

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 27, 2020

5:30 PM

Council Chambers B

Members Present:

Thomas F. Powers, Chair
Stephen L. Hooper, Vice-Chair
Terry M. Clark
Michael J. Remy
Raleigh C. Ormerod

Members Not Present:

George S. Hansel, Mayor

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Asst. City Manager/IT Director, Rebecca Landry
Merri Howe, Finance Director
Director of Economic Development and Special Projects, Medard Kopczynski
Public Works Director, Kurt Blomquist
Steve Russo, Police Chief
Director of Assessment, Dan Langille
Senior Staff Accountant, Karen Gray
Human Resources Director, Beth Fox

Chair Powers called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

1) Madeline Ulrich – Request for Free “Complimentary” Parking – Art Walk

Ms. Shannon Hundley, member of the Art Walk Committee addressed the Committee and stated she was before the Committee requesting complimentary parking for both weekends of Art Walk week, which would be May 29 and June 6. She noted it is just the two Saturdays they were looking for. The Chairman called the Committee’s attention to the criteria contained in the Council Policy on Free Parking.

Medard Kopczynski reiterated the criteria and stated staff would work with the Art Walk Committee to coordinate the efforts. He stated “complimentary” free parking policy adopted by the Council indicating this request does comply with that policy. The loss of revenue because of the free parking will be contingent on number of attendees but it could be about \$600-700 per day in lost revenue. He however, felt this was a good way to support the downtown.

Councilor Clark stated providing this type of free parking to events like this bring people downtown. It however, begs the question as to why we keep charging people to park downtown.

Councilor Remy made a motion that was seconded by Councilor Clark.

On a vote of 5-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the request from the Keene Art Walk for free “complimentary” parking be granted for Saturday, May 30 and Saturday, June 6.

2) Acceptance of Donation – Parks, Recreation and Facilities

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon addressed this item. She noted that the Monadnock Squares organization regularly uses the Recreation Center and they have been using this facility since the 60’s. This donation is in support of improvements needed at the Rec Center.

Councilor Clark expressed his appreciation for this organization and spoke about his family’s experience with this square dancing group. He stated he wholeheartedly supports their group and expressed thanks for their donation.

Councilor Clark made the following motions that was seconded by Councilor Hooper

On a vote of 5-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept the donation of \$300.00 from the Monadnock Squares and that the money is used for any improvements needed at the Keene Recreation Center.

3) Acceptance of NH Homeland Security Grant Program – Police Department

Police Chief Steve Russo stated that this item is in reference to a grant from the Homeland Security Program. Over the last two years, tactical teams in the State have been granted these funds based upon the size of each tactical team. In the past each time they had a grant award for, they would bring each one forward separately. This time the Police Department is asking for authorization to accept all three at once. The Chief noted these funds are solely for training.

Councilor Hooper made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Ormerod.

On a vote of 5-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept grant funding of up to \$11,378.37 from the FY 2018 and 2019 Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program and the NH Homeland Security Grant Program.

4) Acceptance of Forfeited Funds – Police Department

Chief Russo stated this is the acceptance of forfeited funds from a case dating back to 2013. The subject of the case was a large drug organization. He noted that the Keene Police Department collaborated with other state and federal agencies in 2015 to conclude the case.

Councilor Hooper commended the Police Department for the expeditious work on these cases.

Councilor Ormerod made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Remy:

On a vote of 5-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to recommend that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept criminally forfeited funds for \$8,059.73.

5) RESOLUTION: R-2020-03: Relating to the Celebration of Indigenous People's Day

Mr. Peter Mayjoy addressed the Committee. He stated he was before this Committee about a month ago. The Chair explained that this is before the Committee this evening for consideration to adopt the Resolution at the next Council meeting. Mr. Mayjoy stated the way the Resolution has been worded is wonderful. The indigenous people of America are so vital to this country and to who we are as a country.

Councilor Clark thanked Mr. Mayjoy for bringing this item forward. He stated he has thought about this for many years and this just unveils one more of the prejudices in this country. He added he would wholeheartedly support the adoption of this Resolution.

