

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, February 4, 2021. The Honorable Mayor George S. Hansel called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Mayor Hansel read into the record the Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04. He continued that the members of the City Council would be participating remotely. The Mayor asked that during the roll call for attendance, each Councilor identify their online presence and whether there are others with them in the room. Roll called: Stephen L. Hooper, Michael J. Remy, Janis O. Manwaring, Michael Giacomo, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Philip M. Jones, Gladys Johnsen, Raleigh C. Ormerod, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Catherine I. Workman, Mitchell H. Greenwald, Kate M. Bosley, and Thomas F. Powers. Terry M. Clark was absent. A motion by Councilor Powers to accept the minutes from the January 21, 2021 regular meeting was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley and the motion passed on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. The Mayor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Hansel provided a reminder that February 5 at 8:30 AM there was an optional meeting to discuss several legislative bills dealing with State Education and Retirement System Funding. These two issues stand out with potential to impact local taxpayers. Mayor Hansel had invited Cheshire County School Board members, other Mayors from across NH, and the Cheshire County Delegation. Also joining would be Senator Kahn and the Director of the NH Retirement System, of which many local employees are involved.

The Mayor recognized Keene's own Councilor Catherine Workman, who was selected as one of 10 up-and-coming professionals for 2021 by the Business Journal of Greater Keene, Brattleboro, and Peterborough. Councilor Workman was also recognized by the New Hampshire Union Leader's "40 Under 40." Mayor Hansel said that recognition by both groups was well-deserved. The Mayor also recognized Shaun Filiault who was also recognized by the Business Journal of Greater Keene, Brattleboro, and Peterborough as one of 10 up-and-coming professionals for 2021. Mr. Filiault was at the time of this meeting serving as a member of the Human Rights Committee.

PROCLAMATION – KEENE HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY SENIORS

The Mayor recognized that many in the community love going to Keene High School hockey games. Due to a few disrupted seasons, the City was unable to recognize the achievements of varsity seniors and so this proclamation recognized this year and last. As such, Mayor Hansel into the record a Proclamation recognizing Keene High School Hockey Varsity Seniors. Specifically, the Mayor recognized and wished luck to the following individuals: Taylor Panek – Goalie # 1, Peter Haas – Defenseman # 9, Ethan Russell – Left Wing # 6, and Jacob Russell – Goalie # 31.

RESOLUTION – IN APPRECIATION OF JEFFREY W. TITUS UPON HIS RETIREMENT – RESOLUTION R-2021-05

With appreciation, Mayor Hansel read into the record Resolution R-2021-05. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2021-05 was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The City Attorney said that he worked closely with Mr. Titus and appreciated his attention to detail and extensive municipal knowledge. The City Attorney stated that he would miss Mr. Titus and wished him great luck in retirement, when he would have more time to pursue his excellent photography.

On a roll call vote, 14 Councilors were present and voting in favor. Councilor Clark was absent.

CONFIRMATIONS

Before the Mayor recognized Councilor Powers for a motion, the City Clerk noted that there was a correction on the term expiration for the Mayor's nominee of Harold Farrington as an alternate to the Planning Board. The Clerk noted that Mr. Farrington would be completing the term of Emily Lavigne-Bernier who moved from an alternate to a regular member. The Clerk noted the corrected end date of the term should be December 31, 2022. A motion by Councilor Powers to confirm the nominations was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. On a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor, the nominations of Harrold Farrington as an alternate to the Planning Board, with a corrected term to expire December 31, 2022 and to the Energy and Climate Committee, Jude Nuru, with a term to expire December 31, 2023 were confirmed.

NOMINATION

The Mayor submitted for consideration the following nomination. To the Energy & Climate Committee, Denise Thomas to serve as a regular member with a term to expire December 31, 2023. The nomination was tabled until the next regular meeting.

COMMUNICATION – COUNCILOR TERRY CLARK – RESIGNATION – WARD 3 COUNCILOR

Councilor Terry Clark submitted on February 3, 2021 his resignation from the City Council effective immediately. Before accepting Councilor Clark's letter of resignation, Mayor Hansel expressed the City's appreciation for his 10 years of service as the Ward Three Councilor. Mayor Hansel would be setting the filing period at the next regular Council meeting. Pursuant to Section 37 of the Rules of Order, Mayor Hansel declared the Ward Three Council seat vacant.

