

**City Council Work Session
January 13, 2020**

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Rozek, Higbee, Gentili, Otis, Theberge, Remillard, Morgan and Berthiaume

Others present: City Manager James Wheeler, Assistant Chief Dan Buteau, Councilor Elect Mark Eastman; Assessor Supervisor Bryan Chevarie, Richard Laflamme, Barbara Tetreault, *Berlin Daily Sun* and public.

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Councilor Rozek moved to add CACR-17 which is a Constitutional Amendment to the agenda; Councilor Higbee seconded and the motion carried.

Communication from Ted Lacasse re: Tipping Fees

Mr. Wheeler presented a draft of a response to Ted Lacasse's letter. Reviewing 2018 abatements, the BOA entertained \$22,900 of abatements for Carberry related issues which resulted in \$703 of abatements with \$196 pending. Councilor Rozek confirmed that we will be doing a complete reval in 2020 which has to be done every 5 years. Mr. Wheeler clarified that the actual listing and measuring is done over the five years and the values are added all at once. He noted that the City Manager has no role in the tax abatement process, adding that he may attend a meeting and answer questions if that is beneficial. Tax abatements are the BOA's process.

With regard to the city's relationship with AVRRDD, Mayor Grenier presented minutes from the 12/5 meeting of AVRRDD where he suggested that they participate in funding the repair of Hutchins Street. AVRRDD recognized that there is a percentage of truck traffic on Hutchins Street that goes to the landfill. It would be fair that AVRRDD participate in reimbursing the city for a portion of the repair of the roadway. The subject was discussed but no numbers were mentioned. The issue will be debated further when AVRRDD puts together a budget.

Mr. Lacasse's letter also addressed tipping fees. Mr. Wheeler confirmed that tipping fees for the member communities went down this year. Mayor Grenier added that the District sets the fees and all member communities pay the same fee. Councilor Rozek explained that the landfill business is a very complicated, expensive process that has to meet State standards. Limiting the funding could have devastating effects on AVRRDD's ability to meet DES regulations.

Councilor Theberge asked about the close of Bethlehem's landfill and whether that would affect how much waste would be accepted at Mt. Carberry. Mayor Grenier replied that if Bethlehem is granted its last request for space, it could last until 2024. If they close, the waste would not automatically come to Berlin. The District started taking out of district garbage to pay off its bonds. Once the bonds are paid, the District Board will have decisions to make. They could stop taking out of district waste to extend the life of the landfill. There are options for the future.

Councilor Higbee asked about the abatements sited in Mr. Lacasse's letter, questioning if research has been done further back than 2018 and Bryan Chevarie reported that he researched through 2006. Mayor Grenier reasoned that Mr. Lacasse's intentions were good and he's looking out for the best interest of the community. A reply letter will be sent to him will be approved next week.

BUDGET SCHEDULE

Mayor Grenier suggested rescheduling the Board of Education to Thursday, March 5 because of the hockey playoff schedule.

CACR17

Mayor Grenier said that he received a letter from Tom Schamberg asking for support of a proposed constitutional amendment that would open the door to property tax relief. It states that a new state broad-based tax may be enacted only to reduce property taxes. Councilor Remillard stated that we should support at this time so that taxes go down. Councilor Remillard moved with a second from Councilor Rozek to send a letter to the Ways and Means Committee in support of CACR17. All voted in favor.

There being no further business, Councilor Rozek moved to adjourn; Councilor Remillard seconded and the motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Tremblay
Administrative Assistant

*Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the City Council by motion.