Councilor Hooper pointed out the foundation of this area did not start with the Europeans, it started with the indigenous peoples. There was an interesting archeological find at the Keene Middles School, which reminds us of our heritage, which goes back thousands of years.

Councilor Ormerod asked if the indigenous peoples day would be celebrated just this year in October as there is a specific date indicated in the Resolution. Chair Powers stated it would be an annual holiday until this Resolution were rescinded.

A motion was made by Councilor Ormerod which was seconded by Councilor Clark.

On a vote of 5-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2020-03

6) Capital Improvement Program

Assessing

Page 60 – Revaluation Project – Assessor Dan Langille stated he has been in the CIP for a number of years. This item is for reassessing the values of properties in Keene. This is something required to be done once every five years and it was last done in 2016. He explained the property values on tax bills represent values as of 2016. He indicated zoning, use of property, size, condition, qualities, materials used all are considered in determining the assessed value and this needs to be done due to the ever-changing real estate market. The goal of assessing is to represent market value as of 4/1/21. Another goal is to have identical houses e valued at the same level. Adjusting for today's market conditions may either increase or decrease the value of a particular property that has not even been modified. It is meant to represent the market conditions. As they did in 2016, every property owner will be notified of their new assessment and given an opportunity to review that with staff. As of 2018, Keene's assessed values are at 96% of the market rate. It is important to understand that the value of a property does not necessarily mean the tax will go up - this is based upon the tax rate.

Councilor Ormerod clarified the condition of a property as compared to their neighbors, and if a property was in better condition, their assessment would be higher and taxes could be higher. Mr. Langille answered in the affirmative.

Councilor Clark asked whether every house gets a site visit. Mr. Langille stated each property will be reviewed and went on to say the Assessor's Office is always updating the City's records. The revaluation company reviews the exterior. Councilor Clark asked if an improvement is done which, the City is unaware of then the assessment might not reflect that. Mr. Langille agreed that does happen.

Finance

Page 68 – Financial Software Replacement –Finance Director Merri Howe was the next presenter. Ms. Howe stated in FY99 the City purchased and began the implementation of Pentamation software. Pentamation is the heart of the financial functionality of the City and is responsible for nearly \$70,000,000 of transactions that flow through the City. In 1999, this software was considered “state of the art.” The software was last updated in July 2016. Ms. Howe went over some of the functions this software is used for - 25,000 utility bills by Revenue Collection, which equate to approximately \$3.6 million dollars as well as 15,200 property tax bills. Accounts Payable produce 4,880 invoices that total \$7.5 million, 6,000 checks are issued and they maintain a vendor database of 14,700 vendors. The system processes payroll for between 300-350 employees each week, which equate to 18,000 paychecks being issued per year. She stated this software has served the City well over the years, but the needs of the City and its residents have changed and this software no longer meets those needs.

Ms. Howe stated consumers are looking for more information at the touch of their fingertips. As a result, staff is looking at options for upgrading or migrating to a different financial package. This will be a long project that will affect all City departments. The benefit, however; would be to provide secure, accurate information in a time saving manner and be able to serve the City for another 20 years. Ms. Howe stated this project would begin in FY26.

Councilor Ormerod felt this seems timely considering the rate review of the water and sewer utilities. He asked whether there is any software that will be able to provide the support for these varied billings. Ms. Howe answered in the affirmative and added what is available is more flexible than what we had in the past. Councilor Ormerod felt with the right product it could provide for smart revenue and provide the services the City wants to offer. He suggested staff keep this in mind when deciding on a particular software.

IT Director, Rebecca Landry added what was not stated was the ability to integrate data with other databases, which is important as well. When a new software is considered, the requesting Department must provide an assessment of their needs and added the City would not sign a contract unless all those needs can be met.

Councilor Remy felt the expenditure of \$30,000 for research seems unnecessary, as most software vendors would be looking to sell product. Ms. Howe stated this would be to engage an outside consultant to provide an objective review, look at other municipalities and see how the software works for them.

