

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY, February 20, 2012

Mayor Grenier called the City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:34 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. The pledge of allegiance to the flag preceded roll call. Present: Councilors Otis, Morgan Allain, Higbee, Rozek, Nelson and Th  berge. Councilors Remillard and Ducharme were absent. Also present: Pat MacQueen, Bobby Haggart and the press.

Minutes, Previous Meeting

Councilor Nelson moved with a second by Councilor Otis to accept the minutes of the February 6 Regular Meeting/Work Session; February 13 Work Session. So moved, the motion carried.

Disbursements: It was recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims to pay all bills start date 2/09/2012; end date 2/22/2012 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,222,827.67 Draft #1659 Councilor Theberge moved with a second by Councilor Higbee to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: No comments.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports. No Reports.

NEW BUSINESS

2. City Manager's Report

Local Recognition

Sylvia Poulin has been deservedly recognized with WMUR's and Citizens Bank's "Heart of your City" award for all her great efforts on behalf of downtown Berlin and the whole community. As a result, she was showcased and profiled on WMUR's Chronicle show which people all over the State got to see and enjoy. Berlin needs to bottle her energy, drive and devotion to her community.

On Thursday evening I attended the Awards Ceremony in Bedford where Cathy Conway of NCIC was recognized as one of this year's 10 Outstanding Women in Business in New Hampshire by the NH Business Review's annual award. This award goes to 10 women each year in NH who have made outstanding contributions to their businesses and their communities. Cathy has easily met this standard. Working for NCIC she has quietly led many efforts to improve all of the North Country. Specifically in Berlin in the early 2000's she was very instrumental in helping us getting the City's housing effort going and obtained the original grant which helped us get the City's Housing Office established and operating.

Tissue Resurgence

Attached is an article from the Wall Street Journal of 2-16-12 on the resurgence of papers mills such as the Gorham Cascade Mill on the continuing growth of tissue demand throughout the world which according to Mill Manager Willis Blevins is mostly because tissue paper is not easily replaced by the digital media as other paper is.

Budget Meetings with Departments

Meetings with City Departments have been held over the last week to review the budget requests. It certainly looks like this year's budget matters will be every bit as interesting as they have been for the past several years.

BEMS Annual Report

Attached is a copy of the Berlin Emergency Medical Service Annual Report which gives a pretty good feel for the service which the City receives for emergency ambulance service in a year to year contract. The current contract with BEMS will expire in June of 2013. The BEMS annual audit is available in the office for anyone who might like to see it.

Friday Telephone Outage

We had thought that the building of a second telephone line through Pinkham Notch was going to eliminate the problem of the City losing telephone service when an accident occurs on Rt. #2 as it did several years and as it did on Friday afternoon. Apparently a logging truck took out some fiber lines on Rt 2 in Jefferson cutting phone service. Needless to say this type of outage can cause significant communication problems for the hospital, businesses and emergency services. We haven't yet found out from the providers why this occurred since the new second line through Pinkham Notch has been completed.

Legislative Issues

Pole Tax Exemption – HB 1305 Happily, the Fairpoint bill to exempt their poles and conduits from property taxes was solidly defeated in the house with the strong support of Berlin's delegation despite a 13-1 committee recommendation in favor of the bill. This is the third year in a row that the House has killed the effort to reinstate this special interest Fairpoint bill which does nothing but exempt Fairpoint from property taxes which no one else is exempt from. The Council has been solid in opposing this exemption and has regularly made its position known to the delegation.

Testimony on HB 1604 The Municipal and County Government Committee on a vote of 14-3 has recommended at Inexpedient to Legislate this bill which would reduce interest rates on delinquent taxes from 12% and 18% to 6% and 9%. Hopefully the same will happen with the full House.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Nelson to accept the City Manager's Report and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

3. Mayor's Report:

Mayor Grenier remarked that tonight is a light evening but the budget season is just ahead and Council must have lots of time, energy and patience to get through the next couple of months.

At the March 5 meeting, the Mayor will be making changes to the City's representation on the Androscoggin Valley Regional Refuse Disposal District (AVRRDD). The Mayor plans to appoint Councilor Rozek and Tom McCue.

Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Theberge to accept the Mayor's Report and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

4. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

5. Council Comments:

Councilor Nelson reminded everyone that the annual Chamber of Commerce dinner is this Friday and anyone still wanting to attend should RSVP by tomorrow since they are almost sold out.

Councilor Higbee said he was sorry he missed the meeting last week but it was due to business. He will unfortunately miss the meeting next week also.

Mayor Grenier reminded Council that it is appropriate to let the City Clerk know if they are going to be absent. It is important to know who will attend the meetings to be sure we have a quorum.

6. Adjournment:

There being no further business before the Mayor and Council, Councilor Rozek moved with a second by Councilor Nelson to adjourn the regular meeting. So moved, Mayor Grenier declared the regular meeting adjourned at approximately 7:44 p.m.

A True Record, Attest:
Debra A. Patrick, CMC