infrastructure Feasibility Study. All of these responses are due Wednesday March 21st.
9. NH HB1381 relative to Utility valuation will be voted on the floor of the House sometime this week. It is expected this will happen on Thursday. Attached is an article regarding the bill from yesterday's Laconia Daily Sun.

Thursday, February 22, 2018 – 2:00 pm

[illegible]

Meet the Author



Ty Gagne

Where You'll Find Me

Risk, Decisions, and the Last Climb
of Kate Matrosova

Lecture and
Book Signing

Wednesday,

~~March 7, 2018~~

March 14, 2018

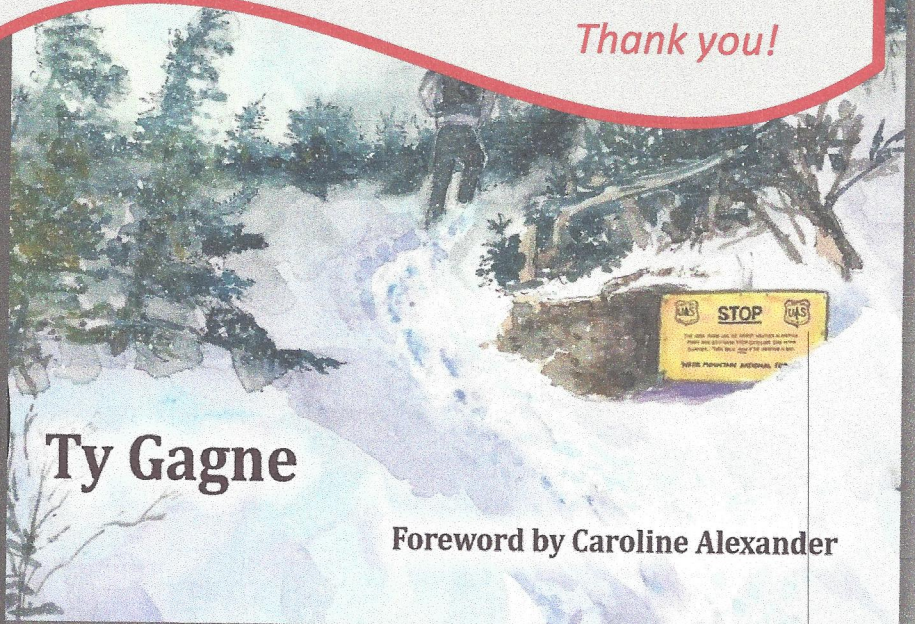
at 6 pm

White Mountains
Community
College
Fortier Library

PLEASE NOTE:

Due to inclement weather, this event has
been postponed one week. Please call
603-342-3087 with any questions.

Thank you!



Ty Gagne

Foreword by Caroline Alexander

2020 Riverside Drive Berlin, NH

603-342-3087



White
Mountains
Community College

Event Sponsors

Berlin Public Library
Gorham Public Library



182 East Mason Street | Berlin, NH 03570

Christopher Dubey

Owner/Manager

Phone: (603) 752 - 1020

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E Mail: mail@bemsinc.com

Berlin EMS Annual Report 2017

- 1. Call Stats**
- 2. Personnel**
- 3. Facilities**
- 4. Vehicles**
- 5. Communications**
- 6. Equipment and Supplies**
- 7. Financial**
- 8. Projections**
- 9. Other Business**

1. Call Statistics:

	2017	2016	2015
Total callouts:	1771	1721	1748
No transports:	365	385	335
Routine:	182	201	232
Emergency:	1224	1135	1181
Calls with transport:	1406	1336	1413

During the calendar year, 2016, overall call volume maintained roughly the same levels as previous years. Unfortunately, while totals remained the same, there was a corresponding increase in no transport calls, and a decrease in paying callouts. This will be touched on more in the financial section of this report.

Changes in the surrounding communities have resulted in the overall landscape of EMS in our area becoming more dynamic. Gorham EMS had added another truck, and shifted more of their focus to staffing transfers. The effect on Berlin EMS has been that long distance transfers, traditionally a large source of revenue, have happened less frequently. In past years, Gorham EMS has had difficulty staffing Gorham resident's needs to travel to other hospitals from AVH. Being able to do that has meant that less often, Berlin EMS has been able to pick up those revenue generating transfers. In the middle of 2017, that pattern changed.

