

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

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

**Thursday, February 24, 2022**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Thomas F. Powers, Chair  
Michael J. Remy, Vice Chair  
Bettina A. Chadbourne  
Bryan J. Lake  
Andrew M. Madison

**Members Not Present:**

*All Present*

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager  
Duncan Watson, Asst. Public Works  
Director/Solid Waste Manager  
Kurt Blomquist, Emergency Management  
Director/Public Works Director  
Merri Howe, Finance Director  
Deputy Fire Chief, Donald Farquhar  
Acting Community Development Director  
John Rogers  
Senior Planner, Mari Brunner  
GIS Mapping Technician, Will Schoefmann  
Airport Director, David Hickling

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

**1) New Hampshire Department of Justice Grant Acceptance - Fire Department**

Deputy Fire Chief Donald Farquhar addressed the Committee first and stated the Fire Department applied for a Department of Justice Grant in the amount of \$84,425 to be used specifically to offset overtime costs associated with extra cost of staffing due to the Covid 19 pandemic response. The Deputy Chief stated the Department has received this grant and they are asking for acceptance of this grant.

The City Manager reminded the Committee about the 10<sup>th</sup> person that was added to the shift and this position has been extended to the end of the fiscal year and this grant will also help to offset that cost.

Councilor Lake made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Madison.

On a 5-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends to the full City Council the acceptance of the New Hampshire Department of Justice Grant awarded to the Keene Fire Department totaling \$84,425 and to allow the City Manager to do all things necessary for the acceptance and execution of the grant.

**2) Downtown Infrastructure Improvements and Reconstruction Project - Consultant Selection - Public Works Department**

Public Works Director/Emergency Management Director Kurt Blomquist addressed the Committee and stated the City has issued a request for qualifications for firms to provide engineering and technical services for the downtown infrastructure project. He explained this project would look at the downtown starting in the Central Square area moving down Main Street to about the Water Street, Railroad Street and Gilbo Avenue area. He indicated the main focus of the project is the replacement of the sewer system infrastructure which ranges anywhere from the 1890's to the 1930's.

The City received 2 proposals from the firms of Stantech Consulting Services and Weston and Samson. A Review Committee consisting of City staff reviewed the proposals and recommended moving forward with interviews with both firms. The firms were interviewed based on their qualifications, number of projects they had completed as a firm. The Review Committee also considered the firms understanding and approach to the project as well as the resources and their overall availability to perform the work.

Mr. Blomquist stated after performing the interviews, the team unanimously recommended moving forward with Stantech Consulting Services as the preferred consultant. He indicated they had a number of things that brought the firm to the top of the review. They have a team that has done a number of projects in downtowns in the State. One of their members is a former City Engineer. They also talked about some unique approaches such as no dig options for utilities to expedite the work and minimize disruption. Another aspect the committee liked is the firm being upfront about the need to have communications at all levels within the community and stakeholders along with the greater community audience because this project affects the entire community.

Chair Powers asked whether this firm has done work for the City in the past. Mr. Blomquist answered in the affirmative. Councilor Remy asked for the cities this firm has done work in. Mr. Blomquist stated they have done work for Concord, Cambridge, and a number of other communities, both in New Hampshire and New England.

Councilor Madison 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 negotiate and execute professional service contracts for engineering, technical, and construction services with Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. for the Downtown Infrastructure Improvements and Reconstruction Project. Further, if the City cannot come to an agreement, the City Manager is authorized to move to the second highest ranked proposer.

In response to a concern from Councilor Remy about the scope of the project extending out to construction; Mr. Blomquist stated this authorization is for construction services, but not necessarily for the construction project. He continued that this motion would only authorize the

engineering services. The construction project - once it is bid - would go through the bid process.

### **3) Proposed Capital Improvement Plan FY 2023-2029**

Finance Director Merri Howe addressed the committee first and pointed to a scrivener's error on page 113 of the CIP book; it mentions Wells Street garage but this reference should be to the City Hall parking structure.

#### Community Development:

Acting Community Development Director John Rogers stated the Community Development Department has two items in the CIP. The first is an update to the Comprehensive Master Plan and the second is an update to the GIS mapping program. He introduced Senior Planner Mari Brunner and GIS Mapping Technician Will Schoefmann.

Ms. Brunner stated the Comprehensive Master Plan updated is scheduled for FY24. It is a two-year project, separated into two phases. The first phase is for FY24 where \$50,000 is allocated which will include a renewal of the 2010 Master Plan.

