

City Council Work Session September 9, 2026

Present were: Mayor Cone, Councilors Korzen, Valerino, Theberge, Higbee Qualls, Lavertu and Plourde. Councilor Morency was absent.

Others present: Assistant City Mgr. Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, SAU3 Superintendent Tammy Fauteux, Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

Mayor Cone started the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Non-Public Session

At 6:31 p.m., Councilor Valerino moved with a second from Councilor Lavertu to enter into Non-Public Session per RSA 91-A:3 II; (d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. So, moved, the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

A land matter and the sale of tax-deeded properties acquired in 2023 were discussed. No votes were taken.

At 6:46p.m., Councilor Valerino moved to come out of non-public session. Councilor Plourde seconded, and the motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Mayor Cone had to step out of the meeting. Councilor Higbee chaired the work session in his absence.

EMPG Grant Extension

Ms. Laflamme explained that the State is requiring a vote of the Council in order to allow the extension. Councilor Valerino moved to extend the EMPG Grant. Councilor Qualls seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

Parade Request

Ms. Laflamme stated this request is for a Christmas parade that the local ATV club does annually. This year they are looking to do it through Berlin and Gorham. Included in the agenda packet is an application for a parade permit through the State of NH Dept. of Transportation as it's required for Gorham to obtain for Route 16. The route they are taking in Berlin is part of the urban compact which is under the control of the City. Chief of Police Lemoine and City Manager Warren both support this request. Ms. Laflamme advised that City Manager Warren asked that the Council approve this request and authorize him to approve this parade in the future. Councilor Valerino moved to approve the parade request and allow the City Manager to approve this parade in the future. Councilor Korzen seconded and the motion carried with all in favor.

At 6:52 p.m., there being no further business in Work Session, Councilor Higbee recessed before moving on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Danielle Rioux
Executive Assistant

*Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the City Council by motion.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Wednesday, September 9, 2026

Regular Meeting

Mayor Cone called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 6:58 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Cone and Councilors Qualls, Higbee, Plourde, Valerino, Lavertu, Korzen, and Theberge

Absent: Councilor Morency

Also present: Director of Special Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Richard King, Christian Judson, Matthew Chernicki, Theodore Bosen, Paul Guerin, other members of the public, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to accept the minutes of the August 17, 2026, Regular Meeting and Work Session. So moved, the motion passed.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #2016 with a start date of 08/18/2026 and an end date of 09/09/2026 for a total cash disbursement of \$2,983,355.98. Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Richard King, of 107 Jericho Road, asked about the vacancy on the Planning Board. Mayor Cone advised an appointment will be made tonight.

Theodore Bosen, of 13 Bisson Road, noted a concern at the polls last year with a candidate standing too close to the entryway for the voters. Mr. Bosen also noted an incident at the polls this year, in which a woman was screaming at two people holding signs for candidates. Mr. Bosen stated he felt unsafe and stated that there were no police there at the time. Mr. Bosen suggested that there should be monitoring outside the polling location as it needs to be a safe place to approach.

Matthew Chernicki, of 240 Burgess Street, stated that he was there with the candidates last year and they were quickly told the rules by the Moderator. Mr. Chernicki noted that the police did stop by during the day. Mr. Chernicki noted that he did not notice any issues, and stated that when he left the sign he was holding unattended, the moderator came to nicely speak with him.

Paul Guerin, of 583 Burgess Street, advised that he was holding a sign when the woman was screaming, and that there was no communication from him to her. Mr. Guerin noted that there are crazy people out there.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

Councilor Theberge noted that he has received calls about a tree on the corner of Eighth and Main Street, which is blocking the view of oncoming traffic and is a concern for traffic safety. It was noted that this is not on City property, and Pamela Laflamme advised she would contact the property owner to bring it to their attention.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Ordinance 2026-02 Amend Chapter 19 (1st read)

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Council Qualls, to read the Ordinance by short title only. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Theberge moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to table the Ordinance and schedule a public hearing for September 21, 2026. So moved, the motion carried.

2. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the July 2026 Activity Reports for the Police Department.
2. Attached is the August 2026 Real Estate Transfer Report.
3. We were notified last week that the City prevailed in the recent Smith Hydro abatement case. The court upheld the value established by our utility appraisal firm in its entirety. There will be no decrease in the value for that tax year, and we now have a court supported value to base subsequent years on.
4. Crack sealing of City streets has commenced, we will focus on the remaining sections of Hutchins Street and then move on to Riverside and northern Main Street, the goal being to keep good roads good.
5. Paving will be done on Glen Avenue, part of Prospect Street and School Street this month. When an exact date is established, we will pass it on.
6. HEB Architects was on site last week to formulate a plan for a low use elevator located at the auditorium entrance that will allow for handicapped entrance to the City Hall. Updates will be offered when new information is received.

