

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 12, 2022

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Thomas F. Powers, Chair
Michael J. Remy, Vice Chair (remote)
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Bryan J. Lake

Members Not Present:

Andrew M. Madison

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Kürt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Rebecca Landry, IT Director
Beth Fox, Human Resources Director
Marti Fiske, Library Director
Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and
Facilities Director
Don Lussier, City Engineer
Todd Lawrence, Police Captain
Steven Stewart, Police Captain
Don Farquhar, Fire Chief
David Hickling, Airport Director

Chair Powers called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM and explained the procedures of the meeting. A quorum being present, Councilor Powers indicated that Councilor Remy was participating remotely. Councilor Remy stated that he is traveling for work and he was in Jacksonville, Florida and was alone.

A. AGENDA ITEMS

1) Adam Toepfer – Keene Pride – Request that the City Absorb the Cost for Police, Public Works and Fire Personnel for Block Party – September 18, 2022

City Attorney Thomas Mullins stated that a communication from Adam Toepfer was submitted to the City Clerk's Office asking that their request regarding financial assistance for the Keene Pride event be withdrawn.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee accepted the communication from Keene Pride as informational.

2) Public TV Programming Services Agreement – ACM/IT Director

Chair Powers asked to hear from staff.

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated that IT Director Rebecca Landry is running late, so she will address this. She continued that the City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a provider to provide public programming. Currently, the City provides the government piece of PEG, and has hired an AV Technician to assist in the broadcasting of public meetings; but there has been a desire in the community to do public access. The RFQ did not receive any submittals; however, the Falls Area Community Television (FACT) organization, a non-profit based in Bellows Falls, VT, heard about the RFQ and came to meet with staff. They are interested in contracting with the City to provide this service. FACT has the experience and the structure to manage the public access for the Keene community as they are currently doing in the Bellows Falls area. She is asking the Council permission to start negotiations with FACT to come to an agreement to begin the public broadcasting at the Library again.

Councilor Lake asked if this would allow the City's content to be broadcast in FACT's other locations like Bellows Falls and vice versa. The City Manager replied yes, for the public piece, but not the governmental programming. She continued that the plan would be for FACT to broadcast their programming in Keene and Keene's programming in VT. Thus, there would be additional exposure for the people who are producing programs.

Chair Powers asked if there were any further questions from the Committee or other City Councilors. Hearing none, he asked if members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute an agreement with Falls Area Community Television for the operation of public programming services on the local public community access television channels provided by Spectrum.

3) Fire Staffing Committee Report and Recommendation - City Manager

Chair Powers stated that this item will be moved to later in the meeting when they are doing the budget review for the Fire Department.

4) Relating to the Appropriation of Funds for the Patricia T. Russell Park Project and the Carpenter Street Flood Management Project

Resolution R-2022-16

Resolution R-2022-19

Chair Powers asked to hear from staff.

Don Lussier, City Engineer, stated that he and Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director, will present together tonight. He continued that the two Resolutions included with this agenda item are to increase the amount allowed for bonds on two previously approved bonds that this project entails. This project has been going through an extensive design process since 2020. It involved community outreach and workshops. The designers and Mr. Bohannon came up with a great plan. Simultaneous with the [Patricia T. Russell Park Project] they had the Carpenter Street Flood Management Project, which, in the CIP, called for replacing the drainage piping from Beaver Brook to Carpenter St. then up Carpenter St. to Church St. That was the first of several phases of flood improvements intended to address localized street flooding on the east side. It was clear, once they started looking at the two projects, that they had to be built together. They do not want to build a park then tear it up to build the pipes; thus, they married the projects together. They had the same consultant design both so they could put it out to bid as a single, uniform contract.

Mr. Lussier continued that with the design process complete, they put the project out to bid over the winter. On March 31, they received one bid for the construction phase. Not receiving many bids is unfortunately an ongoing theme this year and also unfortunately, that one bid came in about a million dollars over the appropriated budget. Staff talked with the vendor, and they did what he calls “value engineering.” The question was how to get this project to fit within the available funding. They came up with several ideas, which do not sacrifice or diminish the quality or aesthetics of the park. Most people would probably not even realize that there was a change.

Mr. Lussier continued that he will quickly run through the changes. The original plan called for blue stone pavers at the entrance pavilion and in the picnic area, which will be replaced with regular concrete. The original plan for the bathroom called for a “site-built building,” which would have been pretty, but building it on site requires a lot of skilled labor and bringing specialty trades into the site, which drives up the cost. It also takes longer to get that work done. Working with the contractor, staff came up with alternatives. The bathroom will now be a pre-fabricated, concrete structure, and will arrive on site in one piece, already built. A crane will set it on its prepared foundation and it will be constructed in a day. They modified the landscaping plan a bit, by removing or downsizing some of the items. For example, a 4-inch diameter tree might instead be a 3-inch diameter tree.

Mr. Lussier continued that the original playground plan called for an all-natural playscape, such as logs and boulders, but logs and boulders are actually very expensive. Thus, in the bid documents they included the alternative of having a more traditional playscape that Mr. Bohannon selected. Mr. Bohannon stated that they will not be losing any of the elements of play. Mr. Lussier stated that this alone saved about \$100,000.

Mr. Lussier continued that the Bocce court was also an alternative bid item, and they will not award the contract for that. The two bleacher sets on the Carpenter St. side will be five rows of seating instead of eight rows. Mr. Bohannon stated that he thinks they were successful in their attempts to maintain the integrity of the design without losing any of the elements.

Mr. Lussier stated that with all of that together, they were able to bring down the top line by about \$401,000. He continued that it still leaves them, unfortunately, with a deficit. Another agenda item tonight is to increase the bond amounts for the two bonds associated with this project. There was a bond associated with the Patricia T. Russell Park Project and separately, a bond was authorized for the Carpenter Street Flood Management Project. Both of those amounts would be increased, with the two resolutions listed in the 4th agenda item.

The next agenda item talks about reallocating other funds that are available to be reused. The Roxbury St. Management Project was completed under budget, and they can shift the \$100,000 savings from that to the Carpenter Street Flood Management Project, and that money would still be used for its intended purpose. The last piece of the puzzle is the \$310,000 authorized by the City Council for the Police Equipment Fund, because luckily, the City was able to procure a grant, which means they do not need all of the money the Council authorized for that. He and Mr. Bohannon ask that they shift \$310,000 from the Police Equipment Fund over to the Patricia T. Russell Park Project.

The City Manager stated that the Police Equipment Fund was created in anticipation of implementing a body-worn camera program, among other things. She continued that they were successful in getting a \$415,000 grant for the body-worn camera program. Thus, they will only need a portion of the Police Equipment Fund to finish that project.

Chair Powers stated that Pat Russell would be very happy to hear that money was not taken away from the Police Department, because she always used to say they were her “favorite friends.” Now she has her own park. He thinks she will watch over this project and be very pleased.

Councilor Lake stated that he appreciates staff trying to keep a slim budget as possible while still maintaining the feel of the park. He asked if the area meant to be a Bocce court is being allocated for anything else, or if they could potentially revisit this in following years, if they did decide to create a Bocce court in the future. Mr. Lussier replied that if they do not award the Bocce court, it will just be planted as lawn. Mr. Bohannon replied that the Bocce court idea will not be forgotten, and he has been researching some grants.

Councilor Remy asked if they have reached out to any of the heavy users of the park, such as the rugby team, to see if they have any interest in contributing to, for example, maintain the eight rows of bleacher seating, as a project element that has value to them. Mr. Bohannon replied that he has not reached out to them recently, but he had a lot of conversation with them early on related to the project’s different amenities. He continued that oftentimes, some of the rugby team’s funding resources did not come through for them, but he certainly can reach back out.

Chair Powers asked if there were any further questions from the Committee or other City Councilors. Hearing none, he asked if members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2022-16.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2022-19.

5) Patricia T. Russell Park/Carpenter St. Flood Management Project – Request to Reallocate Funds - City Engineer

Mr. Lussier stated that this is the other piece of the funding, repurposing other money, as he mentioned previously. He continued that the first motion would be the \$310,000 from the Police Equipment Fund into the Patricia T. Russell Park Project Fund, and the second motion is the \$100,000 from the Roxbury Street Flood Management Project Fund into the Carpenter Street Flood Management Project Fund.

Chair Powers asked for discussion from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked if there was discussion from other City Councilors or the public. Hearing none, he asked for two motions.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council reallocate \$310,000 from the Police Department Equipment project (90324) and move the funds to the Patricia Russell Park Improvements Project (90316).

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council reallocate \$100,000 from the Roxbury Street Flood Management project (90298-21) and move the funds to the Carpenter Street Flood Management Project (90298-22).

6) Patricia T. Russell Park/Carpenter St. Flood Management Project – Consultant Selection for Construction Engineering Services – City Engineer

Mr. Lussier stated that now that they have the funds to move the project forward, they will be looking to hire a consultant to help with the construction oversight and administration. He continued that he has spoken with the Committee a few times about his preference which is, whenever possible, to have the consultant that designed the project and is most intimately familiar with the plans also oversee the work because they have a vested interest in making sure that project goes smoothly. Under the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)'s rules, they are not allowed to do that, but with this, there is no such prohibition. SLR has done a great job on this project and staff would like to retain them for the construction administration phase.

Chair Powers stated that there are notes that the firm City staff has selected has done work prior and has reconstituted under a different name. He asked if that is correct. Mr. Lussier replied that he thinks Chair Powers is thinking about the next item on the agenda. Councilor Powers asked if Mr. Lussier is satisfied with this (SLR) contractor. Mr. Lussier replied yes, SLR did all of the design work and staff would like to have that same team overseeing construction.

Chair Powers asked if there were any further questions from the Committee or other City Councilors. Hearing none, he asked if members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional service contract with SLR International Corporation for an amount not to exceed \$200,000 for Construction Engineering Services required for the Patricia T. Russell Park / Carpenter St. Flood Management Project.

**7) Relating to the Appropriation of Funds for George Street Bridge Replacement Project
Resolution R-2022-17**

Mr. Lussier stated that the George Street bridge replacement project was in the CIP. He continued that the way the State Bridge Aid (SBA) program works is that a municipality has to appropriate its local match ahead of time, to then get in the queue to get State funding of up to 80% of the project. At least, that is how it has been done up until this point. He has been told there may be changes coming from NHDOT on that. The City Council appropriated funds for this project in 2009, and he thinks there were additional funds in 2012. The amount appropriated was based on the NHDOT project budget developed in 2009. The steps in the process are: 1) the City asks the NHDOT to do a budget estimate, 2) the NHDOT prepares the estimate, 3) the City appropriates the funds, and once the funds are sitting and ready to spend, 4) the City asks NHDOT for State funding, and the City is put on the list, 5) and eventually the project goes

forward. However, it has been 13 years since the NHDOT did their estimate. Obviously, some prices have changed since then, including the costs for design. The amount that was in the City's budget to match the design fee is not enough to match the actual design fee that they negotiated. Staff suggests appropriating \$30,000 from the Capital Reserve for the design phase in the current fiscal year. Then they can move forward with the design. Within the bridge capital reserve, they set it up with contributions so they could ask for a bridge to be funded by the State every two to three years. If they had hit that, that would have been fantastic, but unfortunately, the State's funding does not allow them to fund the City that much. Right now, Maple Ave. is not anywhere within the State's Ten Year Plan for bridge funding, but the City's money is already sitting in the capital reserve. Staff will recommend, as part of this, as a follow on action during the next update to the CIP, adding additional funds to the Maple Ave. Bridge capital reserve, so that when the time comes, the money will be made whole. In the meantime, they will use the funds to match the design phase.

Chair Powers asked if there were any questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked if other City Councilors or members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2022-17.

8) George Street Bridge Replacement Design Consultant Selection – City Engineer

Mr. Lussier stated that now that the funding is ready to go, staff is looking to award a contract to get the design started. He continued that this is not really a sole source contract. They selected McFarland-Johnson through a RFQ process. When you are using State money, the State requires you to select consultants based on their qualifications, and once you have selected the most qualified firm, you negotiate a scope and fee. The City went through that process in 2017-2018 with McFarland-Johnson. At the time, the City advertised that for the design of both the Roxbury Street and the George Street Bridge, knowing that the George Street Bridge was already in the State's Ten Year Plan and would be coming up quickly. They did that process once and McFarland-Johnson did a great job with the design on Roxbury St. That project was closed out and very successful. They would like to continue using McFarland-Johnson for the design of the George Street Bridge. The proposed motion on tonight's agenda is to allow the City Manager to negotiate and execute a professional services contract with McFarland-Johnson for an amount not to exceed \$245,000.

Chair Powers asked if there were any questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked if other City Councilors or members of the public had any questions. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional and technical services contract with McFarland-Johnson for engineering services required for the replacement of the George Street Bridge over Beaver Brook for an amount not to exceed \$245,000 (subject to NHDOT approval) with funding from Project Cost Center 90328-22.

