

Memo

To: Mayor and Council
cc: Department Heads
From: Pat MacQueen
Date: July 18, 2011
Re: Manager's Report

Fire Department Integrated Alarm Monitoring System

The Contract for this new system has been completed by the Contractor George B. Allen in the amount of \$51,950. This old mechanical system alarm monitoring system was failing and has been replaced by an up to date digital monitoring system for the Department.

Police Emergency Generator

The contract to replace the emergency generator system at the Police Department is complete. The Contractor was Pow'r Point Generators from Oquossoc, Maine. The work is being funded by a grant through the State from the Dept. of Homeland Security in the amount of \$51,890.

Housing Coordinator Position

I am happy to report that after two attempts to fill the position, Linda White has been hired for the Housing Coordinator position to replace Andre Caron. Linda, who is from Colebrook, has significant experience in management, managing multiple programs and building renovation and we expect is well equipped to carry on the program. She will start this Wednesday.

We first hired Andre into the position in 2004 and he has had incredible success at developing and implementing the City's overall program for removing the sub-standard surplus housing stock in Berlin, and along the way, the renovation of many houses and neighborhoods in Berlin, not to mention assistance with IT and phone systems. Linda will be continuing the housing work with the benefit of Andre's guidance and with the same goal of eliminating the surplus of substandard housing in the City, and Andre will be reducing his role to finishing out old programs and providing some consultation. Linda has big shoes to fill, and I don't believe I can overstate the debt the City owes to Andre for his very productive and successful service to the City he grew up in.

WWTF Letter of Deficiency

NHDES makes regular inspections of the WWTF each year. From time to time they find matters that can be improved, changed or corrected. Attached is a letter of deficiency dated June 6, 2011, the response from PWD Director Michael Perreault dated July 6, 2011, indicating the steps we are taking to correct the concern and finally the acknowledgement letter from NHDES dated July 12, 2011 acknowledging Berlin's actions and finding the matter resolved.

Unemployment Statistics

Attached is an unemployment statistics sheet from the NH EMLI which shows that the Berlin area not surprisingly in May had the highest unemployment rate in the State of New Hampshire. In terms of just municipalities, that honor went to Lincoln which had a rate of 10.2% vs. Berlin's of 8.4%. Our rate is still almost 60% above that of cities like Manchester and Nashua and even Claremont, Franklin and Somersworth.

Berlin Better Buildings

Attached are two fliers announcing energy workshops aimed at educating the Berlin Public about how they can better deal with energy issues in their homes and businesses. The first of these seminars for which an RSVP is required is providing for a free lunch to go along with the one hour seminar from 11:30am to 12:30pm this Wednesday, July 20th, at the T-Bird's building on Main Street which is where the Better Buildings Office is located. The second one is scheduled for this Thursday in the City Hall auditorium and is aimed at local businesses.

National Forest PILT

Attached is a letter from the US Secretary of the Interior notifying us of this year's (FY11) PILT payment for the National Forest which is located in Berlin and takes up close to half of our geographic area. The amount of this payment will be \$39,240 which is a little under the amount we budgeted this year of \$41,500. Don't worry that they refer to us as a County. They do that every year...

Farmer's Market

The Farmer's Market sponsored by WREN continues in its second year with a great following each week. Mechanic Street is literally filled with people taking advantage of the market each Thursday evening.

Legislative Matters

Budget: The State passed its budget (HB 1 and 2) by super majorities in the House and Senate. The Governor let it go without his signature. Beyond the obvious impacts of the freeze on Meals and Rooms Distributions, the reduction in Highway Block, the retirement system changes, it will take some time to assess the impact of this budget in the area of human services and the reductions to the HHS budget. Some of that will certainly end up falling on municipalities as the provider of last resort, but we will not know this until we experience it.

Some of the other state budget changes which may affect us are:

- Reduction of staff at the Department of Revenue Administration.
- Reduction of staff and cuts in grants at the Officer of Energy and Planning for land use board training and regional planning committees.
- Diversion of money from the vital records improvement fund to the state general fund.
- Elimination of grant funding for the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP).
- Continuation of the suspension of RSA 167:11 relative to funeral expenses for recipients of public assistance.
- Reduction in flood control reimbursements to municipalities.
- Reduction from four to three members of the Board of Land and Tax Appeals and repeal of the requirement that at least one member be an attorney.
- Merging of the functions of the Equalization and Assessing Standards Boards.

Pole Tax Exemption is finally Dead: It appears that the pole tax exemption (SB 133) is finally dead after many years of municipalities trying to get the legislature to do the right thing and get rid of it. Now we will need to begin the assessment of poles and conduit for tax purposes.

Manager's Time-Keeping

Attached.