Milan Ambulance has undergone a change in their directorship. Although they have been able to staff some of their calls, this company has still been covering requests for ambulance services in Milan and Dummer often. There has been no effort to formalize any type of relationship with Berlin EMS. Should said relationship be formalized, the City of Berlin could benefit financially. As of now, there does not seem to be any desire from said communities to make that happen.

During the year, due to the changing landscape of the Berlin-Gorham-Milan EMS dynamic underwent many changes. Though efforts were made to initiate an open discussion about the dynamic shift, no real traction was gained.

In short, Berlin EMS, as a company, is currently undergoing challenges on multiple levels, and adjustments are required. Although we are in the process of re-designing our plan, the needed adaptations, due to the changing landscape, are proving to be difficult.

2. Personnel:

Recruiting and retaining personnel, although showing promise for the first half of the year, became a significant challenge during the second half. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, we are seeing the full impact of the NH Bureau of EMS undergoing some policy changes regarding licensure, having added additional requirements for new candidates to become licensed providers. This, coupled with additional standards for instructor requirements has made it extremely difficult to hold an EMS class in our area. Whereas, previously, a service needed to have a licensed instructor on staff, maintaining said instructor's license, and the additional requirements of additional instructors has made training new candidates a challenge, particularly in the north country.

Efforts to discuss this shortage, and develop a plan to have coordinated EMS classes in the area have been met with a lack of interest and momentum. Shortages of interested students seems to be the most glaring challenge. Licensed providers with a national registry, who have applied for positions here, are having to undergo a state and federal background check. This background check is estimated to take two weeks, but, in our experience, it has taken over a month. This makes hiring an out of state, though nationally licensed provider, an increased challenge.

Secondly, the new requirements have resulted in a premium being placed on attracting already licensed candidates to other services within the state. Many organizations have openly advertised in local periodicals, offering pay rates much higher than what Berlin EMS offers. Although we are of the belief that, when our benefit package is considered, the wage is competitive, many potential providers do not subscribe to that philosophy, and choose to focus on the hourly rate, and some of our staff have elected to pursue positions with other EMS agencies which offer a better rate.

The solution of offering a higher wage is, of course, popular among the providers, however, every additional dollar per hour which this company could conceivably pay a new hire is approximately \$48,000 in pre-tax money to the total payroll expense of the company, we are not in a position to be able to do that and financially survive.

Thirdly, the EMS system in general can be a difficult career path for some, and some of our employees have elected to pursue other career options in different fields.

Lastly, the physical demands on our providers take their toll, and we have lost one of our key people to disability. In August, one of our key people was injured lifting a heavy patient who required transport. Although proper lift mechanics were used for a four person stretcher lift, the provider experienced an injury. Although we were optimistic about their return to work post-rehabilitation, we have been informed that the position was resigned.

In previous years, the loss of an employee, for whatever reason has been covered by the remaining employees gathering up additional shifts, with administrators covering more shifts than usual.

Ordinarily, we, as a company, have dealt with the departure of personnel by advertising and a solid 'word of mouth' about our organization, maintaining a pool of part time personnel from which to hire, but in recent years, the requirements for maintaining an EMS license have become such that many potential EMTs have not had the level of interest. This has significantly affected all of the surrounding EMS agencies, and we are all trying to adapt to the changing conditions.

We are currently aggressively recruiting to fill the positions and interviewing qualified candidates, Berlin EMS is optimistic that some of them will be a good fit for the organization, but it is a challenge. Since the departure of three full time employees in December, we have a void to fill. Promising applications have been received and follow through with, and we have interviewed some applicants. As licensed providers are at a premium, available candidates have many choices for where they can choose to work. The process is on-going, with three additional applications coming in during the first weeks of February. We are optimistic that our staffing issues will be solved in a satisfactory manner soon.