Chair Powers clarified even though this is being referred to as a financial software, it is more than that as it drives the entire system. Ms. Howe agreed.

Information Technology

Page 29 - Capital Reserve for IT – Ms. Howe this year a capital reserve was created for major purchases in IT where a project will be set up to schedule and allocate funds incrementally each year to cover these large purchases and avoid spending spikes.

Page 69 – Database Software – Ms. Landry stated the IT Department has transitioned from Oracle to a sequel platform. She indicated the database system requires licensing and this is based on the number of systems and users. Every five years an assessment is necessary to see if it makes sense to stay with a particular platform. This project lines up with server replacement.

Page 71 – Network Equipment Replacement – This item becomes important each year as cyber security and risks are looked at. In FY21 only the switches are being looked at and not things like wire walls. Ms. Landry pointed out switches are replaced only when they are no longer supported by the manufacturer. The proposed switches integrate with the City’s existing phone system (Cisco). Councilor Remy felt anything that can be done for security is worth it.

Page 72-73 – Server Replacement – The City has over 60 virtual servers and they are running on close to four hosts (finance has its own server). This project in FY21 replaces one server and the host server for Finance in FY22. Councilor Ormerod noted how little it costs and asked for explanation. Ms. Landry explained when the City switched to the virtual environment; it went from about a dozen servers to four and noted this is because of improvement in the industry.

Page 74 – Storage Area Network (SAN) – This is what is used by all the servers (single storage system). All the City’s databases are stored on the SAN. Councilor Clark asked whether SAN would be the location where items like Council and Board meeting minutes are stored. Ms. Landry answered in the affirmative. The Councilor stated at the present time Boolean search engine logic does not seem to work well. He added it is difficult to obtain information for research from the present system. He asked whether this is something that would be alleviated with the project slated for FY4. Ms. Landry stated this was a separate issue, the documents the Councilor is trying to obtain are located on the website and are not on the SAN. The SAN is located behind the firewall. She explained the City’s search engine was a google, but google stepped away from independent websites. The City then moved to a product called SOLR. She added that staff has been asked to make sure this SOLR search engine is working properly and if it is not, she would address the issue.

Page 75 - Phone System Replacement – This item it is to replace the phone system - the “brains” of the phone system was replaced a few years ago. The project is slated for FY23. Councilor Ormerod asked when the hardware is replaced whether this also includes the old style paging system. Ms. Landry the City has a few different paging systems. At the WWTF you can pick up a phone and through a loudspeaker speak you can reach particular parts of the building.

FIRE

Page 39 - Ambulance Replacement – Fire Chief Mark Howard and Deputy Chickering were the next two speakers. Chief Howard noted ambulances are currently on a nine-year rotation. He noted in 2019 ambulances responded to 3,460 emergency service calls. In the nine year rotation ambulances would have responded to over 10,000 calls. In FY22, one of the ambulances would be replaced for \$260,000 and in FY25 the second one replaced at \$285,000

Councilor Ormerod asked what happens to the old fleet. Chief Howard replied that previously, the cost of an ambulance would show at \$100,000 in the CIP because of a \$50,000 trade-in value. However, that type of cushion does not exist anymore. The last two ambulances that the City were sold at no more than \$10,000. He indicated they have explored the possibility of marketing old fleet versus trading it in, but noted the last time they marketed an apparatus, it took considerable staff time for over a year and ultimately they sold it for the value that the vendor had projected.

Councilor Hooper asked how the nine-year rotation is put in place – he asked whether this term is mandated. Chief Howard replied that it is not mandated unless the vehicles cannot pass inspection. He stated the City used to be on a seven-year plan, but this was for vehicles that were lighter duty. He stated for the use that these ambulances get, it is important to have reliable vehicles. He added if a vehicle goes out for inspection for a day or two is ok but if, it is out of commission for two to three months with the number of calls received it can be difficult. He stated their biggest enemy right now is electrical systems, emission and rust.

Page 40 - Apparatus Replacement – Chief Howard stated the items that fall under this category are brush units, engines, ladders, and utility vehicles. In FY21, \$45,000 is allocated for one of the two brush trucks. In FY22, \$725,000 for the replacement of the tanker and in FY23 \$45,000 replace of the second brush truck and \$60,000 for the replacement of a utility vehicle and in the final year for the rescue vehicle. Chief Howard stated based on usage these vehicles have varying replacement schedules. Engine 1, Engine 2 and Ladder 2, are on a 15-year schedule. Ladder 1 is on a 20-year replacement and the current Ladder 1 by the time it is replaced would have been extended for an extra 3 ½ years.

Page 41 - Station 2 Study – Chief Howard noted on page 22 it talks about FY22 funds (\$50,000) for the phase 2 assessment. He explained phase 1 has just been completed. Phase 2 will start under the leadership of the Manager and the team that has been put together to look at the building needs. There was \$20,000 left from phase 1 and these funds will be used for the phase 2 review. Hence, the \$50,000 allocated for phase 2 will be used in FY22 for design work in phase 3 from whatever the phase 2 determines. Councilor Ormerod clarified the internal study is the reason we have these remaining funds. Chief Howard agreed.

Page 42 - Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus – Deputy Chickering reported that in FY 24 the project would be at a cost of \$150,000. This is for respiratory protection for personnel when entering hazardous areas. He noted the ones being used now were purchased in 2007. The project will replace 58 units, which have a useful life of 15 years. He added the department is eligible to apply for the 2018 NFPA Standards grant to offset the costs. If the department is successful, the City will be responsible for 10% of the costs. Chief Howard noted the current

standard that is out are the 2018 SCBA Standard and because the City is two years out the city's scoring will be higher. Councilor Ormerod clarified the project cost of \$755,000 in FY24 is if the City does not get the grant. The Chief agreed.

Page 43 - SCBA Fill Station –The Department currently has two fill stations, and these stations are used regularly to fill SCBA bottles with compressed air. They require quality air testing and annual maintenance by an outside vendor. Station 2 unit was purchased by a grant in 2005 and central station's unit was purchased in 2012 by a grant.

Page 44 - Hydraulic Rescue Tools – Deputy Chickering stated the Department currently uses one brand of hydraulic tool for vehicle extrication. The equipment is serviced and tested annually according to NFPA Standards. The newer tool will have higher cutting and spreading power. Life span of the equipment was estimated to be between 15 – 20 years and the current tool has been in use for about 10 to 16 years. Chief Howard stated the strength of the tool they use currently has a difficult time cutting through newer vehicles, which makes it difficult to safely remove people.

Police

Page 54 - Portable Radios – Police Chief Steve Russo stated this is the last year for the portable radio replacement. The number of radios in use have been downsized from 63 to 53 radios, which provides for a saving of \$40,000 than was budgeted. The current ones were from 2006 and were purchased from grant funds and these portable units are not being serviced anymore.

Page 55 - Dispatch Console Replacement - FY22 the budget is for \$233,488 and this amount is based on current price. He noted the current system was installed when the Marlboro site was occupied by the Police Department. At the end of 2021, the system will no longer be supported by the vendor. He noted the current system uses outdated circuits.

Councilor Ormerod asked whether this item should be purchased sooner. Ms. Dragon stated one of the challenges was trying to fit this item into the Plan, as it was not one of those projects that was working itself through the plan. She added if this item needs to be replaced sooner, then staff will come before the Council to adjust the CIP for the following years. Chief Russo stated they should be able to use the current system through the end of 2021 and the vendor should be able to service it through that time.

Page 56 - Mobile Radio Replacement– Chief Russo stated he could not even remember how old these radios are – they are in use 24 in cruisers and have three spare ones. At the present time, only one can be considered a current radio and the oldest ones cannot be serviced anymore. He added if a radio goes down and there are no spares, a cruiser cannot be used. The Chief noted unlike with the fire equipment they do not have Standards they follow and his recommendation is nine years for portable radios, and ten years for mobile units.