Ms. Brunner explained the first phase will start with the renewal of the community vision which will involve a lot of outreach, community engagement as well as neighborhood focused engagements. It would also involve updating the City's socioeconomic and demographic information. The second phase would be in FY25 where \$40,000 is allocated. This would include continued outreach and engagement, along with updated language for the Master Plan and the reorganization and graphic layout of the document. Ms. Brunner added the department is looking to hire professional services to help with this project.

Councilor Remy asked whether the City will be able to leverage any of the housing studies that have been done recently. Ms. Brunner stated this is part of the plan - to take a look at all of the data that is available but the plan is to take a deeper dive into the housing trends in Keene; what exists and what will be needed in the future.

Mr. Schoefmann addressed the committee next and stated he was before the committee to address the 10-year digital base map update. He stated this project gets the City new aerial imagery and topography information as well as ground features that are utilized regularly not only for asset management but also by first responders. This project is scheduled for FY25. The last collection was done in year 2015. Mr. Schoefmann indicated staff is hoping with what is being estimated they will be able to expand collection up to Babbage Reservoir in Roxbury, as well as the airport and the Wastewater Facility in Swanzey. This is one-year project; collection and pre-planning happens the same year and deliverables are usually made in the fall. The imagery is taken in the spring.

Councilor Chadbourne indicated her understanding is that the planning metrics data is a layering system that can be used by different departments; some that are available to the public and then layers that are strictly confidential. The Councilor asked whether this has been something that has been considered. The Manager agreed you can track all sorts of things in GIS depending on

what the City would want to input into the system and the level of effort it wants to put in. She went on to say the City tracks much of its water and sewer structures and that is a layer that has been put into the GIS system. Crime activity could also be tracked if it is put into the system. The Manager agreed there is a lot potential for GIS more so than what the City uses it currently. However, it takes time and money to add those things to the system and then maintain the system. She stated staff will be talking about the future of GIS and what other things it could be used for in the future. She referred the issue to Mr. Schoefmann for him to explain what GIS is used for currently.

Mr. Schoefmann explained the City access website which integrates those plano-metric features the Councilor mentioned, as well as the assessing data that is available for parcels on the assessing mapping. He continued this is the best example of the plano-metric features which helped with the parcel mapping project to get the parcel lines more accurately for the City. As far as tracking crime, this would take additional resources in order to integrate.

**Airport (Page 69):**

Airport Director David Hickling was the next presenter. Mr. Hickling stated before he got into the specific projects he would like to talk about the funding the airport uses to fund different projects. Mr. Hickling stated the airport was fortunate to be part of the FAA National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems and, as such, makes the airport eligible for FAA AIP funding. This program will fund 90% of eligible projects - any project that the AIP program funds the State will contribute 5%, which leaves the City obligated to 5%. As a result the airport tries to fund most all its project under the AIP Program. In addition, the airport has been fortunate enough the last couple of years to be able to use Covid related funds to cover the City's 5%. He noted over the last 2 years, through the AIP Program, the City received over 4.3 million dollars for the taxiway projects and associated work and the City's cost was under \$2,000.

Mr. Hickling went on to say the AIP money is really at the discretion of the FAA as to how the monies are going to be funded and added that the City has to be flexible with the CIP to be able to adjust to what the FAA decides to fund.

**Perimeter Fence – Page 69:**

Mr. Hickling stated the airport has a perimeter fence around a portion of the airport for the portion that abuts the public areas. There is however, a large area that has no fence around it which goes into a wetland and allows wildlife to enter onto the runways. The airport has had some bad experience in the past with aircraft hitting deer. Fortunately no one was injured but it did destroy the aircraft. White tail deer is the biggest threat as well as turkeys, coyotes, and fox. This project is to install a complete perimeter fence that would keep the wildlife out. Work will start in FY23 for \$270,000, which would include permitting and environmental work that needs to be done, as well as the design of the project.

In FY24, staff would push to get funding for the entire project which would be a little over a \$1,000,000 which would complete the construction of this fence.

Obstruction Management Program – Page 70:

This would be a multi-year project. It would start with performing an obstruction survey. It would also include environmental permitting and design, as well as easement acquisition to remove some of these obstructions. Work would start in FY25 and go through FY27 – minimal amount of funding is being requested based on what staff feels the City could receive from FAA funding.