It is also worth noting that the Fire Department has been extraordinarily helpful in this time. As they have taken on a more active role in EMS operations within the city, and hired some licensed providers as part of their latest hiring grant, the company has been offering them an opportunity to work with us and 'learn the skills'. An incredible positive benefit of this has been that some of the EMS licensed fire fighters have taken per diem positions within our organization. We are grateful for this, but not of the belief that any will be leaving the Fire Department for employment here. Still, it is a huge benefit to us that they have generously agreed to help us through this challenge.

Berlin EMS is also aggressively reviewing internal policies and benefits to attempt to evolve with the changing of the times. One of the largest challenges is that, although our yearly payment is very similar to what other services are offering, our hourly rate is less, which has proven to be a hindrance. Simply raising the hourly rate to be competitive results in a concern of the company running out of financial resources.

As it is, at the writing of this report, we are desperately short on people, and stretched very thin.

3. Facilities:

Last year, Berlin EMS had a problem with our sewage, resulting in some needed, costly repairs to the building. During this year, we completed that project, and the repaving associated with it.

Our overhead garage doors are nearing the end of their life cycle. Estimates to replace them are currently at about \$6000.00. This project will happen as surplus funds become available, but it is not a priority.

Berlin EMS has been in contact with some local contractors to provide some upgrades and remodeling to one of our sleeping quarters. The area known as the bunk room is in need of new sheet rock, flooring, insulation, and ceiling, as well as a rebuild of our bunk beds. At the time of this writing, said project is underway.

Our phone system continues to serve our needs.

Berlin EMS has also installed additional security measured including a closed circuit camera system on our lot and front doors. This has been done at the suggestion of our insurance company, as certain substances kept within this building have a potential to be burglarized. We are confident that the system meets our needs. We have also made the BPD aware as to the existence of the system as well as the use of any downloaded footage from it to assist with any investigation they may have regarding this building, or the street camera coverage that it provides.

4. Vehicles:

The company entered into a relationship with Global Emergency Vehicles out of Pennsylvania. GEV has taken possession of our four wheel drive vehicle to re-mount the action cab area onto a new vehicle. During this process, there was an understanding that the company would have access to a loaner vehicle, to utilize while said four wheel drive vehicle was remounted. The vehicle exchange happened in August.

Unfortunately, the vehicle which was given to us experienced a previously unknown mechanical failure within a week of its delivery, rendering it un-useable. As the building space at Berlin EMS has limitations, namely that a standard sized truck does not fit within the building, replacing it has been a challenge, resulting in Berlin EMS maintaining a fleet of only two vehicles between August and December. This has limited

our opportunities to provide second transfers from AVH, as well as secondary call coverage to surrounding communities when one of our trucks is out of town. The unavailability of a second transfer truck has resulted in a limitation on potential overtime for off duty personnel, the loss of generated income from which may have had a hand in losing some of our personnel.

On a positive note, GEV, in December, provided us with a four wheel drive unit which fits into our building, and will meet our needs until our new truck is finished and delivered.

The fleet is currently maintained privately by Mr. Auto, a Berlin based vehicle garage. The company has an excellent relationship with that organization, and trusts their judgement of what repairs are needed and warranted, as well as when we should begin to look at replacement. At this time, two of the vehicles in the fleet are nearing the end of their life cycles, and should look at being replaced at some point.

5. Communications:

Our current communications equipment is sufficient for our needs. Last year, the company purchased two new portable radios, and anticipates purchasing two more in the next year. The oldest, most damaged radios are rotated to backup use.

Berlin EMS is fortunate to have the working relationship we have with the Police and Fire departments, and we look forward to continuing this relationship in the coming year.

The switch over in our telecommunications system, mentioned in the Facilities section is also of note regarding communications.

MARS/AMB continues to provide our billing services, supplying us with laptop computers, which we have been able to utilize for other purposes as well, updating maps, keeping times, and having access to downloaded protocols have been useful to the emergency crews. Although there have been some challenges regarding some specific billing issues, MARS/AMB has shown sufficient progress in the last two months that we are confident they meet our needs and expectations.

6. Equipment and Supplies:

The community of Gorham, NH continues to maintain, as part of their fleet, a bariatric unit, which has been of significant assistance in dealing with some of our larger patients, as we have had a longstanding policy of not charging Gorham when they needed to use our Paramedics, they have reciprocated the courtesy by not attaching a charge to Berlin for the use of their specialized services.