Pamela Laflamme added that there will be a public hearing in the auditorium on September 23, 2026 to review the final draft of the Zoning Ordinance update work. Ms. Laflamme reviewed the updates, and encouraged those with questions to attend.

Councilor Theberge asked if two new officers have been hired at the Police Department and if the money is in the budget. He was advised that they have been hired and the salaries were budgeted for.

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to accept the City Manager's report as presented and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

3. Mayor's Report

a. Planning Board Appointment

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to approve the Mayor's nomination of Christian Judson as an alternate member of the Planning Board, with a term to expire on April 30, 2029. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Korzen again suggested that they Council should have the ability to interview candidates, even though the Mayor has the authority to nominate them.

a. Letter from Kathy and John Trumbull re: Downtown Sidewalks

From: Kathy Trumbull

Sent: Tuesday, August 18, 2026 8:44 PM

To: Phil Warren <pwarren@berlinnh.gov>; Shelli Fortin <safortin@berlinnh.gov>; Robert Cone <rcone0806@gmail.com>

Subject: Persistent Problem with downtown sidewalks

Mayor, City Council, City Manager, and Berlin Police,

Please address the problem that persists with bicycles, scooters, and e-bikes being ridden on the sidewalks on Pleasant Street and Main Street. Kids and teens are riding with no regard for pedestrians on sidewalks. I have requested police intervention to resolve this issue, and the problem persists. As recently as 6:30 today, following the Berlin Community Market, our committee members were gathered at the entrance of 112 Pleasant Street when a scooter and two boys on bicycles rode through with no intention of avoiding us--we had to move or be hit by them. After telling them they shouldn't be on the sidewalk, one of the males yelled back, "Mind your own business, you f'ing c###t!" Our entire committee was speechless that this is how rude, disrespectful and obnoxious these teens behaved. There needs to be an organized group effort to actively get the message out that riding on sidewalks is prohibited. Furthermore, they often are traveling the opposing direction of traffic, in groups of 3 to 5, which makes it

very difficult to avoid them. There was one week when police presence helped the situation, however, most of these incidents occur when there are no police visible. We cannot depend on police presence to solve this problem. There needs to be signage that spells out where these scooters, bicycles, and e-bikes are allowed to ride. Then there needs to be some action taken when they are caught riding on the sidewalks or going the wrong direction. Can the safety committee take this on and create a plan to correct this before an injury or collision happens? We have been plagued with this problem for years and need to get it resolved.

Kathy & John Trumbull

Chief Lemoine was not in attendance, but did advise that they will try to have a police presence in the area. It was noted that the School Resource Officer, Lt. Hollie Dube, will be getting students at BMHS and the elementary school to review bicycle safety and the rules.

Councilor Lavertu asked if there was a penalty involved for those breaking the rules. Councilor Valerino stated that there used to be in the 1990's, when they had an officer walking the beat. Signs were suggested, however it was noted that people do not always read or follow the rules on the signs. Education will be needed to alleviate the problem.

Councilor Korzen shared concerns about E-Bikes and suggested an ordinance be considered to address this. Ms. Laflamme stated that Lebanon does have a set of ordinances they could review, and agreed that education and outreach need to be done with both adults and children.

Councilor Lavertu moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to refer the letter from Kathy and John Trumbull to the Traffic Safety Committee for review. So moved, the motion carried.

b. Porchfest Road Closure Request

To: Mayor Robert Cone & the Berlin City Council

August 23, 2026

Subject: Request for temporary road closure and event approval

Salutations to both Mayor Cone and the City Council,

The Berlin PorchFest committee is asking for approval for a road closure on Emery Street (from the corners of Willard Street to Madison Avenue) on Saturday, October 3, 2026 from noon until 10pm. Additionally, we will be requesting an officer to be present and, as always, endeavor to provide a safe (and fun!) for festival attendees and food trucks for the latter part of the day. We are working collaboratively with Sylvie Warren, executive director of St. Kieran's Center for the Arts, who are long-time participants in the festival.

