

City Council Work Session
August 17, 2026

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

Others present: City Manager Phillip L. Warren Jr., Dir. Of Strat. Initiatives and Asst. City Mgr. Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Chief of Police Jeff Lemoine, Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun and Members of the Public.

Mayor Cone started the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Non-Public Session

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second from Councilor Korzen, to enter non-public session at 6:30 pm under NH RSA 91-A:3 II (1) consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote with all in favor.

A legal matter was discussed and no votes were taken.

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to leave non-public session at 6:55 pm. So moved, the motion carried by roll call vote with all in favor.

Police Grant Extension Requests

Mr. Warren advised that the Council has previously approved grants for a command vehicle, the ILO program, and SWAT SOU special equipment through Homeland Security. The grant extensions will extend the grants to the end of the Federal fiscal year 2028. Councilor Morency asked if any other changes were made to the grants, and was advised there were no other changes.

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to approve the three grant extensions as presented. So moved, the motion carried. Councilor Plourde - recuse

Ambulance Lease Purchase Agreement

Mr. Warren advised that the ambulance estimate came in at \$450,000 with equipment. The cost for the lease-purchase agreement will be at an interest rate of 6.15%, with an annual payment of \$107,252 for five years. The first payment will be due in 2027.

Councilor Korzen moved, with a second by Councilor Valerino, to approve the obligor resolution for the ambulance lease purchase agreement as presented. So moved, the motion carried with all in favor.

At 7:02 p.m., there being no further business in Work Session, Mayor Cone recessed before moving on to the Regular Meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

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

CITY COUNCIL MEETING – Monday, August 17, 2026

Regular Meeting

Mayor Cone called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at approximately 7:10 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

b. Roll Call

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

Absent: Councilor Theberge

Also present: City Manager Phillip Warren, Jr., Director of Special Initiatives Pamela Laflamme, Finance Director Holly Larsen, City Clerk Shelli Fortin, Police Chief Jeff Lemoine, Richard King, Christian Judson, Matthew Chernicki, Paul Guerin, Richard White, other members of the public, and Lisa Connell, Berlin Daily Sun.

c. Councilor Korzen moved, with a second by Councilor Qualls, to accept the minutes of the August 3, 2026, Regular Meeting and Work Session. So moved, the motion passed.

Disbursements:

Disbursement Summary Draft #2015 with a start date of 08/04/2026 and an end date of 08/17/2026 for a total cash disbursement of \$1,030,780.87. Councilor Korzen moved, with a second by Councilor Morency, to accept the disbursement summary and pay all bills as recommended by the Committee on Accounts/Claims. So moved, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Theodore Bosen, of 13 Bisson Road, shared concerns about the police grant equipment purchases through Homeland Security. Mr. Bosen suggested that the Council members read the manufacturer descriptions of the equipment. Mr. Bosen noted that these items can be used against citizens and civilians and stated that with an ICE detention center in Berlin at FCI, there could be protests. Mr. Bosen noted a recent case in Texas in which protestors were prosecuted for terrorism. Mr. Bosen stated he is now practicing law again and representing people who are detained unlawfully. Mr. Bosen again stated that accepting these grants makes the police department beholden to Homeland Security.

Richard King, of 107 Jericho Road, noted again the lack of handicap accessibility in City Hall and offered to do research to help solve the issue.

Matthew Chernicki, of Burgess Street, noted the amazing tourist population in Berlin. Mr. Chernicki stated that he attended the most recent Planning Board meeting and is in support of the proposed casino. Mr. Chernicki stressed the importance of the developer not losing this construction season. Mr. Chernicki stated the casino is an exciting project, which will get people to Berlin, and may help to lower taxpayer responsibility.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Council Committee Reports

There were no Council committee reports.

NEW BUSINESS

1. City Manager's Report

1. Attached is the July 2026 Real Estate Transfer Report.
2. DES performed their annual inspection of the pollution control facility – the inspection report shows that the facility is in compliance with all permit requirements, all best management practices and that the facility is well run. DES did comment that a succession plan for the superintendent should be considered, which is

underway at present – we have an in-house candidate for the superintendent, that candidate is working closely with the current superintendent and we are posting an entry level position to backfill the anticipated vacancy. Our facility is held in high regard by DES, and this is due to the work of the superintendent and his staff.

3. Attached is the July 2026 Fire / EMS Activity report.
4. Regarding the FY 24 audit, the reconciliation work has been completed, and the auditors will now have what they need to complete that year's audit. The auditing firm has advised that they believe that a draft audit issuance date between September 15 - September 30, with a final issuance date of October 15 – October 31, would be a reasonable timeline. We will then move on to completion of the FY 25 audit and begin the field work for the FY 26 audit. Once the final FY 24 audit is approved and issued, we can publish the FY 24 Annual Report.

Councilor Korzen thanked the City Manager for keeping the audits on the docket.

Councilor Korzen asked about the entry level position open at the pollution control facility. Mr. Warren advised that they would like to hire a licensed operator, but are willing to train someone with background experience.

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.

2. Mayor's Report

- a. Letter from Paul Guerin re: Traffic Lights on Cleveland Bridge

Traffic Safety Committee:

Wondering if something can be done on the James C. Cleveland bridge at the lights, such as putting them on a blinking mode or timer at night so that people do not have to wait so long at the intersection, since the sensors do not work.

Traffic is not heavy after 9pm at night, or before 6am in the morning.

Thank you,

Paul Guerin
583 Burgess Street
Berlin, NH

Councilor Morency noted that although this was brought up at the last meeting, they are following past practice by presenting the letter to Council to be referred to the Traffic Safety Committee.

City Manager Warren advised that he has been in contact with the company that services the lights. Options include either a timer, or an optical solution.

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Qualls, to refer the letter from Mr. Guerin to the Traffic Safety Committee for review. So moved, the motion carried.

- b. Re-appointment Trustee of Trust Funds – D. Martin

Attention folks of the city council:

I would like to continue my position as trustee with the city.

Thank you,

Dave Martin

Councilor Valerino moved, with a second by Councilor Korzen, to approve the Mayor's re-appointment of David Martin as a Trustee of Trust Funds for a term to expire June 30, 2029. So moved, the motion carried.

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

3. Public Comments

Theodore Bosen spoke concerning the vote to reconsider the appointment of Christian Judson to the Planning Board. Mr. Bosen suggested that based on reports, this was a violation of Mr. Judson's first amendment rights, as he made statements pertinent to the community and since the content was political it was protected speech. Mr. Bosen stated that although the Council did have the right to reconsider the vote, the use of that power was an unconstitutional motive. Mr. Bosen noted that others may now worry about what they say and suggested that Mr. Judson could consult with legal counsel and bring a lawsuit against the City, which would cost the taxpayers money. Mr. Bosen suggested that the Council consult with legal counsel, and reinstate Mr. Judson if counsel agrees.

Richard King stated that he also attended the recent Planning Board meeting, and that the proposal presented by the casino was a good plan with positive changes. Mr. King noted that this will bring tourists into the City, and do a lot for non-profit agencies.

Matthew Chernicki asked about the timeline for the RAISE grant and if it is on schedule for 2027. Mr. Chernicki noted the importance of water and sewer for Route 110 to encourage development and increase the tax base and revenue.

Richard White, of Cheshire Street, noted that the City needs to increase the tax base, as they are currently not growing. Mr. White stated that Berlin has missed out on opportunities for a factory and a transportation system to make travel to Conway easier.

Matthew Chernicki mentioned the homeless issue and noted that they have no access to clean water, medical services, bathrooms, or a place to go. Mr. Chernicki urged the Council to show compassion as many are disabled. Mr. Chernicki noted that they should build a foundation today to bring everyone up together.

4. Council Comments

Councilor Valerino noted that the ERT team was activated twice yesterday and both times there was a resolution with no injuries. Councilor Valerino noted that these successful resolutions are due to the training and equipment available to the officers, and applauded the police department for applying for the grants. Purchasing the equipment with a grant does not create a burden for taxpayers and provides the community with a professional emergency response team. Councilor Valerino noted that although NHSP does have a team, it takes them time to gather members and respond.

Councilor Valerino agreed with Mr. Chernicki's comments about the casino, noting his support and that it will help the City grow.

Councilor Morency noted that the tactical team averages about one call out per year, and that no rights have been violated and no injuries received with any of the callouts. Councilor Morency stated that training, communication, and knowing the community are important parts of the emergency response team, and urged citizens to get the facts.

Councilor Lavertu stated that Berlin has one of the best police departments in the area, with dedicated, hardworking officers. Councilor Lavertu noted that Berlin should not be compared to Texas, and that if you are protesting peacefully, you will not get arrested.

Councilor Lavertu noted that many people have come to the area due to the trails and the former casino.

Councilor Lavertu stated that everyone wants to be kind-hearted and to take on the homeless issue, however they also do not want their taxes to go up. Councilor Lavertue noted that there are places for the homeless to go, and that this is not an issue for the City to address as it would create liability issues.

Councilor Higbee noted that he attended the meeting last week on the school facilities, and that he is now a member of the subcommittee that was formed. The next meeting will be held in November. Councilor Higbee also noted that a safety issue was brought up at the meeting concerning traffic when dropping off students, and suggested that the Traffic Safety Committee contact the school to address this at their next meeting.

Director of Strategic Initiatives Pamela Laflamme advised the Council that the RAISE grant is on schedule, construction documents are being finalized, and the project will go out to bid this fall.

5. Adjournment

On a motion by Councilor Higbee, seconded by Councilor Qualls, the Council voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 pm. So moved, the motion carried.

A True Record, Attest:

Shelli Fortin
City Clerk

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