It is the understanding of this organization, based on discussions with some of the state bureau members, and other, larger services that there may be a forthcoming mandate requiring power lift stretchers. It is our understanding that Vermont already has such a requirement. Berlin EMS is concerned about said mandate, for a variety of reasons, firstly, that the power lift cots, should they be required, may cost upwards of \$10,000 or higher to fit each vehicle. More importantly, there is a significant amount of substandard housing in Berlin, often requiring creative thinking to remove patients from their homes, down stairs, and onto the ambulance when they have a need for ambulance services.

While the power lift cots may assist with the lift, they become more of a problem when the time comes to get the stretcher into and out of narrow door frames and up and down stairs. The weight of the stretchers is significantly higher than the current models that we use, and they are unwieldy. For this reason, we hope that they are not required. Perhaps, in this case, we may be able to fulfill our obligations by having one such unit, instead of three.

Our defibrillators are also nearing the end of their realistic life cycle, with new units predicted to cost approximately \$30,000 each to upgrade to the newer models.

Some of our other equipment, stair chairs, and extrication equipment is in similar shape. Historically, we have resisted the trends and fads in the industry, such as Auto Pulse CPR boards, and instant tire spikes for the vehicles, instead observing how well they work out for other local services, and learning from their trials, but, that philosophy only goes so far.

Further discussion with Law Enforcement has opened up the possibility that we may be required to provide tactical body armor, as part of the 'warm zone' plan with regards to dealing with mass casualty, active shooter incidents. That possibility does not seem as likely as the other listed equipment issues, but we are monitoring it.

Acquiring new equipment can be a challenge, as our private service is generally ineligible for grants, and we have historically thought outside the box when it comes to facing the unique challenges the industry presents, but possible unfunded mandates for new equipment could render that strategy moot. As always, should we receive word that these required purchases may be coming, we will inform the city.

Laptop computers now accompany our service members on every call. In addition to completion of their required paperwork, the laptops have the ability to store information involving irregular medical emergencies, which may not be part of the routine work the responders do. Carefully integrating this new technology into our standard practices is considered part of the Berlin EMS long term plan. We would like to utilize new technology as it is proven, but cautious to not jump into the next fad, as doing so can be financially irresponsible.

7. Financial:

A copy of our 2017 financial reports is included with this report, there are several matters of note.

Our receivables have gone up by over \$100,000. Amortized expenses have had a corresponding jump as a result of our dealings in attempting to acquire a new vehicle.

Medical supplies have been significantly more expensive, general insurance, and maintenance on our fleet have also been notable increases. Many of the other expenses have been kept in check. Employee turnover has resulted in different people being assigned to supplies and maintenance. This generally results in an upward adjustment to expenses as fine tuning these areas can be a challenge to learn. Employee health insurance continues to be an upward expense due to the lack of stabilization nationally.

The company has renewed our contract with MARS/AMB for a lesser percentage fee than previously agreed to. The tradeoff was that, instead of getting four new computer

laptops for report writing, we will be acquiring two. We are in the process of cycling out the bottom performing units.

We continue to see an increase in other services taking transfers from AVH. The best possible explanation for this was our lack of a vehicle, and the smaller roster of people to staff a third truck with. We are optimistic that as our roster fills again, we will be able to accept second transfers and re acquire the revenue from them.

Cindy Elbert insurance services continues to handle our professional insurance needs, we are pleased with their performance.

8. Projections:

It is currently a time of transition in emergency medical services. The trend seems to be moving toward increasing the quality of the providers, their education level, and the standards that they are held to, both to acquire and maintain their licensure. This trend also seems to be applied to the training of the next generation of EMS providers. Unfortunately, for all of the forward thinking momentum this movement seems to be getting, the part that lacks is the plan for how to increase the wages of said providers.

Many surrounding communities are having the same challenges, and they are handling it in different ways. It is our belief that this change, regardless of the outcome, will be expensive. The push to have better paid EMS providers, coupled with the unfunded mandates regarding the purchase of new equipment, mean that the nature of this company's relationship with the city will be changing.