PorchFest has also decided to continue to utilize the Norway Street neighborhood for the earlier part of the festival (between 8th Street and 10th Street). We have been advised by the Berlin Police Department that a road closure here is not necessary, however, we will be operating with the utmost caution to provide a safe space in which to enjoy the festival. The PorchFest committee is working directly with Norway Street neighbors and this year we are offering children's entertainment as well as a free community cookout.

The Berlin PorchFest committee sincerely appreciates your ongoing support for this amazing event (now in our 5th year!). Please feel free to reach out to Mandy Bernd: mandy@thecbh.org, with any further questions or concerns.

We hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

Mandy Bernd

Steward for the Androscoggin Valley, Berlin PorchFest Committee

Councilor Korzen moved, with a second by Councilor Lavertu, to approve the request from the PorchFest committee for the road closure on Emery Street on October 3, 2026. So moved, the motion carried.

c. Letter from Michael Adam re: Splashpad

From: Michael Adam
Sent: Thursday, August 27, 2026 2:51 PM
To: Shelli Fortin <safortin@berlinnh.gov>
Subject: Proposal for East Side Park Splash Pad and Seasonal Ice Rink

Dear Mayor,

I am writing to propose an exciting addition to East Side Park that would benefit our community year-round: a splash pad during the summer months that converts into an ice rink in the winter.

The location under consideration at the park offers significant advantages. We have a nearby river that could supply the water, minimizing utility needs, and the planned setup allows for the necessary piping to be installed without disturbing local traffic.

Most importantly, the goal is to fund this project entirely through donations, ensuring this becomes a wonderful asset for residents at no cost to the city.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal with you in further detail.

Sincerely,

Michael Adam

Councilor Lavertu shared concerns about the health of the water, if used from the river, and was advised they could not use it.

Councilor Korzen noted the need for recreational activities, such as the splashpad, pickleball, and the Tale Trail.

Councilor Korzen suggested that in addition to the Recreation and Parks Commission, this should also be brought to the attention of the Berlin Water Department. Mayor Cone advised he can bring this to the Water Commission.

Councilor Korzen moved, with a second by Councilor Lavertu, to refer the splashpad request to the Berlin Recreation and Parks Commission. So moved, the motion carried.

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Qualls, to accept the Mayor's report as presented and place it on file. So moved, the motion carried.

4. Public Comments

Christian Judson, of 473 Forbush Avenue, thanked the Council for the appointment to the Planning Board. Mr. Judson also noted that the splash pad would be a great addition to the City. Mr. Judson stated that there is a city ordinance concerning trees that extend past driveways, which allows Public Works to cut them down.

Paul Guerin, of 583 Burgess Street, again spoke about the woman who was screaming at them at the polls, stating it was crazy, and that nothing was said by him. Mr. Guerin also asked if citizens had the right to legally cut branches hanging over the sidewalk. Mr. Guerin suggested that an ordinance be passed to keep the sidewalks clean of debris. Mr. Guerin also asked about the new member at the Planning Board meeting on September 1, who was sitting in for the City Manager.

Irene Blais, of 490 Goebel Street, advised that any branches that hang over your land can be cut.

Micah Bachner, of 59 High Street, stated that he is visiting and is reminded how quaint and lovely the area is, and how it is hard to find those that take care of their community.

5. Council Comments

Councilor Korzen noted that the polls were fantastic, and that the workers do not get paid a lot, but do great work.

Councilor Korzen noted that a few people came to talk to him at the polls about the pickleball court, and that they could come up with the funds to get the project done. Councilor Korzen stated that he advised them to come up with a proposal.

Councilor Korzen asked about paving on Prospect Street, and was advised it is on the list to be done.

Councilor Korzen noted the green door at the recreation department is not closing properly. Councilor Korzen also noted that they had two accidents with cars backing into the telephone pole at the Recreation Department, and suggested something be added to make it more visible.

Councilor Korzen noted that as far as the the entrances to polling places, the Moderator did look at the law to determine where candidates could stand, and that next time a map will be available detailing the locations.

Councilor Theberge noted that Berlin is “The City that Trees Built” and requested the tree at the corner of Eighth Street not be cut down, but just trimmed.

Councilor Theberge asked how the City Manager could appoint someone to the Planning Board. Ms. Laflamme advised that under State law, in a City, the City Manager has a seat on the Board. The City Manager can attend, or can appoint someone to attend in his place, which is what happened in this instance.

6. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Qualls, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 pm. So moved, the motion carried.

A True Record, Attest:

Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

Note: Minutes are unofficial until they have been accepted by the Council by motion.