

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, September 12, 2019

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Carl B. Jacobs, Vice-Chair
Thomas F. Powers
Terry M. Clark
Bettina A. Chadbourne

Councilors Present:

George Hansel

Staff Present:

City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon
City Attorney, Thomas Mullins
City Engineer, Don Lussier
Parks Recreation and Facilities Director,
Andrew Bohannon
Senior Planner, Tara Kessler
Asst. City Manager/IT Director, Rebecca
Landry
Public Works Director, Kurt Blomquist
PW Operations Manager, Aaron Costa
Asst. Public Works Director, Tom Moran
City Engineer, Don Lussier

Mayor Kendall Lane

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1) Joseph S. Hoppock, Esq. - Request to Purchase City Property

Attorney Joe Hoppock addressed the Committee and stated he represents Roberta Mastrogiovanni who runs the Corner News Store, which is located at 67 Main Street and 2 Gilbo Avenue. Attorney Hoppock noted Ms. Mastrogiovanni purchased just the building from the city in 2002 but would like to rectify this issue of only owning the building and not the land under the building by purchasing this land from the city. Attorney Hoppock noted his client's objective is not only to preserve the investment in her business but to also preserve the historic nature of the building as an old railroad station. In order to do that it will take a sizable amount of money as there has been no electric work that has been inside the building. However, at the present time Ms. Mastrogiovanni has no incentive to do anything if she does not own the land under her building.

Attorney Hoppock stated his client is unable to get a loan against the property and as a result would like to purchase the land under the building. He stated his letter to the city outlines the cash offer Ms. Mastrogiovanni is proposing and noted their plan is to close in 30 days from August 23.

Chair Greenwald stated he is an abutter to this property and has a letter on file which indicates he will not purchase city property as long as he is a city councilor.

Councilor Clark asked for staff comments with reference to plans for Gilbo Avenue and how it would affect this property. City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated staff has asked this matter be put on more time to look at the legalities surrounding this property and the future plans for this area.

Attorney Hoppock felt this response sounded indefinite and noted his client signed a seven-year lease in 2013, which is up next year and has the option of renewing it for one term of three years. He noted eight years ago there was mention of a plan for Gilbo Avenue and today it looks no different than what it looked like eight years ago. He further stated the more this item is delayed the more that building deteriorates and the more unlikely it is going to be able to be restored the way Ms. Mastrogiovanni wanted to restore it.

Councilor Jacobs clarified the lease is for the land. Mr. Hoppock agreed.

Councilor Clark did not feel it should take long for staff to come up with a response for the question he posed. Attorney Hoppock stated Gilbo Avenue is a long street; the item before the Council is for a small portion close to four tenths of an acre and if that portion has nothing to do with the city plan, he felt it should be sold to Ms. Mastrogiovanni.

Chair Greenwald stated he would like an update regarding the historic nature of the building as well.

Councilor Chadbourne asked what timeframe staff is looking for to respond. Ms. Dragon stated staff was looking for two cycles. Attorney Mullins noted this would be October 10 at the meeting of the Finance Committee.

Councilor Clark made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Powers.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends putting this item on more time for two cycles.

2) Acceptance of Donations – Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director Andrew Bohannon indicated this donation is \$700 collected at the peanut carnival for after school programs. He indicated six scholarships were possible from these funds.

Councilor Chadbourne asked what the peanut carnival was and also what the acronym CATCH meant. Mr. Bohannon explained that the peanut carnival is an event held at the end of the summer playground program where staff provide tickets to purchase peanuts(it is now a peanut free event) and the children use those tickets to play games, face painting, roller derby events, etc. There are usually about 200 children that attend this

event. With reference to the acronym CATCH it stands for Coordinated Approach through Afterschool Health – which is their afterschool program.

Councilor Powers made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept a donation of \$700.00 and that the money is used for the Recreation Department scholarship fund.

3) Acceptance of Donations – Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

Mr. Bohannon stated this donation is for \$500 for use by the Human Rights Committee, for the collaboration with the Keene International Festival. He indicated this person wants to remain anonymous for the public process but she has been sent a thank you note.

Mr. Bohannon stated this event, which will be held on Saturday September 21, 2019, is an event to celebrate Keene’s diversity. He added it is a well-publicized event this year.

Councilor Chadbourne thanked the anonymous donor.

Councilor Powers made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept a donation of \$500.00 and that the money is used for the Human Rights Committee collaboration with the Keene International Festival.

4) Acceptance of Donations – Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

The next donation Mr. Bohannon referred to was as he stated “a little different”. He indicated he has been working with the New England Mountain Bike Association Keene/Brattleboro Chapter for a few years with reference to locating a pump track similar to the footprint used for the skate park. Mr. Bohannon stated he has Michael Davern from the New England Mountain Bike Association – he noted this would be a great amenity to include in Keene’s park system to get children and families riding bikes at an early age. He stated the closest one he can reference is the one located in Amherst but also referred to a smaller track closed loop behind the campgrounds (informal).

He noted the one being proposed would be designed by professionals and maintained by the New England Mountain Bike Association. The track will provide safe environment, for new bikers learn and progress. With that Mr. Bohannon introduced Mike Davern.

Michael Davern of Hurricane Road explained a pump track is a closed loop which might cross over itself several times, and where kids learn to ride bicycles and learn great riding

skills. He indicated Keene has a large mountain biking network on city land and on private land but because Keene is so hilly and rocky it is an area that is difficult to learn and a pump track is a great environment for children to practice biking skills. Mr. Davern referred to pictures included in the committee's packet and added this is a great gathering place and stated people travel great distances to use a pump track.

Chair Greenwald asked whether pump tracks require constant grading. Mr. Davern stated nothing that is necessary to be done regularly but as dirt wears off dirt will need to be added.

Councilor Jacobs asked whether there is any type management that would be required especially with the "crossover" Mr. Davern had talked about. Mr. Davern stated it would be like a skate park and tend to have a certain flow to how people tend to travel.

Councilor Chadbourne asked how liability will be handled because it would be on city property. Mr. Bohannon stated it would be a recreation facility and as at all recreational facilities, there will be signs posted "use at your own risk". Councilor Powers stated this does fit into the Recreational Master Plan – Mr. Bohannon agreed and added there is an item regarding alternative uses for parks and it has been a conversation piece on the table. He further stated tracks are sometimes built with wood but felt this would be a good opportunity for the City to build a natural track.

Mr. Peter Poanessa of Dickinson Road stated he has been part of the New England Mountain Bike Association for a number of years and is a supporter of this project.

Mr. Nathaniel Stout of 46 Hurricane Road stated there is some talk about a dog park in this area as well and asked for clarification. Mr. Bohannon stated the location for the dog park if it was to be conceived would be in a different location.

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Clark.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept a donation of the construction of a pump track in Wheelock Park from the New England Mountain Bike Association Keene / Brattleboro Chapter.

The Chairman noted there is no money being requested of the city at this time.

5) Acceptance of Donations – Parks, Recreation and Facilities Department

Mr. Bohannon stated this item is in reference to accepting an informational kiosk at Railroad Square by the Walldogs. He noted the Walldogs event was a highly successful event and stated he is pleased to see this event keep giving back to the community. He noted how attractive the murals are, and the economic boost this artwork is bringing

downtown. Mr. Bohannon stated he would like Peter Poanessa who has designed this information booth to address the committee.

Mr. Poanessa stated this information sign is intended to bring back memories of the railroad heritage and the sign is designed to look like a vertical section of the railroad tracks. He added they have located a 32 foot rail from the Cheshire Railroad buried in the side of the Rail Trail in West Keene which they would like to harvest and use for this piece. Mr. Bohannon stated the sign would be located in the right of way area in the garden area, closer to the front - it is more of an informational kiosk for the Walldogs project.

Councilor Jacobs asked whether this would meet the criteria council set for public art. Mr. Bohannon stated it is an informational kiosk with industrial art qualities. The councilor stated if this is an art piece we should not forget the policies that are in place. Mr. Bohannon stated when this conversation started it was looked at more as an informational piece rather than an art piece. He added if the art criteria were used, he felt it would meet the required criteria.

Councilor Chadbourne stated there was talk there would be an “app” related to the tour. Mr. Poanessa stated this is something they had given some thought to but at the moment they are looking at all expenses – but this is something being considered.

Chair Greenwald noted the mural project did not involve any city funds and this sign project is not requiring any city funds either.

Councilor Clark made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept a donation of an informational kiosk in Railroad Square from the Walldogs.

6) Periodic Report - Assessors Board

City Assessor Dan Langille was the next speaker. Mr. Langille stated he is also the Chair of the Assessor’s Board. He indicated they act more like a zoning board with reference to the city’s assessing requirements. The Board is comprised of three public members, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. They hold staggering three year terms. The members consist currently of two realtors and one appraiser and they all live in Keene. Mr. Langille is a non-voting member serving the administrative needs of the Board.

He continued the main role of the Board is to review applications for abatement - when a property owner feels they are over-assessed. Once they receive the final tax bill the property owner has until March 1 to submit the application. The burden is on the property

owner to prove their case and they would need to provide documentation as to why they feel they are over-assessed.

Mr. Langille stated once the Board makes a decision it is final, but a property owner has the right to file an appeal with the Superior Court or the Board of Tax and Land Appeals. The Board hearings are open to the public.

Another matter within the purview of the Board is requests for property tax exemption for religious and charitable organizations. This is also a similar process as was stated earlier. There is no statutory requirement to have an Assessing Board but many communities have one and are run them similarly to how Keene runs its Board.

Mr. Langille stated his other responsibilities involve general responsibilities to the Assessing Department, providing tax information to the Tax Collector, etc.

Chair Greenwald asked whether all information submitted to the Board is public. Mr. Langille stated some information can be private such as information on income and expense.

The Chairman asked for the process for setting assessment for commercial properties. Mr. Langille state the first step is to review the application submitted to the Board, the burden here again is on the applicant; this could be in reference to comparable sales, cost approach, or income approach.

Councilor Powers made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Jacobs.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee accepted this periodic report as informational.

7) Contract services to Perform a Water/Sewer Rate Study - Public Works Department

Asst. Public Works Director Tom Moran stated the last time the city performed a water and sewer study was in 2004. He indicated the plan is to have a consultant look at the entire operational system connected with water and sewer. He turned the presentation over to Aaron Costa, Operations Manager.

Mr. Costa stated what staff is looking for tonight is for the City Manager to enter into a contract with Raftelis to perform a Water/Sewer Rate Study for an amount not to exceed \$64,708. He indicated the water and sewer fees provide for the funds connected to the water and sewer enterprise funds and the current rate is based on meter size and volume. He stated this study would take into account all aspects of the water/sewer utility services including costs associated with treatment, operations and maintenance, equipment repair and replacement, maintaining appropriate working capital and cash balances, debt services requirements as well as identify capital improvement needs. The project deliverables will include rate-modeling software specifically built for the City of Keene,

a final report of the findings and recommendations, public outreach and staff training. This is something that will be used by Public Works and Finance staff and will determine how what staff is doing affects rates.

Mr. Costa stated the City received five responses to an August 2019 Request for Proposals. A review team consisting of Aaron Costa, Operations Manager, Tom Moran, Assistant Public Works Director, Don Lussier, City Engineer, Merri Howe, Finance Director and Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director independently rated the initial proposals and conducted interviews and are recommending Raftelis as the firm to offer the contract.

Raftelis's presentation included an affordability aspect of the rate model and staff is recommending it be included as part of the project. Raftelis provided a cost estimate of \$15,000 to perform the low income study and staff is recommending it be included as part of the project. The City budgeted \$110,792 for this project and funding is available in the FY20 capital budget - the \$64,708 is well within budget.

Mr. Costa reminded the Committee he was before the committee regarding a grant from DES for \$20,000 to perform this study. This grant is contingent on the city completing this work and complying with DES requirements by May 31.

Chair Greenwald asked how the rate study would relate to the economically disadvantaged. Mr. Costa stated this would not be part of the study but affordability based on census data will be part of the study. He added much detail from the study will be provided to this committee.

Councilor Clark asked how this differs from the city adjusting the rate every year. Public Works Director Kurt Blomquist answered this study gets into things like additional fees that could be derived from a targeted group, different rate structures, bulk customer pricing – expanding upon what the city is already doing.

Mayor Lane asked whether the \$15,000 for the low-income part of the study included in the does the \$64,608. Mr. Costa stated it is included in the \$64,608.

Councilor Jacobs made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the City Council authorize the City Manager to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional services contract with Raftelis to perform a Water/Sewer Rate Study for an amount not to exceed \$64,708. If a contract cannot be negotiated, the City Manager is authorized to negotiate with the next ranked firm.

8) Design Change Order - Roxbury St. Bridge Replacement - Public Works Department

City Engineer Don Lussier stated the city was scheduled to replace the Roxbury Street bridge. The project was put out to bid but the bid came back \$700,000 over budget. Staff recommended rejecting the bid and rebidding the project. Mr. Lussier stated the design consultant has been directed to repackage the bid documents, DOT has asked for certain modifications, staff has talked to the original bidder and other contractors in the area to see how the bid package could be designed to make it more enticing to them.

Mr. Lussier stated the plan is to send out the bid late fall with the intention of awarding the contract during the beginning of the year, which would give the contractor all winter to build the components so that when the school year ends in June work can begin.

Chair Greenwald noted the background notes indicate this project is funded through the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's State Aid Bridge program. The NHDOT has already reviewed and approved the requested change. The cost to the City is therefore \$1,353.57.

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Clark.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a change order with McFarland Johnson for engineering services associated with the replacement of the Roxbury Street bridge over Beaver Brook, in an amount not to exceed \$6,767.83.

9) Sale of Former Alps Properties - Airport Division

Asst. City Manager/IT Director Rebecca Landry stated the former Alps property was subdivided into two lots. There is now a five acre lot and a ten acre lot. The ten acre lot is the open lot and the five acre lot consists of the mini golf area and the Go-Kart area. Staff is looking for authorization to sell the ten acre property without a bid process to the individual who owns property behind that lot and has right of way across that lot. Staff however, will be looking for a bid process for the five acre lot.

Councilor Chadbourne stated the items in the recent past that have come before this committee have been positive items and is glad to see the Airport moving forward. She added Beth Bendell of Monadnock Aviation has complimented Ms. Landry on her effort.

Councilor Powers clarified the sale of proceeds would come back before the Finance Committee as to how it would be spent on the Airport. Ms. Landry noted the FAA has certain criteria, sale of property should be at current value or for more and they could also restrict funds for AIP projects (city provides 5% and the State provides 95% funding). The appraisal of the property has to be approved by the FAA.

Councilor Clark made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Powers.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute purchase and sale agreements for the former Alps properties at the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport.

10) Sale of Airport Hangar - Airport Division

Ms. Landry stated this item is for the sale of the former green hangar currently leased by Monadnock Aviation for aircraft maintenance and storage. This lease is in good standing and goes through June 2020. The city is responsible for this property and it is in need of structural maintenance. The city has the opportunity to negotiate a sale with Monadnock Aviation and not put it out to bid.

Chair Greenwald asked how a price is set for this property. Ms. Dragon stated it is difficult to set a price on this because of its condition. The city recently spent \$7,500 on it and would like to recoup those monies but is also trying to avoid future expenses.

Councilor Clark asked how much land goes along with this hangar. Ms. Dragon stated the sale is just for the hangar – the land would continue to be leased.

Councilor Powers made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute purchase and sale agreements for the so called Green Hangar at the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk