

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, November 12, 2020

6:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Mary Alther, Tax Collector

Members Not Present:

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

1) Acceptance Kiwanis Club Decorative Lighting - Public Works/Emergency Management Director

Public Works Director Kürt Blomquist addressed the committee first and stated the Kiwanis Club has been sponsoring the tree lighting festival in the City at least for the past 25 years. During the past few years they have also decorated the light poles on Main Street which have remained lit through February. Last year the Kiwanis Club proposed the City take over the lights permanently because of the number of challenges they have been experiencing.

Mr. Blomquist stated in the recent past his department has received no complaints about these lights. From a maintenance standpoint there has been some damage because of poles being hit by vehicles and have seen only one act of vandalism.

Mr. Blomquist stated at this point staff is recommending Council accept these lights with the understanding that the Council will determine how long they would like these lights to stay on past the holiday season, whether that be year-round or some other timeframe. The consensus of the Committee was that the lights would remain on year-round.

Liz Sayre from the Kiwanis Club addressed the committee next and stated the club has six new sets of lights which can be used as replacements. She noted the Kiwanis Club has received positive comments about these lights and expressed the club's appreciation for the staff supporting the City's ownership and was hopeful that the Council will agree to take them on.

Chair Powers thanked the Kiwanis Club for their many years of service installing these lights.

Councilor Hooper thanked the Kiwanis Club as well and noted these lights not only add to the beauty of downtown but also add to the safety of downtown.

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

On 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept decorative lights and associated apparatus placed on decorative light poles located on Main Street from the Keene Kiwanis Club.

2) Tax Deeds for Unpaid 2017 Property Taxes - Revenue Collector

Tax Collector Mary Alther addressed the committee and stated per RSA 80-76, two years after the execution of a tax lien, the tax collector must execute the tax deed unless the City Council waives the process until 2021. The City has 17 properties that have taxes due from 2017, which went into the lien process in 2018. Of the 17 properties, 15 property owners have asked for a waiver and have been working on paying off the taxes. Ms. Alther stated staff is recommending waiving the deeding until February 2021. The other two, staff is recommending moving forward with the deed process.

Councilor Ormerod asked what happens when the City issues a tax deed on a single family home. Ms. Alther stated the City becomes the owner of the property, but the property owner has a way to regain the property by paying the past due taxes. She stated there are also eviction notices sent out and the entire process could take up to six months. There are RSA's the City has to follow in this regard. Councilor Ormerod stated he understands the RSA process but there are also other directives the City has to follow regarding eviction during Covid and asked how that comes into play. Chair Powers stated his understanding is that the two properties in question, one is a piece of land and the other is a single family home which is unoccupied.

Councilor Clark stated the City wants to give every opportunity to property owners to get caught up and only after every avenue is exhausted the City moves forward with the deed process.

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

On 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to instruct the Revenue Collector to waive until February 26, 2021, the tax deeding for the 15 properties identified in the November 5, 2020, memorandum from the Revenue Collector as being contrary to the public interest; and after such date to provide further recommendations with respect to the payment status of the properties; and further that the City Manager be authorized to accept the tax deed from the Revenue Collector for the two properties identified in the November 5, 2020 memorandum.

3) Third Amendment to Municipal Services Agreement with KSC - City Manager

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon addressed the committee next. Ms. Dragon stated the next three items relate to the funding of the part time position tied to the new social hosting ordinance. The Manager noted this item is an amendment to a current Municipal Services Agreement the City has with Keene State College (KSC). The City is currently operating under a one year agreement that expires on June 30, 2021. This amendment articulates a 50/50 funding split between the City and the College as it relates to the part time employee contract work. The part

time position will be handled through a temporary employment contract. The Manager noted this will allow the City time to evaluate the demand for this position and the potential additional ways it can align its duties with KSC. Utilizing a temporary contract also provides time for the City to determine if and how it should be added to the City's schedule of part-time and full-time positions.

The Manager went on to say the adoption of the Social Host ordinance creates a new program at the City. This position is an integral part of this program. It provides the administrative support necessary to track and monitor activity in neighborhoods, and this position provides the crucial follow up between the City, College, students, landlords and property owners that is needed. KSC has made changes to their code of conduct policy this year prompted by Covid-19. The policy now holds students accountable for both on and off campus behavior. This ordinance and the shared position allows the City and College to work together more effectively to address quality of life issues in neighborhoods.

The Manager stated the first motion is for an amendment to the Municipal Services Agreement and articulates the hiring of a City employee and how it will be funded 50/50 between the City and the College. The funding is approximately \$7,500 from the City and \$7,500 from the College for the next six months.

Councilor Clark clarified this will be a City position under the Police Department. The Manager agreed.

Councilor Ormerod asked with tough economic times ahead what protection exists to keep such positions alive for at least a year. Ms. Dragon stated the amendment of the Agreement provides for a starting point for next year for the City when it begins negotiation with KSC. Even though there is no 100% certainty the College will agree to continue, President Treadwell is very much committed to this program and would like it expanded to work closely with the City.

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

On 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends to the City Council that the attached Third Amendment to the Municipal Services Agreement between the City of Keene and Keene State College be forwarded with a recommendation that the City Manager be authorized to execute the amendment.

4) Relating to the Acceptance of Funds from Keene State College

The City Manager stated this is the actual acceptance of funds into the City budget. She explained in order to accept funds from KSC and place them in the appropriate budget line a Resolution is required to complete that process.

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

On 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that Resolution R-2020-39 relating to the acceptance and use of funds from Keene State College be adopted.

5) Transfer of Funds Within General Fund Operating Budget - Finance Director

Ms. Dragon stated the final action related to this position is moving funds from the contract line in the General Fund Budget to the appropriate personnel line in the Police Department budget.

Councilor Clark asked what the marketing and development fund is used for. Ms. Dragon stated it has been used for print material for the Economic Development office but it is also used for the Downtown Coordinator position. Beth Wood who was hired as the Downtown Coordinator jointly between MEDC and the City has now been hired by the City as the Parking Manager. The Councilor asked whether these funds are going to be necessary going forward. Ms. Dragon stated a portion of those funds will remain for the Social Host position and the rest will be used to support the continued work with the downtown and economic development efforts.

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

On 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to re-appropriate and transfer funds from Marketing and Development to Police Admin Part Time Wages and Social Security Taxes as a funding source for fifty percent (50%) of the cost and related job expenses incurred to employ a Community Specialist.

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Additional Edits by,
Terri Hood, Assistant City Clerk