

MAYOR'S REPORT

MARCH 6, 2014

It has been about five weeks since my last report, and I must say, winter is being winter this year. Come on spring!! City Manager Jim Wheeler has just released the City Manager's FY 2015 Berlin fiscal budget proposal on Monday evening. I asked Jim to put forth a budget that resembles the vast needs of the community. The purpose is to make aware of Berlin's many challenges we must face in the upcoming three to five years. There is a recognition within the make up of the City Council that not every problem can be addressed in one or even two years. We must and will, however, begin to address our infrastructure needs that have been long delayed. As your Mayor, I won't support a big tax increase and we must all work together, citizens and employees, to finally begin addressing our needs.

I had a very interesting and cordial meeting with Mike Cummings of Gorham Paper & Tissue two weeks ago. I left the get together very confident that the plan in place to turn the mill's fortunes around will succeed. The changes made by GP&T were very painful to implement, but given the state of the serious energy issues they face, there really is no alternative. It may take a significant amount of time for GP&T to satisfy their obligations, but creating stability and positive cash flow near term will require employees and management alike to remain focused on the task at hand. I am very bullish on Mike Cummings' plan and support his efforts.

Why is it that right now, March 6th, #2 fuel oil is more expensive than gasoline? And how come no elected officials from Concord or Washington is even discussing it? Large energy companies are squeezing the very life out of the middle class in this state and folks are looking the other way. The next time someone tells you we need a lot less government regulation, you should remind them of the Wall Street meltdown in 2007 that created the largest recession since the 1930s and this reckless gouging of heating oil pricing. Shamefull...

By now most of you have read about the Notre Dame Arena's plans to completely redo the front face and lobby area. The \$300,000 project, when finished, will save over \$4,000 annually in avoided energy costs. The funding is as follows; \$100,000 in form of a grant from the Tillotson Foundation of the NH Charitable Trusts; \$65,000 from present Notre Dame Arena funds raised through charity gaming events held in Seabrook; \$60,000 raised from the community. We have received many donations to date but still need to raise much more. The rest will come from donated labor and materials and an \$85,000 loan from Northway Bank if necessary. If you have the ability to help with any sized donation, you can mail your donation to Notre Dame Arena, PO Box 338, Berlin, NH

03570. Please write "project" on your check and the kids of the Berlin/Gorham area thank!!

Burgess Biopower is experiencing a startup that has been a bit more difficult than hoped for. Engineers have been on site and a plan of action will be implemented once weather warms up a bit. Burgess Biopower and Cate Street Capital remain the catalyst for future development here in Berlin and I'm very excited for the time their energy can be spent expanding the site.

Recently there have been letters sent to the Berlin press criticizing me for my purported stance on the Northern Pass project. Yes, I have always supported the concept of the Northern Pass project, and my many fears have actually been realized with the sky high acceleration of energy prices here this winter. What has never been printed is the fact that my support is not unconditional. I certainly recognize that there very serious issues that need to be addressed by the developer. Unsightly transmission poles and conduit can and will scare our iconic landscape. Movement needs to be made to address those issues in sensitive areas in a manner that allows for constructive input from residents. No one will get everything they want, NP will have to spend more money to bury more of the lines, but let's be clear. Opponents have no right to tell industrial landowners (Wagner Forest, Plum Creek Timber, ect) what they can and can't do with their property. In fact, these big timber companies will receive significant royalty payments which will keep these lands available for outdoor recreation for all to utilize. I advocate for the middle ground and I'll take the criticism from the 15% who oppose under all circumstances.

On Tuesday, March 11, there will be a special election to replace the late Ray Burton for Executive Council, District One. No one can really replace Ray, whom I considered a friend and able public servant. It should surprise no one who knows Mike Cryans, however, that the brothers and sisters of Ray Burton have supported Mr. Cryans' election. I've know Mike Cryans since I was elected as your Coos County Commissioner twelve years ago. Mike knows the issues, is very approachable and has no hidden agendas. He also needs no introduction to the Berlin/Gorham area. Please join me on March 11 to vote for Mike Cryans to fill the unexpired term of Ray Burton on the Executive Council. For this election only, there will be only one voting station in Berlin. That will be at the Berlin Recreation Center and the polling hours will be the same, 8AM to 7PM.

In closing, please join me in a moment of silence for former Mayor Joe Ottolini who passed away last month. Mayor Ottolini served in many capacities here in Berlin over the years. It is that type of service that exemplifies the true meaning of community service. Thank you, Mayor Ottolini, and also Mrs. Ottolini, for the work and sacrifices you made to make Berlin a better place.



Paul Grenier, Mayor