MSFI REPORT – VERBAL UPDATE – DETERIORATING CONDITIONS ON THOMPSON ROAD – CITY ENGINEER

A Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee report read recommending on a 4-0 roll call vote to accept the update about deteriorating conditions on Thompson Road as informational. Mayor Hansel filed the report as informational.

FOP REPORT – ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT FUNDING – COMPLETE STREET INFRASTRUCTURE – PARKS, RECREATION AND FACILITIES DIRECTOR

A Finance, Organization & Personnel Committee report read recommending on 5-0 roll call vote that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to execute the Project Agreement with Southwest Regional Planning Commission for the award of the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) 2020 Complete Streets Implementation Grant and recommend the acceptance of the grant in the amount of \$41,000.00 for the complete streets infrastructure. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the report was duly seconded by Councilor Hooper. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Ward Three Council seat vacant.

FOP REPORT – LEASE AGREEMENT WITH SENATOR SHAHEEN AT 12 GILBO AVENUE – PARKS, RECREATION AND FACILITIES DIRECTOR

A Finance, Organization & Personnel Committee report read recommending on 5-0 roll call vote that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a lease renewal with United States Senator Jeanne Shaheen for the office space located at 12 Gilbo Avenue. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the report was duly seconded by Councilor Hooper. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Ward Three Council seat vacant.

FOP REPORT – UPGRADES TO HVAC SYSTEMS AT CITY HALL – PARKS, RECREATION AND FACILITIES DIRECTOR

A Finance, Organization & Personnel Committee report read recommending on a 5-0 roll call vote that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to award and execute a contract with KPMB Enterprises LLC for specifications to upgrade the ventilation and HVAC system at City Hall in the amount of \$165,500.00. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the report was duly seconded by Councilor Hooper.

Councilor Jones asked whether this project would result in credits to the City's annual EcoHealth Report Card. Councilor Powers replied that this would result in more efficient energy consumption at City Hall that would result in such credits. Beyond that, Councilor Powers anticipated credits to employee productivity and fewer illnesses because good air impacts the body. He anticipated only positive results. Councilor Greenwald posed a question about project costs that was meant actually for the next agenda item. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Ward Three Council seat vacant.

FOP REPORT – CITY HALL REAR WALL PROJECT – CONSULTANT SELECTION – CITY ENGINEER

A Finance, Organization & Personnel Committee report read recommending on a 5-0 roll call vote that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional service contract with DuBois & King, Inc., in an amount not to exceed \$140,000 for engineering and technical services for the City Hall Rear Wall Project. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the report was duly seconded by Councilor Hooper.

Councilor Greenwald expressed concern and asked if there was a rough estimate of the total project cost. Councilor Powers replied no, adding that any estimate at this time would be a wild guess and in his opinion an unrealistic expectation before knowing what the project is. He said this planning and study phase was the most prudent way to determine future needs. The City Manager added that in addition to flooding of City Hall and cracks now in the wall, there were also signs of flood damage to neighboring properties, such as Central Square Terrace, due to Town Brook. Exploring a solution to this problem would benefit neighbors too.

Councilor Bosley recalled conversations over time as to whether City Hall should remain in its present location. Without yet knowing the results of this study, she asked whether it was prudent to spend the \$165,000 on the new HVAC equipment if there is a chance that the results would show that it is best to move City Hall. Councilor Powers understood Councilor Bosley's point but said that it was a time to be prudent because he did not expect that City Hall would be moving any time in the near future and if more space was needed, there could be other solutions. In his opinion, this recurring problem should have been addressed many years ago. A quality ventilation system would have significant benefits for employees now and would increase property value if and when the building sold. The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Ward Three Council seat vacant.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager reported that the week of this meeting the City amended its sick leave policy for full time probationary employees to allow them to advance up to six days of sick leave for an absence related to Covid-19 or quarantine. This was done to assist probationary employees not yet eligible for sick leave. Prior to December 31, 2020, the Federal Government created Emergency Paid Sick leave through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act related to Covid-19 but the program had since expired.

