

**March 11, 2026**  
**Berlin Economic Development Authority Meeting**  
**Berlin City Hall**

**Present were:** Chair Gabriella Goode, Peter Higbee, Andre Duchesne, Janet Nickerson, Dick Huot, Dick Eastman, Vicky McMorrow, Paul Robitaille, Richard Plourde

**Excused were:** Steve Halle

**Others Present:** Dan Whittet, Caleb Page, Eamon Kelley, Ted Bosen, Lisa Connell, Berlin Sun; and Pam Laflamme, Director of Strategic Initiatives

Chair Goode opened the meeting at 5:30PM

**Approval of January 2026 meeting minutes**

Mr. Duchesne made a motion to approve the minutes of the January meeting as presented. Mr. Huot seconded the motion. So moved, the motion passed with all in favor.

**Financial Report**

Ms. Laflamme reviewed the financials with the board for December, January, and February. There were very few expenses, all of which were related to Townsquare Media. The cash ending balance on February 28<sup>th</sup> was \$943,428.97. Questions were asked & answered. Mr. Higbee made a message to approve the three sets of financials, seconded by Mr. Eastman. All members voted in favor of the motion.

**Fiscal Year 2027 Budget**

Ms. Laflamme reviewed the proposed budget with the board. The difference between last year's budget and the proposed one for 2027 is putting money in the marketing budget that was not done for this current budget. That was an oversight last year during the budgeting process. Questions were asked about how marketing funds have been used and there was discussion about what the board had done with Townsquare Media. A new strategy is needed for this year. Mr. Higbee made a motion to approve the budget as presented seconded by Mr. Huot. All members voted in favor of the motion.

**Economic Development Strategy**

Recast Your City – Chair Goode shared that the Small Business Development Center will be held a business networking event in the auditorium on February 26. The NH Community Loan Fund, Coos Economic Development Corporation, WREN, and NH Employment Security were present as resource partners. The event was well attended and SBDC already indicated they want to come back later in the spring or summer.

Ms. McMorrow shared that she has met with Mandy Bernd of the Community Builders Hub to discuss ideas for downtown programming events. Music on Main will be back this fall and there is even an effort to revive Super Sunday. Cup & Cone and Hydro Tavern will hold a joint anniversary block party at the end of May.

The board discussed the entrepreneurship idea and noted that several organizations and individuals are interested in pursuing this effort. Ms. McMorrow noted at program that exists for high school students called Distributive Education Clubs of America that aims to support efforts to prepare emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in marketing, finance, hospitality and management in high schools and colleges. Mr. Higbee reminded the board that we should also look into providing succession planning support for family-owned businesses. Ms. Laflamme will inquire with SBDC if they have contacts for that effort.

The social media & marketing strategy needs to be worked out with a new direction for the upcoming year. Questions were asked and answered about our previous efforts.

Mr. Higbee noted he would like to assist in the signage and way-finding efforts.

Rite Aid Property –The only update shared was that Ms. Laflamme had submitted a grant application to EPA for cleanup and assessment of City owned properties in the downtown area. Questions were asked and answered.

Make My Move – The idea was put forward by a new resident of Berlin who was not in attendance at the meeting. It was asked that he be invited to next month's meeting. Little is known about the process works and what the returns on investments look like. Most communities are located in the Midwest with only a small presence in Maine. Ms. McMorrow said she noted that Manchester, NH is listed on the website. Staff will look into learning more from Manchester. Mr. Higbee recalled a similar effort/discussion many years ago but it was not getting any traction.

Data Center Discussion – Mr. Huot passed out a handout prepared by a former resident of Berlin related to the idea of locating a data center in Berlin. He finds this would bring many jobs and benefits to the City. The question of how to approach Burgess was brought up. Ms. Laflamme mentioned as the City is in the middle of negotiating a PILOT with the new owners, it might not be the right time for city officials to bring this idea forward. Ms. Laflamme said she would discuss with the City Manager. There was interest in learning more.

### **Nonpublic**

None

### **Member Comments**

Mr. Huot passed out his thoughts about the current conditions of Bickford Place and that it should be moved. It was noted that HEB Engineers had shared two years ago that it was feasible but expensive. Ms. Laflamme will ask HEB for an estimate of the cost so the board can make an informed decision. The board previously spent \$400K to build it. Chair Good mentioned that we should look to those who do public space planning for ideas to get the best and highest use of the space.

Mr. Huot also wanted to know more about the proposal for Dummer Yard as he has heard they will not be using all of the acreage for their project. Ms. Laflamme indicated that the developers are interested in talking to the board if that is what they would like. While it was noted that this is a bit of hot topic in the community, the board would like to learn more about the land use and whether there is potential for industrial land uses beyond the landfill. Mr. Huot made a motion to invite them to the next meeting, seconded by Mr. Robitaille, and all members voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. Huot asked about a development at the former Isaacson Structural Steel office building on Jericho Road. Ms. Laflamme shared that there is a proposal to turn it into 20 units of housing. The project is going to both the Zoning and Planning Boards in the near future.

Ms. McMorrow asked about how we could get lighting in the Tondreau Parking lot. It was explained that the City does not own the property and that the owners would need to be approached to discuss further. She stated wayfinding signage will be very important in the development of downtown.

### **Public Comments**

Ted Bosen, 13 Bisson Road, shared with the board that he thought the data center idea would be a windfall for the City. He also was going to share thoughts about a park he believed to be City owned but is actually owned by Patriot Power, LLC. He then went on to share his thoughts about the RAISE grant and the loss of the snowmelt component. He believes the City could and should make the case to get that part of the project reinstated. He shared that there was case law and precedent on the City's side.

Eamon Kelley, 396 Grafton Street, thanked the board for organizing and hosting the SBDC event.

Dan Whittet, 138 Prospect Street, told the board that the City's energy committee would be happy to help with the data center project. He also mentioned that Melissa Elander shared information about a heat pump initiative.

Caleb Page, 88 Prospect Street, expanded on the heat pump conversions saying that there are ideas not just for heat pump installations, but training funds for technicians and small business incubation ideas.

### **Other**

None

### **Adjourn**

**Ms. Nickerson made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Higbee. So moved, the motion passed unanimously.**

**Minutes taken by Pamela Laflamme**