

CITY OF BERLIN
New Hampshire

Minutes of Council Work Session of 3/18/2020
Council Chambers
6:30 pm

Members:

Mayor Grenier
Councilor Remillard
Councilor Rozek
Councilor Otis (remotely)
Councilor Theberge
Councilor Higbee
Councilor Eastman
Councilor Berthiaume

City Staff:

James Wheeler, City Manager
Patricia Chase, Finance Director/Tax Collector
Ben Hall, Director of Public Works
Jon Goudreau, Superintendent of Pollution Control
Terry Letarte, Recreation Director

Mayor Grenier opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Recreation Department

Mayor Grenier invited Ms. Terry Letarte, Recreation Director, to review her FY21 budget requests. Ms. Letarte is requesting an overall increase of \$3,721 from the FY20 budget which includes an additional \$2,000 in the Arena and Hockey Supplies expense account and an additional \$2,000 for baseball supplies.

Ms. Letarte is requesting \$3,000 for playground meals. Mr. Wheeler explained that during the FY20 budget Ms. Letarte requested \$6,500 for meals that had been historically reimbursed by the USDA and was passed through the Recreation User Program Fund (Fund 19). The \$6,500 in the FY20 budget was inadvertently left in the General Fund's Recreation budget. Ms. Letarte explained that, as an example, she has purchased six complete meals during the holidays for Berlin families using this general fund account. There was discussion regarding the Recreation Department using funds to purchase meals instead of processing those needs through the City Welfare Department.

Ms. Letarte is also requesting \$1,000 for automotive repairs, maintenance and gas for a 2010 Kia that was donated to the City.

Pollution Control

Mr. Jon Goudreau, Pollution Control Superintendent, discussed his FY21 budget requests. He noted that overall he is requesting an additional \$5,000 which is mostly attributed to benefits and interest on loans. Councilor Rozek asked if there were any forthcoming large expenses, with Mr. Goudreau responding that he is working on plans for future capital improvement projects which include upgrades to pump stations.

Public Works Department

Mr. Ben Hall, Public Works Director, was invited to review his various department budgets. He began his presentation with an overview of street lighting which has a requested budget of \$118,500. Mr. Hall used a five year average but expects that the expense will decrease over time because of the upgrade last year to LED lights.

Mr. Hall reviewed the Public Works staffing and associated tasks/assignments. There are 26 full time staff members. The City Manager's FY21 budget is \$2,209,676.65 with the FY20 expenses projected to be \$2,252,037. Mr. Hall noted an increase in hot and cold patch due to a five year average and that sand has seen an increase in pricing.

The City Manager's Sewer User budget is \$3,445,774.23. The capital improvements include sanitary line replacements, security fence replacement, a sewer ejection station and upgrades to pump stations.

Mr. Hall discussed the Solid Waste and Recycling budgets. The department provides weekly curbside pickup and bi-weekly pickup of recyclables with 3,600 locations serviced. The department has initiated a process of becoming compliant with the City's Ordinance regarding waste pickup. Over time the City has seen a decrease in solid waste tonnage due largely to the promotion of recycling. Mr. Hall pointed out that the City has a 10% recycling rate compared to the national average of 25-30%. The City Manager's Solid Waste budget is \$829,475. He noted an increase in landfill monitoring expenses due to PFSA testing. He also pointed out a decrease in tipping fees projected by reducing waste through Phase 1 of the Ordinance compliance initiative.

A review of the Recreation and Parks responsibilities followed. A discussion around the use of federal prisoners to aid in city property maintenance followed. Mr. Hall is hoping to take advantage of the program this coming summer. Mayor Grenier inquired if any personnel were trained to treat the fields, with Mr. Hall responding that one of the supervisors was able to do much of the work. There is an increase in the budget due to the increased use of the fields.

Mr. Hall began reviewing the list of capital improvements by listing the current fleet. Mr. Hall also reviewed the maintenance costs of various pieces of equipment. The City is in need of new salt/plow trucks. A discussion followed around those needs and potential options. Another piece of equipment that needs replacing is one of the City snow blowers. The cost of a new snow blower is approximately \$150,000. Mr. Hall went on to explain that the 2010 Holder sidewalk tractor has had \$32,902.19 in maintenance and repairs since 2010 and should be replaced. There

was further discussion around the replacement of loaders, with Mr. Wheeler agreeing to research lease to own options.

Next, Mr. Hall explained that the City has three packer and two recycling trucks with an average age of seventeen years. He pointed out that most important is the need for a packer replacement due to the high repair costs and unreliability. He also shared that there is a DERA Grant funded through the EPA and a State Clean Diesel Grant funded by NHDES/EPA that the City might benefit from. Mr. Hall is actively pursuing and receiving updates for these and any other grants as they become available.

Mr. Hall initiated a discussion around a salt shed replacement. The current shed has progressively deteriorated sharply over the years and is in need of replacement. Mr. Hall reviewed a potential replacement option by utilizing, in part, the School's Building Trades program and City personnel to construct a 75' x 50' building with one lean-to. Mr. Hall also discussed the current sand storage system which contributes to significant heat loss every time the basement doors to the City garage are opened. Councilor Rozek requested that Mr. Hall visit the salt/sand shed that AVRDD had installed.

Councilor Rozek initiated discussion around the idea of contracting winter maintenance of City streets.

Mr. Hall went out to review and discuss the City's infrastructure which includes 11 municipally-owned bridges, more than sixty miles of streets and over 15,000 linear feet of retaining walls. In addition the City has a storm water drainage system to maintain.

After a summary review of the City's needs a discussion took place around the Pay as You Throw program. There are over forty communities in NH that have adopted this method of removal of solid waste. The Council agreed to set a future date to further explore this option.

Motion to Adjourn by Councilor Higbee and seconded by Councilor Berthiaume

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Patricia A. Chase