We understand that there has been some movement toward looking at Berlin Fire as an eventual possible replacement, as well as the ever present possibility that another company may show interest. As always, this company will cooperate in any way that we can to assist with the study and implementation of said plan. It is our firm belief that we are the correct fit for this community, but, should the city go in another direction, we are optimistic that such arrangements can be made that will be satisfactory for everyone involved.

9. Other Business:

Berlin Emergency Medical Services continues to do what we can to be a part of this community, covering non-profit events at no cost, and doing everything that we can to keep costs as low as possible when covering events that promote Berlin and help it to grow. Our involvement in the community is important to us, and we are proud to be a part of it.

**SECTION 000111
ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS**

Sealed Bids for the construction of the **Hillside Avenue Bridge #232/066 over Dead River**, located on Hillside Avenue in Berlin, NH, will be received by the City of Berlin, at Berlin City Hall (mailing address: 168 Main Street, Berlin, NH 03570), until **2:00 p.m.** local time on **March 15, 2018**, at which time the Bids received will be publicly opened and read. The Project generally consists of:

Removal and disposal of existing 12-ft long x 42-ft wide bridge with concrete abutments, steel stringers, and concrete deck; removal and disposal of two (2) sewer manholes and 330-ft ± of 8-in VC sewer pipe; installation and maintenance of water diversion structures and erosion control measures; construction of a new 2-lane bridge with sidewalks over a 16-ft channel including: cast-in-place concrete footings on ledge, a pre-cast concrete rigid frame bridge at the location of the existing bridge, and pre-cast concrete wingwalls; reconstruction of stream banks at wingwalls; installation and maintenance of temporary sewer service; installation of (1) sewer manhole and 330-ft± of 8-in PVC sewer pipe; coordination with Berlin Water Works and installation of 40 feet of 14-inch ductile iron water pipe; reconstruction of 355-ft± of 2-lane paved road, sidewalks, granite curb, pavement markings, catch basins, and drainage structures; installation of 165-ft± of steel T4 approach and bridge rail; re-establishment of turf, wetlands and landscaping.

Bids will be received for a single prime Contract. Bids shall be on a unit price basis.

The Issuing Office for the Bidding Documents is: HEB Engineers, Inc., PO Box 440, 2605 White Mountain Highway, North Conway, NH 03860, (603) 356-6936. Prospective Bidders may examine the Bidding Documents at the City of Berlin, the Issuing Office on Mondays through Fridays between the hours 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., and on www.constructionsummary.com and www.worksinprogress.com.

Bidding Documents may be obtained from the Issuing Office either via in-person pick-up or via mail, upon Issuing Office's receipt of payment for the Bidding Documents. The non-refundable cost of printed Bidding Documents is \$100 per set, payable to HEB Engineers, Inc. An additional charge of \$15 for regular postage or \$30 for overnight postage will be applied to requests for mailed documents. The date that the Bidding Documents are transmitted by the Issuing Office will be considered the prospective Bidder's date of receipt of the Bidding Documents. Partial sets of Bidding Documents will not be available from the Issuing Office. Neither Owner nor Engineer will be responsible for full or partial sets of Bidding Documents, including Addenda if any, obtained from sources other than the Issuing Office.

To be considered a responsive Bidder, the Contractor shall have obtained at least one set of paper plans and specifications from the Engineer (HEB Engineers, Inc.). The Bid will not be awarded to a Bidder unless a record for the purchase of at least one set of paper plans and specifications exists in the office of the Engineer. To meet this requirement and to establish the record of purchase, a prospective Bidder must purchase paper plans and specifications using the name that is to appear in the Bid Documents.

A pre-bid conference will be held at the site local time on **Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.** **Attendance at the pre-bid conference is mandatory.**

Bid security in the amount of **\$5,000** must be provided with each Bid in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders. The Successful Bidder shall furnish 100 percent Performance and Payment Bonds in accordance with the Instructions to Bidders (Section 00200). **Notice to Proceed is expected to be March 30, 2018 and construction is expected to start June 18, 2018. Project is subject to permitting, easements, and revisions. The Work is to be substantially complete by September 10, 2018 and completed and ready for final payment on or before October 1, 2018.** Liquidated damages of \$1,000 per day will commence on **September 11, 2018** for failure to complete the Work within the stipulated contract times.

Along with the Bid, the Bidder shall supply Certificates of Insurance to the Owner, as defined in the Supplementary Conditions. **The Owner and Engineer shall be named as additionally insured.**

The Bidder shall submit to the Owner and Engineer a list identifying all Subcontractors, Suppliers, and other persons and organizations that are to furnish principle items of material and equipment. The list shall be submitted with the Bid. The contractor shall also complete the Bidder Qualification Statement with supporting data (00410-B) and submit with the bid.

The apparent Successful Bidder shall submit a Qualifications Statement for each Subcontractor, Supplier and other person and organization requested, if any. The Qualification Statement(s) shall be submitted within five days of the Owner's or Engineer's request. Any such Subcontractor, Supplier, or other person or organization so identified may be revoked on the basis of reasonable objection after due investigation, in which case Contractor shall submit an acceptable substitute, without an increase in Bid price.

The Owner reserves the right to reject any and all Bids, to waive any and all informalities not involving price, time or changes in the Work, and to negotiate contract terms with the Successful Bidder, and the right to disregard all non-conforming, non-responsive, unbalanced or conditional Bids. Also, Owner reserves the right to reject the Bid of any Bidder if Owner believes that it would not be in the best interest of the Project to make an award to that Bidder, whether because the Bid is non-responsive, or the Bidder is unqualified or of doubtful financial ability, or fails to meet any other pertinent standard or criteria established by Owner. Discrepancies in the multiplication of units of Work and unit prices will be resolved in favor of the unit prices. Discrepancies between the indicated sum of any column of figures and the correct sum thereof will be resolved in favor of the correct sum.

Owner: **City of Berlin**
By: **HEB Engineers, Inc.**
Project Engineer: **Jason C. Ross, PE**
Date: **February 15, 2018**

END OF SECTION

March 4, 2018 Laconia Daily Sun

LACONIA — Legislation pending in the state House of Representatives would shift millions of dollars of taxes away from utilities and onto the backs of local taxpayers, City Manager Scott Myers said in a letter urging lawmakers to kill it.

Taxes are typically based on an appraisal of a property's fair market value, but House Bill 1381 would have appraisals of utility land take into account its original purchase price.

If a utility's property appraisal were to go down, its taxes would decline. Homeowners would presumably have to make up the shortfall.

Find more information about HB 1381, which has a House floor vote on Tuesday, by [clicking here](#).

The New Hampshire Municipal Association, in its Feb. 23 Legislative Bulletin, explained how the bill would work:

"So that piece of land that the electric company bought in 1920 for a dollar an acre, and that is now surrounded by land selling for \$50,000 an acre? It would be valued at a dollar an acre. Seriously."

Myers' letter was sent to local state representatives Charlie St. Clair, David Huot, Frank Tilton and Peter Spanos.

"Flawed taxation formulas that were made up on the fly will significantly reduce a municipality's ability to assess utility property at fair market value, and fair market value is the entire premise for quality assessment," Myers wrote.

The City Council gave Myers permission to send the letter.

Rep. Patrick Abrami, R-Stratham, the sponsor of the bill, acknowledged that the legislation has drawn criticism and said it will likely be tabled, meaning it would not progress, but he called Myers' letter "parochial."

Abrami said taxation of utility property varies greatly from one municipality to the next, and that has led to numerous lawsuits. Some municipalities set the tax too high and some too low. He contends his bill would standardize practices.

He also said that, when municipalities set taxes too high, the utility passes on those costs to ratepayers.

"Some towns are gaming it, assessing well above what the utility property is worth," he said.

"Let's say Laconia is playing it fair," he said. "What happens if other towns are overassessing utility property?"

Abrami said utility rates are set by the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission and property taxes are a "pass through," or an item automatically

added to the rate. That means that municipalities who overassess utility property can cause power rates to increase in nearby communities.

St. Clair, Huot and Spanos all said they'd vote against the legislation. Tilton did not return a call for comment.

"This seems like a plum for the utilities," St. Clair said. "There's no guarantee this will put money in citizens' pockets in terms of reduced rates. On the contrary, that's not normally the case.

"Any savings on our rates will quickly be erased on increased taxes to make up for deficits given to municipalities."