The City Manager shared that the road rehabilitation projects for 2021 were scheduled tentatively to begin in June. These projects resurface streets identified through the City's asset management plan and funded through the Capital Improvement Program. This year, streets include the neighborhoods of: Cady Street, Hooper Street, and Speaker Street; Federal Street, Lamson Street, and St. James Street; Martin Street; Roxbury Street from Beaver Brook to Water Street; School Street and West Street to Gilbo Avenue.

The City Manager was very pleased to share that Police Chief Steve Russo was appointed by the Governor to the Police Standards and Training Council for the term ending Jan 2023. She was grateful for Chief Russo's willingness to serve. It is more important than ever given the nationwide and NH focus on policing, and the various changes coming forward. It is great that Keene is able to add its voice from this region to the conversation. The Police Standards and Training Council was created by the New Hampshire Legislature in 1971. It is the sole source of basic training, and the primary source of in-service training, for all law enforcement officers in the State of New Hampshire. The Mission of The Police Standards and Training Council is to shape, sustain, and strengthen the competency and professionalism of New Hampshire law enforcement in service to our State. The City Manager said that the Governor could not have selected a better professional to add to the Council.

Also regarding the Police Department, the City Manager directed the Council's attention to the annual recruiting analysis for the Police Department had been posted for calendar year 2020. Each year, the Police Department provides a detailed analysis of recruitment efforts, including demographic information for the City and County, and they post this [report on the Keene Police Department website](#), which the City Manager encouraged everyone to visit.

Lastly on the Police Department, the City Manager shared with the full Council that Chief Russo was ready to bring forward the results of the body-worn camera and in-car video testing and evaluation period. The Department did a great job conducting a very thorough evaluation and would be sharing all of the information at the next FOP meeting on February 11.

On Covid-19, the City Manager provided a very encouraging update that as of February 3, statewide hospitalizations were down to approximately 200. Only a few weeks prior, the State was close to maximum capacity at 400 hospitalizations. The local percent positive rate had also dropped from 9.3% the prior week to 5.9%. The vaccination site at Krif Road was expected to operate seven days per week in the near future and rumors were that the Astrazeneca vaccine would likely become available soon in larger quantities.

The City Manager discussed SB99, relative to the amount of Meals and Rooms Tax revenue that is distributed to municipalities, and said that it would return municipalities to the 40% amount of annual revenues, a percentage that had not been seen since 2010. For 2021, that would be an additional \$929,157 dollars to the City of Keene. The City Manager said this was something that deserved everyone's attention. If this bill goes without adoption, the City would have since 2011 been shorted \$8,823,389. There was a hearing on this bill Monday, February 8 at 9:45 AM. The City intended to submit testimony in support of SB99, including a copy of the letter sent by the Mayor on behalf of the City this year, which would also be shared our Senator.

On January 22, 2021, the City Manager sent notice to Cheshire TV through Certified Mail that per Section 23B of the City's agreement with them, the City was providing 120 days written notice of termination of our contractual relationship with them. Reserving the City's ability to cancel with a 30-day notice for breach of the agreement or loss of their 501(c)3 non-profit status. The 120 day clause requires no reason for termination by either party. However, the letter sent does reference violations of articles of incorporations and bylaws. As well as a real concern that those involved in orchestrating an effort to remove members of the prior board are now benefiting financially. It was the City Manager's understanding that she would be likely receiving a communication back from Cheshire TV in the near future.

The City Manager concluded sharing some good news related to the most recent Monadnock United Way workplace campaign, which this year City employees pledged almost \$21,000 through a combination of cash/checks and payroll deductions. It was a very successful campaign. This year Monadnock United Way met their campaign goal of \$1,277, 000.

REPORT – HB 314 – RELATIVE TO THE AGGREGATION OF ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS – ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE

02/04/2021

The report from the Energy & Climate Committee was referred for review to the Planning, Licenses & Development Committee.

RESOLUTION – RELATION TO "BEE CITY USA" – RESOLUTION R-2021-06

A memorandum was received from the Conservation Commission requesting that Resolution R-2021-06 be referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee for their review and recommendation. Resolution was referred for review to the Municipal Services, Facilities & Infrastructure Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Hansel declared the meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk