

# Memo

**To:** Mayor and Council  
**cc:** Department Heads  
**From:** Pat MacQueen  
**Date:** May 2, 2011  
**Re:** Manager's Report

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## **Primex getting out of Health Business**

At a meeting here with representative of Primex recently, we learned that Primex will be getting out of the health insurance business with the new fiscal year. As you know most of our groups presently receive health insurance through Primex with Harvard Pilgrim as the carrier. Primex was started by municipalities in 1979 as a means to provide Workers Compensation and Property Liability insurance to municipalities. It has grown over the years and added health insurance to its lines about ten years ago.

Primex has assured us that we should see no significant change in pricing or the plans other than we will be dealing directly with Harvard Pilgrim now rather than Primex. They have also assured us that should we wish to leave the program we can do so without penalty.

## **Bickford Place**

It is pretty hard to miss, but if you haven't driven down Main or Pleasant lately, you should so that you can see the final construction of Bickford Place. As of today the steel is all up and the new canopy and most of the lighting is in place. It is quite a striking visual new focus for Main Street both during the day and also at night. It will undoubtedly help to anchor Main Street and provide a central place for people to

gather and socialize and for events to occur. The Berlin Industrial Development and Park Authority (BIDPA) is the developer of this new downtown attraction and it deserves great credit for planning and following through with this great addition to Berlin's Downtown.

### **DES Brownfields Public Information Meeting**

I have attached some information from the very enlightening presentation which was made last Tuesday evening in the City Hall auditorium by Nobis Engineering, City Housing Coordinator Andre Caron, Tri-County CAP, NH DES and USEPA. The presentation basically reviewed the Brownfields efforts completed and ongoing regarding the property (formerly Fraser property) the City owns along the river behind the new Court House as well as the Notre Dame Building on School Street. The presentation also reviewed or summarized all the various "Brownfields" efforts which the City, NHDES and USEPA have undertaken in a strong partnership.

In stark contrast to almost every other funding program provided by the State and Federal governments, and as can be seen from the sheets I have attached, the North Country has received approximately \$2,331,098 in "Brownfields" funds and the City of Berlin has received \$2,009,143 of that. This is over half of all of this type of funding that has been spent in the whole State of New Hampshire. In Berlin's case it has taken or is taking at least nine critical properties which would have remained blighted and undevelopable for many years and is making them developable or re-developable. The effect is about the same as removing cancers from a living thing.

### **Snow Plow Damage**

It was an abnormally tough winter for snow plow damage because freezing of the ground didn't occur until later than normal and then we had several snows after the weather warmed up this spring. There are quite a few structures such as manholes and the like which have been hit or otherwise damaged as well as quite a bit of ground that has to be torn up and repaired.

### **12<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge**

Last week we had the Engineer, HE Bergeron (HEB) and the contractor Winterset out to look at the surface of the newly repaired bridge deck. There has been either some surface spalling or some mechanical damage or both to the new surface of the bridge which shouldn't have occurred at this early stage of the new bridge deck. Winterset and HEB are both doing some quick research on the matter and will be coming back with information and a recommendation about how to correct the problem.

## **Hutchins Street EPA Data**

Last year we were told by USEPA that we would have the data necessary to determine if there was any great problem with proceeding with the Hutchins Street re-alignment project. We had hoped that if we got that information early enough that we would be in a position to complete the design and bid that project for construction this year. Unfortunately, we are still waiting for the information from USEPA and it is likely that because of the delay that the project will have to be built next year rather than this year.

## **Legislative Matters**

**Retirement Reform:** It appears that the retirement reform bills HB 580 and SB 3 have now been coalesced into a house version of SB 3 and a Senate version of SB 3. A committee of conference will have to resolve the differences between the two bills. Some of the differences are that the House version repeals the special account and removes all benefits (health, dental, retirement, etc.) from the status quo doctrine in collective bargaining. It limits re-employment of retirees to 1,300 hours per calendar year (currently 1,768 hours). The Senate version requires a 6-month separation period before re-employing a retiree, and then prohibits employment into a full-time position. The Senate version of SB 3 also repeals the so-called spiking assessment altogether by disallowing overtime, special detail and end of career payments to be figured in the final average compensation as occurs now.

**HB 590:** This bill would set up a study committee to look at the issue of whether or not the offering and acceptance of federal grants-in-aid relating to matters not included among the defined powers of the federal government is constitutional. NHMA urges opposition to this bill.

**HB 457 Revival:** An attempt this past week to revive this bill fell short in the House by a vote of 134-213. This is the bill which would halve interest rates for municipalities on unpaid property taxes.

**SB156:** This is the vehicle registration bill which the Mayor and Council opposed, which would allow auto dealers to register vehicles at the time of purchase through an electronic vehicle registration system. The bill passed the House last week on a vote of 176-166. It still has to be approved by the Senate but that is apparently likely.

## **Public Works Monthly Report**

Attached.

## **Manager's Time Keeping**

Attached.