Pavement Maintenance – Page 71:

Mr. Hickling stated this is an ongoing program. The AIP program pays for most of the infrastructure at the airport, including all the pavement. Part of the agreement of receiving the funding is the requirement to maintain that pavement. This would involve crack ceiling and other pavement maintenance. He noted the biggest part of this work is the marking. The airport has around 75,000 square feet of painted pavement and it is costly to paint those markings every couple years. This again is a multi-year project and is based on available funding at that time.

Snow Removal Equipment Project – Page 72:

Mr. Hickling stated this project is also fundable through the AIP Program. The airport has a 1995 piece of equipment. This vehicle is included in the CIP anticipating receiving grant funding for that.

Terminal Apron Expansion Project – Page 73:

Mr. Hickling stated this project would be for the purpose of expanding the main apron right in front of the terminal. The current space is difficult for planes to be able maneuver and there have been situations when taxiways had to be closed to use them for parking. Mr. Hickling added it was included in the Airport Master Plan to add the ability to do deicing.

Beacon Replacement Project – Page 74:

The Director noted there are currently 12 hazard beacons in the area on different hills and towers to mark obstructions for aircraft. This project would allow for replacing those beacons and the plan is to replace these with solar powered and LED lights

Councilor Remy asked about the impact to wetlands due to the fence installation. Mr. Hickling stated the impact would be only when the fence is being installed but once it's in, there would not be any impact to wetlands. He further stated this can also be mitigated by using timber mats or doing the work during winter months.

**Fleet Services**

Duncan Watson, Assistant Public Works Director/Solid Waste Manager and Jim Mountford Fleet Services Operations Manager were the next two speakers.

Mr. Mountford noted the City's fleet consists of 157 vehicles and the Fleet Services also manages an additional 99 pieces of equipment. He indicated the fleet division works on all its vehicles and equipment and it is very rarely that any work is outsourced. The fleet divisions also manages the fuel island.

He explained all vehicles that are being replaced have all timed out as far as the amount of years the City holds onto them. If there is a way to extend the use of these vehicles, it is done, especially some of the older police vehicles. Those vehicles were sent to other City divisions that use them for less mileage. He indicated the City makes every attempt to purchase used vehicles, thereby saving quite a bit of money. Mr. Mountford indicated the City is also going to be looking at electric cars more into the hybrid market in the future but the City's infrastructure will play a lot into this decision.

Mr. Mountford stated in FY23 there is a proposal to replace the roof which has received a patch fix for many years FY24 – FY25 money is being allocated for a fire suppression project.

Equipment Replacement Program – Page 192:

Mr. Watson stated this is the source of funding for the replacement program. He indicated with vehicle replacement, this is not based on some artificial schedule, but rather they are replaced as the need arises.

Roof Replacement Project – Page 193:

Mr. Watson indicated what they have now is a patchwork quilt looking roof – this work will provide a new membrane roof for that main part of the building.

Fleet Services Building Assessment Project – Page 194:

A consultant will be brought in to evaluate the fleet to determine what future needs the City may have as it starts transitioning from fossil fuel vehicles to either hybrid and/or electric vehicles. He felt this would be an inevitability for the future. He noted Page 195 would have the results that would come out of the consultant study – this is a placeholder.

Fire Suppression System Project – Page 196:

Mr. Watson stated this project is based on a recommendation from the City's insurer, Primex. He indicated Fleet Services does not have a fire suppression system in the building.

Councilor Chadbourne asked of the 157 existing vehicles the City owns whether any of them are fuel efficient. Mr. Mountford stated they have a couple of Hybrid Ford Escapes. The Engineering Division currently uses one and there is also one at City Hall which is used by the Planning and Inspections. There is on electric car Fleet uses every day and about 40,000 miles has been put on it. The City has had that vehicle since 2009. Mr. Mounford talked about the availability of vehicles and indicated it is becoming difficult to replace them.

Councilor Madison asked whether staff will take into a consideration the design for the new fire suppression system as it looks at hybrid and greener vehicles because those vehicles have unique firefighting needs. Mr. Mountford stated this would be part of the building evaluation. Mr. Watson added the proposed system will be a non-water based system.

Councilor Remy asked about the picture on page 192. Mr. Mountford stated this is a trackless sidewalk equipment.

Chair Powers asked whether this was the first year the suppression system is shown in the CIP. Mr. Watson answered in the affirmative. The Chair stated he is concerned the City could have expensive equipment in this area without the best protection. Mr. Mountford stated at the present time they have fire extinguishers every 10 feet apart inside of the building. The Fire Department also has a knox box set up to get into the building without the need for any staff to be present.

### **Solid Waste**

Mr. Watson reminded the committee the solid waste fund operates independent of the tax rate and is funded entirely by tipping fees at the transfer station as well as the sale of recycling commodities that are sold from the recycling operations. The site currently processes around 21,000 tons from the City of Keene residents and commercial businesses, and they are in the first year of a renewal contract with Waste Management which has them supplying Keene currently around 12,000 tons from outside of Keene. Mr. Watson stated a combination of that allows the solid waste fund to continue a very successful and unique business model.

He noted Keene is the only municipality in the State of New Hampshire that operates independently from the tax rate and he felt this is something to be very proud of. Staff feels this model will continue to be successful for the next three years.

Mr. Watson stated New Hampshire is going to be seeing a disposal crisis. In not too much in the distant future, the disposal capacity in the State of New Hampshire is not going to be adequate enough to take care of New Hampshire's disposal needs. He indicated the issue with New Hampshire's disposal capacity is that there are no restrictions on out-of-state waste coming into the State. He went on to say that the State of Massachusetts closed every landfill in the State and a tremendous amount of that tonnage is making its way into New Hampshire and taking up airspace that could in theory be used for New Hampshire residents.

He indicated there is a variety of reasons why this is not being done and there is talk at the State level regarding this issue. There is a primary landfill Keene uses right now through its contract which is located in Rochester, New Hampshire which currently has capacity until the year 2,034. There's also another major landfill in Bethlehem, New Hampshire which is currently in the expansion process for about 5 years but within that next 5 years this line is going to be crossed. The City currently has a three-year contract with Waste Management for disposal of material from our transfer station and the City is in constant discussion internally about this issue.

Mr. Watson stated as the contract expiration gets closer his next request for proposal will be the ability to maintain this business model as much as possible in the future. He added the cost of shipping waste long distances is going to be the issue. He stated his hope is there would be some new technology that would come in the relatively near horizon which would allow the City to have other options than just simply taking 70% of its waste stream and shipping it 125 miles to be buried in a landfill.

Recycling Equipment Replacement Program - Page 125:

This page has often been referred to as a placeholder because all equipment is serviced on a regular basis and staff works closely with service contractors who keep staff updated on the condition of the equipment. FY23 is for the infeed conveyor which is used to feed the recycling on the conveyor line which drops it onto the processing line. In the near future, there will be a need to replace both the cross belt magnet and the eddy current separator, which is a rare earth magnet which is used to magnetize non-ferrous metal.

Weight Scale Replacement – Page 126:

Mr. Watson stated this is the heart and soul of transfer station operation. It is used to measure everything inbound and outbound. This again in FY25 is considered to be a place holder. Work on the scale is done regularly to preserve the life of the scale. The scales are certified by the Bureau of Weights and Measures and if there is ever a problem a temporary scale system will be brought in.

Refurbish Facility Interior Project – Page 127:

Mr. Watson stated this building was completed in 1994 and everything in it is original to that building. There is tremendous amount of wear and tear in the common spaces. An architect has been engaged to provide the City with a rough design. Using that design, staff will be looking for a contractor after July to do some interior refurbishment of the facility to bring it more up to date.

Pavement Replacement - Page 128:

This is for pavement replacement for the the main areas of the recycling center. This pavement is also original to 1994. There has been a lot of pothole patching done over the years and other refurbishing work, but the pavement has never had a full service refurbishment. What is being proposed is a mill shim overlay which is a standard to a road rehab project anticipated for year 2025.

Upper Level Pavement Project - Page 129:

The upper lever area of the recycling center is entirely gravel which has been challenging to maintain with the number of vehicles that travel those roads. This road sees about 18,000 vehicles a year.

Councilor Lake asked staff to consider any safety precautions as the driver takes the first turn as you get up to that level.

In closing, Mr. Blomquist extended his appreciation to the Committee. He also extended his appreciation to the City Manager, Finance Director and his staff for their effort in putting these projects together.

Chair Powers reminded the Committee the public hearing on the CIP would be on March 3 and the Finance Committee will make its suggestions on the CIP at the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned the meeting at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,  
Terri Hood, Assistant City Clerk