

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, December 9, 2021**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Thomas F. Powers, Chair  
Stephen L. Hooper, Vice Chair  
Bettina A. Chadbourne

**Members Not Present:**

Michael J. Remy  
Raleigh C. Ormerod

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager  
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney  
Marty Fiske, Library Director  
David Hickling, Airport Director  
Patty Little, City Clerk  
Deputy Fire Chief Jeff Chickering  
Rebecca Landry, Asst. City Manager/IT  
Director  
Beth Fox, Asst. City Manager/HR Director

Chair Powers called the meeting to order at 6 PM.

**1) New Hampshire State Library, Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the American Recover Plan Act Formulaic Sub-Grant Round 2 - Support of Library Services - Library Director**

Library Director Marty Fiske addressed the committee and stated she is before the committee regarding a grant that is fed through the State Library. This is a larger competitive grant. 42 of them were awarded across New Hampshire.

This particular grant is about expanding the access of the library services to its patrons. This grant in particular is for people who have mobility issues, people who are immune compromised, people who may have a hard time reaching the library during normal service hours, and those people who have a difficult time getting to the library. This grant will pay for a 20 unit smart locker which will be placed outside Heberton Hall. If someone called the library for an item they have placed on hold and want it picked up after hours. Staff would place that item in the locker (staff goes outside twice a day already to empty the book drop) so it would be done at one of those times. When the person comes to pick up their item they would scan their library card, the locker associated with their library card would open and they would be able to take out their materials, close the locker, after which time they would not have access to that locker any longer. If somebody wanted to pick up something on Saturday night or on Sunday, this would provide that access.

The locker is weatherproof and hence does not need any sort of roof over it. It is ADA compliant, it is three feet off the ground, and hence, snow will not interfere with the operation of the locker.

Ms. Fiske stated, staff has already worked with the facilities team to place the locker in the best possible location, and will be located next to an ADA compliant flat sidewalk. It is also within sight of security cameras and underneath well-lit areas in the evenings.

The other part of the grant is to pay for owl microphones and cameras speaker units. This is a 360 degree camera and microphone that you could put into the middle of a space and it would pick up everyone in the room as they are speaking, and everyone would be able to see the entire room. The library is planning on purchasing three; two would be available to members of the public and could borrow it when they use library meeting rooms. It also could be used for organizations who want to bring in training from another location and have all their members participate. The third unit would be used by library staff. There will also cases purchased for these units so accessories could be stored and moved easily. This concluded Ms. Fiske's presentation.

Councilor Hooper felt this was a good public initiative he asked for clarification of the operation of these units and about the general space for each unit. Ms. Fiske stated the unit is seven feet wide by about two and a half feet deep and about five feet tall (entire unit) the individual lockers are smaller but sufficient for a stack of books.

Councilor Chadbourne commended this addition and felt it was a good alternative for our changing times. She indicated even though this was weatherproof whether some kind of roofing could be added over it especially for someone who is trying to gain access and is in a wheelchair. Ms. Fiske stated she will work with the facilities to see if that's a possibility.

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

On a 3-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept and expend a grant of \$34,496 from the New Hampshire State Library, Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the American Recover Plan Act Formulaic Sub-Grant Round 2 for the support of library services.

2) **Authorization to Enter into a Contract - Writing and Dissemination of the Keene Public Library STEM and Maker Activities Toolkit - Library Director**

Ms. Fiske addressed the committee again and stated in 2018 the library won an IMLS grant for the making of STEM programs and activities for preschool children. Over the past two years the library has developed a series of events and programs about teaching parents to teach their children about early education models. There has been an extension of that grant due to the pandemic, delaying the execution of the last part. This contract is for that last part of the grant, which is to write a toolkit so that other libraries across the nation can put together their own programs and repeat the successes the library has had in creating these programs. It would have a contract for a person who would come in and interview library staff to help them organize the materials that would be most efficient to be put into the book that would be published.

The funding will also help with presentation at, at least two conferences for continuing education for librarians.

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

On a 3-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a contract with Regallium Consulting, LLC for the writing and dissemination of the Keene Public Library STEM and Maker Activities Toolkit as outlined in RFP 02-22-03.

**3) Acceptance of FAA AIP Grant for Airport – Airport Taxiway ‘A’ Reconstruction - Airport Department**

Airport Director David Hickling addressed the committee and referred to the taxiway project going on at the airport. The FAA is funding the majority of it and have decided to break it into phases. Phase 2 involves the reconstruction of the existing pavement area and the airport received a grant last year to cover the reconstruction of the asphalt but funding was not received for work on the under drainage and lighting; this grant is for that work.

Councilor Hooper asked how this grant is split between the entities. Mr. Hickling stated 90% is covered by the FAA, 5% by NHDOT and 5% by the City. The City’s portion comes from funds received through the sale of properties. Councilor Powers asked for the timetable for this work. Mr. Hickling stated work would be completed next spring.

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

On a 3-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept, execute and expend a grant for the amount of \$594,324 from the Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement Program.

**4) Moving Forward With PEG Programming - ACM/IT Director**

Assistant City Manager/IT Director Rebecca Landry reminded the committee about the recent presentation about the future of public education and government programming via community access television stations provided by spectrum to Keene Spectrum subscribers. In response to that presentation there were questions raised by the Council as to what the public interest and engagement was.

Ms. Landry stated that the City has been providing Government programming and is looking forward to continuing to do that into the future. The franchise fee revenue is providing that funding at the present time. Hence, the franchise fees are continuing to be collected from Spectrum by the City. The question at this time is what the future of public programming is. After the presentation a few weeks ago, the Council expressed interest in surveying the public to gather information about the public piece of PEG. A very basic survey was published. The survey asked questions like: Are you a Spectrum subscriber? Are you a Keene resident? How often do you watch channels 1301 and 1302? Do you support the City spending franchise fee

revenue on streaming services for public content? Quite a bit of input was received from the public. The results of that survey are included in the memo tonight.

The survey began on November 9. It was posted to City social media accounts, it was sent to City email listserv subscribers and linked from the City website homepage. Danny Mitchell interviewed Ms. Landry and they talked about the purpose of the survey and encouraged people to participate. 308 survey respondents indicated they are Keene residents. Ms. Landry stated she is only providing responses the City received from Keene residents. Of the 308, 55% subscribe to Spectrum cable TV services and 61% support the City using the franchise fee funding for production and streaming of publicly generated videos, via YouTube, Facebook and other online video streaming services. Seven Keene respondents watch Spectrum Local Community Access channels daily, 14 watch weekly, 34 watch monthly, and 253 indicated they do not watch the local channels.

Ms. Landry stated some information has come forward, that may impact how we consider the response to that final question about supporting streaming video on platforms, other than the spectrum channels. She stated the City Attorney has determined if any franchise fee revenue is used to support public programming on any platform such as YouTube, Facebook, etc. that content must also be provided on the public access channels provided by Spectrum (channel 1302). This is not something staff was aware of the last time staff had this conversation.

Return of public programming will require a business structure. In many communities best accommodated by a third party nonprofit organization. Ms. Landry explained public programming involves content management, equipment lending, production guidelines, all of which require a governance and business structure. The requirements are best accommodated by a third party organization and staff was originally planning to move forward with a recommendation to have a competitive process for the selection of public programming services for this purpose. Upon the selection of a nonprofit organization, staff would return to the City Council with a recommendation to negotiate an agreement for the public program piece.

Ms. Landry stated the formula for the proportional use of franchise fee funding to support government, education and public programming would change from what it was before because the City has now taken on the government education piece. This has been separated from the original formula which was supporting all three pieces. As a result, the City will assume responsibility for its own content and programming.

Ms. Landry then posed a question to the Council – do they wish to continue to support public programming via cable TV channels; do they need to hear more from the public before they make that decision. She added at this point in time staff is prepared to seek a contract with a third party organization to manage public programming. However, if the council would like to hear more from the public before determining whether to provide for public programming via the spectrum provided channels on cable TV staff can hold off on that. Staff could place the public programming item on a future agenda and use that as an opportunity to hear more from the public. This concluded Ms. Landry's comments.

Councilor Hooper felt this was a good start and noted during the height of Cheshire TV, it was well used and well watched. He indicated in the interest of time it might be important to continue to move this process along and seek the competitive third party to get things moving forward. Councilor Chadbourne felt it was well advertised but stated she was disappointed that more people did not participate. She indicated she appreciated getting some feedback and agreed with Councilor Hooper it should be moved forward.

Ms. Landry stated if that was the wish of the committee, the only thing the committee would need to do is to accept this communication as informational. Staff will come back and seek the authority of the Council to negotiate and execute when an organization has been decided on.

Councilor Hooper asked whether this was going to be a state, regional, national effort to try to get interest in the third party process. Ms. Landry stated they would potentially post an RFP or an RFQ - how widely would it be broadcast is a good question. She stated she was interested in hearing from Councilor Hooper, given his experience with public programming if the City was to cast that wider net, whether the City might get an organization who would want to operate a local channel. Councilor Hooper stated he did not have an answer to that but felt it was going to be a challenge to find a third party. He indicated it makes sense to seek as far and wide as possible.

Ms. Landry stated there is a local access association that represents New Hampshire and perhaps one in New England which could help advertise such an opportunity.

The City Manager stated she would like to have a motion which directs her to move forward with a competitive bid process for a third party to manage the public part of PEG. She explained this is because the way this is worded, it talks about PEG programming, and the Memo separates it very nicely. However, if there is an affirmative motion, it would be very helpful and less confusing and make it very clear staff is not talking about the educational piece. The City has staff on board that are being paid to do the Government portion and that portion is being broadcast and live streamed.

Councilor Chadbourne asked what type of support the local access association Ms. Landry had referred to, would provide for the City. Ms. Landry stated she would lean on them to get advice on where to post and if they have an opportunity within the organization to publicize the offer, she will be looking into that as well.

Councilor Powers asked what role schools might play in this process and whether the City was reaching out to the Towns of Swanzey and Marlborough. Ms. Landry stated the City had a good conversation with Keene school representatives who were excited about involving the Cheshire Career Center and producing more content than they have in the past. Swanzey and Marlborough, the City does not have a contractual relationship but should there be a public programming organization that results from this, Swanzey might want to start doing some programming and tap into some revenue. She noted the City Manager might want to speak to this as she has spoken with Swanzey on this issue.

The Manager stated the model has evolved. Originally, all pieces of PEG access was together. As the City moved forward with the Government piece and the school is doing their work on the educational piece, the only opportunity left for some sort of enhanced partnership with the other communities is through the public piece and felt there was potential for that.

Councilor Hooper noted during the peak of Cheshire TV there was a lot of involvement with Keene High School and felt the City can get back to that high level of involvement with the school. For this item to be a success, the Councilor felt it was vital to get school participation and encouraged working with the High School.

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

On a 3-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends to direct the City Manager to proceed with a competitive bid process to provide public access programming.

Ms. Landry complimented the team that is involved with the live broadcast for their hard work.

**5) Downtown Infrastructure Improvement and Reconstruction Project – Update -  
Public Works Director/EMD**

Public Works Director Kurt Blomquist addressed the committee next and stated the downtown infrastructure reconstruction project has been around for a while. It is reflected in the current CIP with a current value of approximately \$7.4 million dollars. The project is primarily focused on the City's infrastructure. Infrastructure in the downtown ranges anywhere from the late 1890's to 1930s with some work in the 1980s. Mr. Blomquist noted this infrastructure has served the community well and has lasted beyond its useful life but the City is starting to have some significant problems that need to be addressed.

The project is going to be focused in the areas of Central Square, Main Street from West Street to Roxbury Street down to Water Street. Some side streets such as Lamson Street, Church Street, Railroad Street and Gilbo Avenue are also going to be incorporated.

The other aspect of the project is looking at how the downtown is used. The current configuration has done very well. It has served its purpose since the late 1980s when it was reconstructed and laid out for primarily a commercial focus. As time has gone by and as downtown has changed to become more office, entertainment, with increasing residential - how the downtown is configured in different areas is not necessarily serving the purposes.

Mr. Blomquist stated as the City does the infrastructure work, part of the planning and design is going to be looking at different areas to do some adjustments, to be able to provide for example more gathering space. The way the downtown is currently configured, doesn't make it easy to close off areas, to be able to move traffic or people around.

He noted they would also be looking at enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities and expanding on what exists today. Also encouraging more residential, based on the new zoning adopted by Council.

The scope of the infrastructure upgrade would be to storm water system, sewer system, telecommunications, electrical, broadband for people to use on phones but also broadband to help manage infrastructure. Smart cars is also something that is being discussed as well as parking and the irrigation system.

Building Services - The City's infrastructure is close to 100 years old and many are starting to fail. Improvements are also going to be made to sidewalk areas, pedestrian bicycle facilities, street crossings, and gathering spaces.

Mr. Blomquist stated they will also be looking at Railroad Square which is a popular place, designed and built back in the late 80s. The drainage at the present drains towards the back of the site which is currently used for different types of activities.

The ultimate goal is for a full pavement overlay.

The project is anticipated to be in phases. The project will start with Central Square. The next phase would be Roxbury and West Street down Main Street down to Gilbo Avenue and then the side streets, Railroad Street and finally down Water Street.

Another aspect of the project is to put together a project committee. The committee will be charged in reviewing scope and designs. They will host public meetings and activities to gain support and input from the public. Ultimately, this is the vehicle staff will use to come before Council with different recommendation. Mr. Blomquist stated he will be looking for the Mayor to appoint this committee; the committee would consist of Council representatives, community business partners from the downtown area and residential folk.

As far as schedule, Mr. Blomquist stated an RFQ will be sent out between December through January, with a goal of bringing a recommendation to Council by February. At the same time, working with the Mayor by February and March to establish a project committee. Design development phase will begin in March 2022 and probably go through October 2022. In November 2022 the plan is to commence Phase 1, with the hope of the first phase ready to go out to bid in the early or late winter of 2023, with first phase construction contracts to begin sometime in April or May of 2023. At the same time as the City completes Phase 1 and gets through the bidding process, the City will begin the final design of Phase 2 and design for Phase 2 completed by winter 2023 and bids sent out so that construction for that phase could begin in 2024. The schedule is to have the final phase awarded by April/May 2025. Mr. Blomquist agreed this is an aggressive schedule for a project of this size, particularly a project that is going to have lots of community interest. He added he anticipates having a project team throughout the entire project. He stated he envisions as one design phase gets done that project team will move off and we will bring on probably another team to help through the construction phase. There has to a lot of communication between the City, businesses and residents regarding utility shutdowns, temporary services put up etc. This concluded Mr. Blomquist's presentation.

Councilor Chadbourne clarified the \$7.4 million is for the design process as well as for the actual pipes underneath the road. Mr. Blomquist agreed. The Councilor asked, in addition to taxation, whether the City was also looking for grants. Mr. Blomquist stated portions of this project have

been submitted to the NH Environmental Services Stormwater/Wastewater funding and have been notified the City is within tentative funding line for grants and principal forgiveness loans. For example, for the storm water side which is valued at about \$900,000, the City could potentially be offered a \$300,000 grant and a low interest loan that has principal forgiveness. He added the City's goal is to continue to look for sources. He explained with the Build American grant, there has to be more detail provided, things like economic analysis. Hence, the City needs to get through the design phase to get to a 50% design to be more effective and more efficient in getting grant funds.

Councilor Hooper stated the plan sounds ambitious but felt it was extremely necessary to go through all the phases to improve the existing old infrastructure. He stated he is anxious about the storm water portion, so that the City can get ahead of the increased problem with flooding.

The Manager reiterated the efforts around seeking grant funds for this project; this is a large project that will take multiple years to complete. However, the timing seems to be good and in keeping in line with the infrastructure grant that is coming from the Federal Government. The City has already heard from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services with respect to funding sources for water, sewer and storm water but have not heard about the road portion as of yet. With the Build America grant as the City moves forward with the design process they are likely going to be more competitive as the City has not scored well without it. She indicated the City will be looking for grant opportunities. Councilor Chadbourne thanked the Manager for her reassurance and felt this is a project that is vital for the City.

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

On a 3-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee accept the Downtown Infrastructure Improvement and Reconstruction Project Update as informational.

**6) Redistricting of Ward Lines – ad hoc Redistricting Committee Ordinance O-2021-15**

Kendall Lane of 5 Hastings Avenue and City Clerk Patty Little were the next two presenters. Mr. Lane stated he is before the Committee as Chairman of the City's Re-Districting Committee. Mr. Lane recognized Marilyn Houston member of the committee also present today.

Mr. Lane stated this is the first time the City Council has had the opportunity to be involved directly in the redistricting process. He noted this system would be effective as of January 1, 2022. Mr. Lane turned the presentation over to the City Clerk to review the highlights of the ordinance being proposed.

City Clerk Patty Little stated as always with ordinances, the City looks at other cities and often can find a sample that would work for the City. She noted majority of the cities were facing the same situation as Keene in terms of this delay of the census data. The City has actually modeled one.

The first section defines the Ward - the concept of Ward but the important part is the sentence which states “ *elected Ward officers in office at the time of redistricting in City Wards shall*

*continue in their offices until the end of the terms for which they were elected*". Ms. Little stated this is a component they have always put into a charter amendment sort.

Section two talks about the process to amend and that's really the language of the Charter so the Charter amendment that passed provided for the public hearing, provided for different notice requirements – staff is just mirroring that language and have made reference pursuant to Section two.

Next is the Ward line descriptions; boundaries of the five wards. She noted the City is very data driven, the State is not and they are anxious for Keene to complete its Ward lines and noted Keene had a completion date of January 1, 2022 and Keene has met that goal and is the first City to actually hit that goal. She noted this is the third time Mr. Lane has Chaired this committee and he knows what the steps are - establishing that criteria is important and that was done first for the entire process. Ms. Little also commended the able assistance Will Schoefmann and the technology which helped with this process.

Councilor Hooper thanked Mr. Lane and City staff for this work on this item.

Councilor Chadbourne thanked the committee members who put in numerous hours working on this. Councilor Chadbourne added she is happy to be back in her Ward.

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

On a 3-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends Ordinance O-2021-15 be adopted and be effective January 1, 2022.

**7) Relating to the Fire/EMS Training and Public Education Revolving Fund Resolution R-2021-48**

Deputy Fire Chief Chickering addressed the committee and explained current fiscal policies adopted by the Council on September 5, 2019 emphasis the use of stabilization funds. Revolving fund is a stabilization fund established for a particular purpose. The revenue is deposited in the fund and is allowed to accumulate from year to year and not considered part of the City's general fund surplus. Revenue generated by the revolving fund activities subsidize the expenses of the activity, thus keeping the funding outside the general fund resulting in no impact to the taxpayer.

The Manager noted to the City Attorney - the language of the proposed Resolution talks about all revenues received and asked whether it needs to talk about expenses as well. She indicated this is meant to be a fund that tracks both expenses and revenues associated with training and nets out the two. In most cases, it is a simple net out with no impact at all. However, there are times when there is a little bit of revenue left in the fund. This differential would remain in this fund from year to year and could be built on. She stated one of the things she wanted to clarify is that we are not simply separating the revenue; we are in fact doing both revenue and expenses. She asked whether the language in the Resolution needs to be amended to reflect that. The Manager clarified by paying the expenses from this fund those expenses are not being budgeted in the General Fund for this activity.

Attorney Mullins in response stated the way it is written, you are to pay all expenses from this fund and the key words are payroll, equipment and agreed all of those expenses are being paid out of this fund.

HR Director Beth Fox stated the language that is used for this Revolving Fund is similar to that used for the Police Special Detail Fund established in 2020.

Chair Powers explained this is much like an Enterprise Fund – it is not operational, it is going to provide an educational program and will be paying for tuition and fees for people hopefully from outside the organization.

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

On a 3-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2021-48.

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

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