

## Special Meeting November 14, 2011

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Otis, Remillard, Ducharme, McCue, Evans, Rozek, Nelson and Councilor-Elect Higbee. Councilor Th  berge was absent. Others present: Pamela Laflamme, Linda White, Pauline Tibbetts, Fran Cusson and public.

Mayor Grenier opened the Special Meeting to accept the November 8, 2011 Municipal Election Results and welcomed those present at approximately 6:30 p.m.

### NOVEMBER 8, 2011 MUNICIPAL ELECTION RESULTS CITY OF BERLIN

	<u>WARD 1</u>	<u>WARD 2</u>	<u>WARD 3</u>	<u>WARD 4</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<b><u>MAYOR</u></b>					
Paul Grenier	<u>272</u>	<u>288</u>	<u>380</u>	<u>247</u>	<u>1187</u>
<b><u>COUNCIL</u></b>					
<b><u>WARD 1 (FOUR YEAR TERM)</u></b>					
Russell Otis	<u>244</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b><u>WARD 1 (TWO YEAR TERM)</u></b>					
Lucie Remillard	<u>255</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b><u>WARD 2 (FOUR YEAR TERM)</u></b>					
Denise Morgan Allain	_____	<u>280</u>	_____	_____	_____
Thomas McCue	_____	<u>84</u>	_____	_____	_____
<b><u>WARD 2 (TWO YEAR TERM)</u></b>					
Richard Lafleur	_____	<u>155</u>	_____	_____	_____
Dori Ducharme	_____	<u>170</u>	_____	_____	_____
<b><u>WARD 3 (FOUR YEAR TERM)</u></b>					
David Moore	_____	_____	<u>168</u>	_____	_____
Peter Higbee	_____	_____	<u>223</u>	_____	_____
<b><u>WARD 4 (FOUR YEAR TERM)</u></b>					
Diana Nelson	_____	_____	_____	<u>222</u>	_____
<b><u>WARD 4 (TWO YEAR TERM)</u></b>					
Roland Theberge	_____	_____	_____	<u>245</u>	_____
<b><u>SCHOOL BOARD (4 Yr)</u></b>					
Louise Valliere	<u>249</u>	<u>292</u>	<u>386</u>	<u>235</u>	<u>1162</u>
<b><u>SCHOOL BOARD (2 Yr)</u></b>					
Nathan Morin	<u>171</u>	<u>189</u>	<u>240</u>	<u>148</u>	<u>748</u>
Nicole Plourde	<u>187</u>	<u>236</u>	<u>273</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>863</u>
Kenneth Proulx	<u>123</u>	<u>152</u>	<u>209</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>583</u>
Robert Rodrigue	<u>98</u>	<u>101</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>449</u>
Tricia Walsh	<u>95</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>163</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>458</u>
Mark Evans	<u>93</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>104</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>352</u>
<b><u>LIBRARY TRUSTEE (4 yr)</u></b>					
Paul Tardiff	<u>261</u>	<u>307</u>	<u>396</u>	<u>236</u>	<u>1200</u>
<b><u>LIBRARY TRUSTEE (2 yr)</u></b>					
Linda Lafleur	<u>268</u>	<u>298</u>	<u>402</u>	<u>237</u>	<u>1205</u>
<b><u>MODERATOR</u></b>					
Robert Morrissette	<u>276</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
Lauren Letourneau	_____	<u>298</u>	_____	_____	_____
Aline Boucher	_____	_____	<u>394</u>	_____	_____
Robert Dumoulin	_____	_____	_____	<u>235</u>	_____
<b><u>SUPERVISOR OF CHECKLIST</u></b>					
Robert Pelchat	<u>268</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
Donald Bisson	_____	_____	<u>396</u>	_____	_____
Roger Fecteau (6 year)	_____	_____	_____	<u>233</u>	_____
Normand Dupuis (2 year)	_____	_____	_____	<u>229</u>	_____
<b><u>WARD CLERK</u></b>					
John DeChamplain	<u>273</u>	_____	_____	_____	_____
Steve Letourneau	_____	<u>293</u>	_____	_____	_____
Lucille Paradis	_____	_____	<u>399</u>	_____	_____
Edmond Albert	_____	_____	_____	<u>231</u>	_____

City Clerk Debra Patrick presented the election results for the Council's consideration. Councilor McCue moved with a second by Councilor Nelson to accept the election results. The motion carried with all in favor.

Councilor Remillard moved with a second by Councilor Otis to recess the Special Meeting and go into Work Session. Mayor Grenier closed the Special Meeting at approximately 6:31 pm.

## **Work Session November 14, 2011**

Mayor Grenier opened the Work Session at approximately 6:32 p.m.

Present were: Mayor Grenier, Councilors Otis, Remillard, Ducharme, McCue, Evans, Rozek, Nelson and Councilor-Elect Higbee. Councilor Th  berge was absent. Others present: Pamela Laflamme, Linda White, Pauline Tibbetts, Fran Cusson and public.

The City Manager pointed out that Pam Laflamme had set up a slide show of pictures featuring 47+ multi-family housing units which, four years ago, had no second exits in them. Thanks to the efforts of the Code Enforcement team, this has been rectified and it is the difference of life and death. Now these units have installed a second egress and are in compliance with life safety codes. It is an impressive showing of life safety in the City.

### **Update of Housing Coordinator Activities**

Mayor Grenier then introduced Linda White Housing Coordinator and said she has filled Andre Caron's big shoes and the word on the street is that Linda is doing an admirable job.

Linda thanked the Mayor and Council for inviting her this evening. She gave Council a written overview of the projects she is working on and said that so far, it has been one of the most enjoyable jobs she ever had. It is diverse, interesting and there are more questions than answers. She hopes to do a good job and told Council she is open to feedback.

### **Housing Coordinator Report November 14, 2011**

#### **Land Sales**

September 29, 2011 (Bids Due)

Bid packets went out to abutters for 12 properties

**7 Land Parcels sold: \$26,704.55**

November 17, 2011 (Bids Due)

5 remaining parcels went out to general public

o HillsboroSt.	Map/Lot 131-044	\$2900
o HillsboroSt.	Map/Lot 131-045	\$2766
o 288 Burgess St.	Map/Lot 131-064	\$2133
o 407Champlain	Map/Lot 130-353	\$5333
o 818 Fourth Ave	Map/Lot 119-468	\$4000

#### **Berlin Neighborhood Revitalization Program**

73 Homeowners have inquired about the program

- > 35 Homeowners have not met the qualifications: (Over income, didn't complete paperwork, no1 residents, etc.)
- > Our list presently has 38 Applicants, Total of 48 units (12 on the waiting list)
- > **We are presently working with 26 Homeowners, 33 units (goal is to do 35 +units)**
- > Work has begun on 17 Homes, 21 units- approximately 65% (10 roofs completed) and will be completed this fall/winter. The remaining will be completed in the spring.
- > We have received \$242,362.75 from CDFA for these homes
- > The program has been able to leverage \$48,450 (16.22%) in matching funds from Department o1 Energy Weatherization program funds and USDA (Rural Development)Housing preservation grant funds, for a total **of \$298,719** in funds going to these 17 homes (approximately \$14,225 per living unit)
- > The General Contractor for the Program (TCCAP) is working with 13 Local Subcontractors to complete the work

## **De-densification & Tax Deeding**

### **> Demolition Bids**

- o 249 E. Mason (completed)
- o 246 Grafton St.
- o 12 Cambridge St.
- o 52 Gilbert St.
- o 49 Gilbert St. (bids due-11.17.11)

### **> Future Demolitions:**

- o 661 Western Ave
- o 663 Western Ave (City Funds)
- 790 Western Ave (796 Western-previously demolished)
- o 729 Second Ave
- o 735 Second Ave (NSP3)
- o 483 School Street

### **> Home Sales**

- o 290 Grafton (next week)
- o 249 Burgess
- o 567 First Ave (Dec-Jan)
- o 615 Fourth
- o 819 Fourth

**NSP3** - Renovation of 3 Buildings (9 units)

### **Grant Initiatives**

EPA Brownfields Community Wide -Assessment \$200K - due Nov 28, 2011

EPA Brownfields Clean-up \$200K

CDBG-\$500K - due January 30, 2012

### **Training**

EPA Brownfields Presentation - Nobis Engineering

CDBG Implementation Training

CDBG Writing Workshop

OJT - Acadia - Asbestos & Lead Abatement

### **Code Enforcement**

40 Multi-family buildings with a total of 154 units that now have a second means of egress

Linda added that 249 East Mason Street just came down and the difference there is amazing.

Councilor Nelson inquired about status of the house on the corner of Rockingham/East Mason Street.

Linda replied that the City owns it. It is a single family house which was part of the original NSP Program and it is not for sale yet. Andre has debated what to do with it and they are currently weighing ideas.

Councilor Nelson then asked if the City got a grant to put a building on that parcel.

Linda replied that yes, we did. She knows Andre was the originator on the program and she will get more info to the Council. She confirmed that the building has been winterized.

Councilor Rozek stated he is pleased that Linda is enjoying her new job. He asked about the future of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and inquired if it will continue for the next several years. He asked about the future of federal dollars regarding a small town in dire straits in some areas.

Linda replied that in Concord Berlin has points in the grant system with our at-risk population. The truth is that Federal dollars are shrinking and grant competition gets harder and is open nationwide. They will continue to seek funding and are working aggressively to write grants. They have engineers working on those since it is important that they see we have a master plan in place since those things are helpful while applying for a grant. Others towns in the state are not so aggressive.

Councilor Rozek asked Linda if she thinks that establishes a base line that they work off of? Linda said yes, the state funnels federal money and they want to look good too because that determines how much money they get. If a town does not implement the proposed work, it does not look good if the state gets money back. Berlin always puts the money to good use and we are the only one in the state that has a grass-roots revitalization program where we are actually going in homes. Other communities are just building new but we are improving what we have. In Concord, Berlin is the poster child for doing a great job.

Pat added we have been successful to get grants and the original reason for applying for grants was for demolition. These programs were a side reason for money.

Mayor Grenier asked when the next CDBG round begins. Linda said the deadline is January 30 and the grant will be awarded in the spring. The NSP is ahead of the game and a year ahead of completing the grant round. People hear the word and ask about the program.

Councilor Remillard asked what three buildings will be doing the NSP3 next. Linda informed her that they are 104 Grafton Street, 28 Spring Street and 115 Strafford Street.

### **National Home Care Month**

Fran Cusson thanked the Mayor and Council for their help through funding. It keeps people in their homes and subsidizes Title 20 the Adult Home Care Program. Their budget has been a challenge but they got level funding for the next two years through the state. Some programs got eliminated but they did get level funding. The AV Homecare Program provided 10,140 hours and served 150 people, 135 from Berlin. City funds remain with Berlin residents and they are on a sliding fee scale and clients have to meet criteria to get on the Title 20 Program. They also get funds from Gorham. They use city funding to keep people in their homes through the Homemaking Program which runs errands like groceries and are companions to keep clients safe in their own homes. Dorothy's Gift began five years ago and has evolved and grown and they also do fundraising to help subsidize clients in need.

Mayor Grenier asked how much Dorothy's Gift raised per year. Fran replied that they make between five and six thousand dollars. She added that once some clients get back on their feet, they send a donation into the fund and they also have a mail campaign to solicit donations. Deceased clients sometimes bequeath donations.

Pauline Tibbetts informed Council that Dorothy's Gift allows the agency to go into emergency mode if they get a call on Friday at 3:30 with a person in a crisis situation. Their staff are the eyes and ears representing their clients. Their policy is that when staff checks on a client and the client is not home, they call the family to find out where people are if they do not answer the door. Pauline added that they appreciate the City funds which remain in the Berlin area.

Fran went on to say that they employ seventy-five full and part-time people and many of them are working mothers. Some of their retired staff come back to help out.

Mayor Grenier said they have always provided good service and a window of care that bridges families. Their mission is more important now than ever. We had a whole generation move out of Berlin and now have folks in their 70's and their kids are gone with no other interaction.

Councilor Ducharme praised them for the great work they do for our community.

Ms. Tibbetts concluded it is all thanks to the staff who don't get thanked too often. Working with the elderly is not for everyone but they have a long standing record and a low job turnover. The staff feels they make a difference in their clients' lives. She thanked Council for their support through the years.

### **Traffic Safety Committee Recommendations**

Councilor Evans, Chair of the Safety Committee, presented the following recommendation:

Update Ordinance 15-68 parking adjacent to schools (Emery Street) because it no longer has any purpose since the Berlin Regional Catholic School is closed. This piece was missed when they recently got rid of play streets on Emery but did not include the no parking ordinance attached to that too.

Councilor Nelson asked if the speed limit signs were taken care of in that area as well so we can get everything taken care of all at the same time.

Mayor Grenier asked Council that if there is a speed limit, do they want to make it part of first read for Monday night?

Councilor Evans said it is not marked as a speed zone so the sign should be taken down administratively. The City Manager will check on it.

### **Tax Rate**

City Manager MacQueen explained that according to the DRA Berlin's Tax Rate will be \$31.70 and Council has ten days to request a hearing. Mr. MacQueen explained that order to do this, we took an additional Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars from Undesignated Fund Balance which means that this year we are using One Million, Three Hundred Thirteen Thousand Dollars (\$1,313,000) to balance our budget.

Mayor Grenier added that most of that money is unspent appropriations and some revenue surpluses. We will still carry Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) of Unappropriated Fund Balance so that \$1.3 Million was just excess appropriations that were not used that were turned back to the city at the end of the fiscal year. We may not always have that luxury but as long as we have that luxury he thinks the people need to get it. As long as we keep the Two Million Dollar (\$2,000,000) Undesignated Fund Balance, we are in good shape. The state must have recognized that because if they thought our finances were weak, we would have gotten a higher tax rate. Another point of interest is that of all the communities in the Androscoggin Valley, we are the only ones with no tax increase. The other communities within the valley saw a pretty significant tax increase. A lot of that was a reduction in state revenues and higher county taxes. Other than Gorham where there was a political error.

Councilor Rozek knows there are varying factors when it comes to the tax rate but is happy that as a Council they approached the budget last year with the intent to lower the tax rate by 25 cents. He feels if they would have gone for level funding they would be above this rate now but he could be wrong. He is sharing this with the new council who were not here for the budget. Council approached this with a 25 cent reduction and that was the Mayor's intent. Although they could not achieve that reduction, they have to be grateful they are at level and not above it but that was with the help from the City Manager. He thinks it is always a good idea to approach the budget with a lean perspective so we can stay on track.

Mayor Grenier's initial reaction when he saw the new tax rate was that they promised the voters something so maybe they should petition the DRA to look at it again. In thinking about it, do we really want the DRA to comb through our finances for 25 cents? Council agreed they did not.

Councilor McCue commented that the moving target is our assessments. It is a set of numbers which is a rough ideal to work with and makes it harder to maintain a level tax rate. On the upside of that we are at a point of where that should start to level off. This has been the tough part those last few years.

Mayor Grenier concurs and said that the Ten Million Dollar (\$10,000,000) loss was a big hit and not only was there a County Tax increase but our share of the County Tax went up.

Councilor Evans asked how the County Tax is apportioned and is it by a head count? Mayor Grenier replied it is only by valuation. There have been failed attempts to alter the formula using 40% value and 60% population but that would have hurt Berlin.

Councilor Otis asked what percent of those tax dollars do we actually use? Mayor Grenier replied that over half is for the prison, the nursing home, sheriff transports, etc.

Councilor McCue moved with a second by Councilor Otis to close the work session and go into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person; for an economic development update and stated the Individual chose not to be present. Roll call resulted in unanimous affirmative votes of Council including Mayor Grenier who closed the Work Session at approximately 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Debra A. Patrick, CMC  
City Clerk