Page 57 - EXACOM Hindsight System – Chief Russo stated this item is used to record all conversation that comes over the radios. These units are good for six years and after that time the vendor will no longer service the units. He added these units are required for accreditation and is a public safety issue. This item is budgeted for \$35,000 in FY27.

Equipment Fund (Fleet)

Page 198 - Equipment Replacement – Mr. Blomquist explained the Equipment Fund is an internal service fund, which is funded by departments through an internal service charge for the maintenance and replacement of vehicles. Asst. Public Works Director, Duncan Watson stated page 198 outlines the vehicle replacement program. Pages 201 – 204 lists the vehicles being replaced but added the assessment of these vehicles is on-going. Mr. Blomquist noted his staff does not just look at the five years as listed in the CIP but they look ahead to ten years

Councilor Ormerod complimented staff for the different types of vehicles they work with and the types of grants they try to leverage. He noted, as this is really a ten-year program if electrical vehicles are something that could be given some thought to. Mr. Blomquist stated the City did own a pickup truck as well as staff vehicles that are hybrid. He stated some of the challenges are to see what vehicles are available and the fact the City's fleet does not travel long distances. The other issue are the facilities to be able to maintain these electrical vehicles. He added his staff is constantly evaluating these vehicles and looking to see if electric could be an option for the City.

Page 199 - Fleet Services Roof Replacement – Mr. Watson stated this roof is currently a patchwork roof and at this point staff is chasing leaks. Replacement is projected for FY23.

Page 200 - Fleet Services Building Assessment– This project is to use a consultant to project ahead of what can be expected with the fleet facility.

Solid Waste

Page 135 - Recycling Equipment Replacement – Mr. Watson stated this capital reserve is for replacing major pieces of equipment. The first piece of equipment being replaced is the primary baler. He added it is critical piece of equipment for the recycling operation. He called the committee's attention to the three other pieces of equipment listed on that page that will also be replaced in the future.

Page 136 -Weight Scale Replacement – Mr. Watson stated this is the lifeblood of the operation and helps weigh incoming and outgoing material, which is how charges are calculated for the revenue stream. Chair Powers noted these expenses are through the solid waste fund, funded through revenue at the transfer station

Councilor Hooper asked how often the weight scale is checked for accuracy. Mr. Watson stated this is something that is done through a vendor who is certified in Weights and Measures.

Page 137 - Refurbish Interior Facility – In the upcoming CIP it is anticipating an upgrade in the design surfaces for the transfer station. He noted this surface is original to this site and will be 30 plus years this year. He noted it is important to look at this facility and make sure the conditions meet the needs of the employees who work at this facility. Mr. Blomquist stated his number one goal is to make sure PW employees are properly taken care of. He stated PW employees at times work in very difficult conditions and especially at the transfer station when the weather conditions are very cold it is that much colder at this site and there are people who work six to eight hours in these conditions and stated this was an important project for him.

Councilor Ormerod asked whether there were any hazardous conditions such as asbestos associated with this facility. Mr. Blomquist stated this building was constructed in 1994 so there is no asbestos at this site.

Page 138 - Pavement Replacement – Mr. Watson stated by the time we get to this project this facility will be over 30 years. He stated this pavement is seeing a lot of cracking, there is going to be a point when the road will not be able to be band-aided back.

Councilor Clark asked what the plans for the property the City purchased that is located before the transfer station. Mr. Watson stated there are options being looked at, but there is nothing right now and added access to this site is challenging.

Ms. Dragon stated the next step is the public hearing on March 5. The CIP comes back for amendments or to be approved as is. She stated putting a package like this has a lot of moving parts and stated she is most impressed at how long staff attempts to stretch the life out of assets. The Manager stated City has a very skilled team running these departments.

Chair Powers stated the public hearing is Thursday, March 5. Bus tour on March 7 and the next Committee meeting is on Thursday, March 12.

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker