

Memo

To: Mayor and Council
cc: Department Heads
From: Pat MacQueen, City Manager
Date: April 2, 2012
Re: Manager's Report

Property Sale Bids and Demolitions

The properties on Western Ave, - 790, 661 and 653 - to be demolished have all been awarded for the demolition to All-Metals Recycling (AMR) which was the low bidder in the amount of \$11,500 for all three. This was put out in two bid packages and AMR was low bidder on both of them. Eight bidders bid and the high bid was \$101,900 for all three. The abatements have been completed on all but one of the buildings and so the demolitions should occur in the next couple of weeks.

Specifications for the demolition bids for 735 and 729 Second Ave and 483 School Street are being finalized and will be put out to bid next week.

Rite Aid Block Final Demolition

The abatement work is now apparently complete and happily, the demolition of the remaining Penney's building has begun and should be finished this week. This demolition has opened up great views of the Albert Theater and District Court buildings from Pleasant Street. The vacant lot should be quite a bit more appealing to potential developers than the blight that has sat there for several years.

Insurance RFQ

We have put out a Request for quotes for most of the types of insurance that the City carries. These are health insurance, property liability insurance, workers compensation and unemployment compensation insurance. The proposals will be due in early March but after most of the health insurance figures for July 1, are finalized by the vendors. Council will remember that Primex which currently underwrites most of the City's health insurance will be transferring that to the new NH Interlocal Trust as of July 1st. Little should change with this transfer as the actual carrier is still Harvard-Pilgrim.

Anti-degradation River Study RFQ

Henry Noel, WWTF Supervisor has also developed an RFP for an anti-degradation river study of the Androscoggin River. It will study the river in the area of the WWTF plant as part of our overall effort to respond to the EPA order we have received. We have been working with our Engineer Wright Pierce and NH DES on this particular project. The study of the river will involve taking samples of the river both above and below the plant over an extended period of time to determine the impact of the plant effluent on the river itself. The information from the study will be used to support the City's request for change (increase in design flow from 2.6MGD to 3.0MGD) to our National Pollutant Discharge Permit (NPDES) which needs to be renewed two years from now.

Fire Training in Berlin

Over this past winter, Firefighter 1 training classes were held in Berlin at the Berlin Fire Station. This offered 120 hours of Firefighter 1 training for firefighters from throughout the north country and the state; two were from Berlin. The classes were held Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays with one weekend at the Fire Academy in Concord. There were 15 different instructors over the course of the class.

Highway Safety Grants

Attached are five letters received from the NH Highway Safety Agency indicating that the following five Highway Safety grants have been approved for the Berlin Police Department:

- OHRV Patrols
- Red Light Running Patrols
- Berlin Enforcement Patrols
- Berlin Bicycle Enforcement Patrols
- Berlin Sobriety Checkpoints

Each year these grants essentially provide the BPD with overtime funds to fund these enforcement efforts.

Legislative Policy Process

HB 1460 Defined Contribution Pension Plan Currently, the State Retirement System to which municipalities belong to is a defined benefit plan meaning that the benefits are defined in advance and whatever they are determined to cost is what the state and municipalities have to pay for the retirement plans. Because benefits have been mindlessly added to the plan over the years, the costs of the plan grew dramatically leading to a huge unfunded liability in the plan. The State Legislature is now trying to deal with that difficulty and one of the approaches proposed in HB 1460 is to switch from the current defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. Under this approach, which more and more states and employers have been switching to, the public employer pays a known amount toward the plan and then the benefits of the plan must fit within whatever those payments are. This certainly makes great sense except for the fact that according to NHMA, there are some very significant up-front costs involved with making this switch. NHMA is rightly advocating that this needs to be studied and fully understood before making another leap of faith without having the actual cost in hand.

HB1658 TANF CAP TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) provides state assistance to certain categories of needy families – very often single mothers with their children. This bill as introduced in the house was intended to limit TANF increases as a result of a supported mother having additional children while on the TANF support. However, because the state welfare law requires that municipalities support through local welfare any indigent person who doesn't have other means of support, most times when the state attempts to cap or cut back on some sort of public assistance for itself, it very often means that cost simply gets passed down the chain to localities who again by state law must find funds to support such families. This is not something municipalities get any choice about. It is required by state law. For these reasons NHMA opposed the original bill and also opposed an amendment provision to HB 1658 which was aimed at welfare fraud but also would have mandated that TANF payments not be increased during eligibility of a particular family for any reason. This latter section on no increases for any reason was dropped but the fraud provisions were retained by the House Finance Committee, and so it sounds as though the bill as it stands at the moment should not be too objectionable.

PWD Monthly Report

Attached.

Manager's Timekeeping

Attached.