

February 6, 2024 Planning Board

Present were: Regular Members: Chair Lori Langlois (via Zoom), Vice-Chair Tom McCue, Henry Noel, Larry Laflamme (via Zoom), Dan Whittet, and Micah Bachner; **Ex-Officio Member:** Lise Barrette; **Alternate Members:** Jeffrey Quackenbush, Cassandra Mason (via Zoom), and Eamon Kelley.

Excused were Regular Members: Karen Collins; **Ex-Officio Member:** Denise Morgan
Others Present: Phillip L. Warren, Jr, City Manager; Pamela Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives; and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

Acting Chair Tom McCue called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Public Comments

None

Approval of January 9, 2024 Minutes

Mr. Whittet made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2024 meeting as submitted. Mr. Bachner seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Capital Improvement Plan Review with City Manager Warren

Mr. Warren presented the Capital Improvement Plan. The front cover shows the breakdown of each department function throughout the years of 2024 to 2030 and below it shows the different funding sources throughout the same years. Each page afterwards was broken down by each department function with more details including funds on hand from past capital improvements. In the future, he will be factoring in the debt schedule into the equation. There was some discussion around the school capital improvements, federal funds and the HVAC projects. It was noted that the HVAC options were discussed by the school board thoroughly. It was also noted that the RAISE grant with the District Heating grant may open up the possibility of running District Heating up Willard Street to cover both schools for the design, the taps and the piping.

Mr. Whittet made a motion to recommend as presented the Fiscal Year 2024 Capital Improvement Plan to the Berlin City Council for consideration. Mr. Noel seconded the motion. All in favor, the motion carried.

Mr. Quackenbush wanted to note that if the District Heating project is able to save the schools Two Million on HVAC then he would not want to see the City committing to new boilers.

Housing Opportunity Grant Review of Recommendations

Ms. Laflamme explained that tonight we will review the Regulatory Recommendations from Barrett Consulting. She is asking that the board members make notes of any questions or comments and send them to her as soon as possible so she can send them to Barrett

Consulting. This will help them to be better prepared for our next meeting with them on Wednesday, February 21, at 6:00pm.

Ms. Laflamme reviewed all the recommendations with the board members. There was discussion concerning the 79E Tax Relief we currently have in place and in combination with any possible Historic Mitigation. Other discussion revolved around possibly creating a Conservation Fund from Land Use Change Tax which was noted that it would need to be in line with State law and approved by City Council. The section on Zoning to encourage alternative housing brought up discussions on employer assisted housing and what it entails; the process it will take in defining homeless shelters, single occupancy housing and transitional housing; and preserving land on the outskirts of the City by limiting development. The Maps Online zoning layer was looked at onscreen as well as the new building usage layer.

Zoning Ordinance Discussion – Recreational Vehicles

Ms. Laflamme explained that this situation keeps coming up where people buy a property thinking they can put a recreational vehicle on it but we are not set up for this. She reviewed the conflict in the ordinance where the City defines a seasonal dwelling that does not include recreation vehicles. In our ordinance we are required to have the State Flood Plain language which states people can have a recreational vehicle on a site for less than 180 consecutive days. This does not match up with our definition and we need to clean up the language by possibly allowing recreational vehicles as seasonal dwellings for no more than 180 days in a year. There was discussion about the areas in the City where these issues come up. This will involve more enforcement but possibly make it easier to track with permits and fees. RSA 216 and some examples from other communities were also read by Ms. Laflamme. It was noted that this zoning change is for the health and safety aspects of recreational vehicle living. Ms. Laflamme hopes to have a sample draft ordinance for the April meeting.

Other

Ms. Laflamme reminded everyone about the meeting on February 21, at 6:00pm with Barrett Consulting. She is asking everyone to please get any comments to her soon so that she can share it with Barrett Consulting and they can be prepared for the meeting.

Ms. Laflamme shared the Councilor Denise Morgan has been appointed as an Ex-Officio Member of the Planning Board and she will be here for the next meeting.

Ms. Laflamme would like members to get the word out that Consolidated/Fidium is currently working on high speed fiber cables throughout the City and it will be available this spring. People can sign up early on their website which has choices for plans.

Project Updates

Ms. Laflamme shared that all the documents for the RAISE grant are in for final approval. Once approved, then we can start with the design engineering. If the Department of Energy District Energy grant goes through then we can run both of the projects together. She is

also receiving funding from USDA for Project Management funds for help with consultation fees and hiring any assistance needed for the grant.

Ms. Laflamme gave an update on the Route 110 Utility Extension project. She shared that the City has funds that are going to be used towards hiring a consultant to make a case for the EDA, Economic Development Administration, to receive funding which is geared to industrial and heavy commercial development. The Jericho Gateway and this utility extension project is going to help with development of residential, outdoor recreation, retail, hospitality, and lead to job creation.

Public Comments

None

Member Comments

Mr. Bachner asked about the procedure for adding any items to the agenda. This can be done any time in advance of the preparation of the agenda.

Mr. Whittet asked about some clarification of what a Home Rule State is. Mr. McCue explained that it involves the fact that municipalities only have the power granted to them by the legislature.

Mr. Noel asked about the Capital Improvement Plan portion of the Road Improvements. Ms. Laflamme explained that the City has had a Road Surface Management System done which shows which roads are a priority to do and when to do them. It is a line item on page 8 of the Capital Improvement Document.

Mr. Whittet said his term is ending the April and he would like to continue on as a member. Mr. McCue and Mr. Quackenbush also would like to continue on as a member when their term expires in April. Ms. Laflamme will write a letter to the Berlin Council recommending this.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the board, Mr. Noel made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bachner seconded it. All in favor, the motion carried.

The Planning Board meeting ended at 8:14 pm.