**9) Relating to the FY 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Budget
Resolution R-2022-09**

Chair Powers asked for a motion to put this on more time.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee placed this agenda item on more time.

B. BUDGET REVIEW

Chair Powers stated that tonight they will hear from several departments regarding the annual budget review. He continued that they are changing the order they put out earlier as the format for this evening, starting with the Library.

LIBRARY

Marti Fiske, Library Director, stated that Jennifer Alexander, President of the Library Board of Trustees, will do the presentation of the budget request. She continued that she will be available to answer questions and give clarifying information.

Ms. Alexander read from a prepared statement:

“The Library would like to start off by saying that we support the Facilities Department’s budget request for supplemental janitorial hours at the Library. This will help us maximize our potential for earning revenue and properly maintain Library spaces. The Library is doing its best to increase revenue streams. At the start of the current fiscal year, the fee for non-resident cards increased by 17% for a six-month card, and the annual card increased by 20%. Public printing, copying charges, also increased on March 1 by 50% for black and white copies, and 8% for color copies. We considered raising rental fees, but found it was not possible. The Library currently does not have a regular janitor for the Heberton Annex, and the Library must use an outside cleaning service for private events in this portion of the building. The cleaning company charges a minimum of \$275 for cleaning after a single event. When combining this

with our current rental fee, the total rental cost increased 150%, which is not affordable for most. Only one group has been willing to pay the fee since event spaces reopened in September 2021. Other interested parties chose to rent at other locations that offered both lower rent and free parking. Currently, the Facilities staff are cleaning bathrooms and floors only once a week. Library program staff are doing additional cleaning of events spaces and hallways after Library programs. What is already very difficult will become impossible when the Public Access TV station reopens, Library programs return to normal levels, and outside meetings take place. Due to this, the Library supports the Facilities Department's budget request for supplemental janitorial hours at the Library. Without a janitor, things will remain the same, leaving valuable spaces unused, reduced income, poorly maintained spaces, and Library staff spending time on cleaning and less time at their regular Library duties.

Now turning to the Library Department's request, the 'Library Department request' column you see before you does not reflect the Library's actual request. It was explained to us that there were challenges in translating the request due to software changes. We would like to clarify for you what the request was, so that you are better aware of the Library's needs. If they are not addressed this year, they will return before the Council in future years. The City Manager request increases the Library non-personnel line by \$1,025; \$601 to public printing; \$300 to equipment; \$680 to collections; and \$44 for photocopier lease; with a decrease in the postage budget by \$600. The Library's request had included a supplemental personnel request for conversion of a Librarian I in Collection Development to Librarian II, and an additional 18 hours to make the position full-time. The City Manager's recommendation reflects the conversion to Librarian II at only 32 hours. Short staffing has been a major challenge since the new wing opened in 2019, nearly doubling the Library's size and adding three new service stations, the teen area, atrium, and Makerspace. Current staff hours only cover the Makerspace for 30% of open hours, and the teen area for 40% of open hours, but require 89 staff hours more per week than before the expansion. To date, 15 hours were added for a non-professional aide, and volunteers offer an average of 15 hours per week. This leaves the existing staff still stretched to cover an additional 59 staff hours per week. We have shifted staff to cover these public-facing hours, but meanwhile, time for behind the scenes work, such as purchasing and managing the library's collections, are reduced. Plus, additional duties have been added, such as managing reservations for the doubled meeting spaces; and scheduling, recruiting, training, and retention of volunteers.

The conversion from Librarian I to Librarian II reflects the higher level of collection development duties taken on by the position. The Collection Department Librarian will be responsible for two of the three core services of modern public libraries: developing and curating a collection of materials in multiple formats, and research assistance. Collection development is specialty work that requires a high level of professional training, a depth of knowledge of the existing collection, and an understanding of needs and habits of users. Duties include removing outdated materials, researching resources available, tracking of high-volume patron requests, publishing schedules, orders and deliveries, cataloging, and preparing materials for the users. The Collection Department Librarian will be primarily responsible for

meeting the Library's target of the adult collection reflecting a variety of diversities, at least by 30%. This does take extra staff time for research and tracking. There are currently only two people in a Librarian II position – the head of the Reference Department and the Digital Services Librarian, a total of 1.84 FTE. Librarian II positions are also responsible for providing service at the reference desk and are part of the pool that supports other service desks. With a community the size of Keene, the Library needs multiple librarians in collection development, to handle the volume of work, avoid lapses in service when staff are absent, and provide variety for the users' needs and tastes. Because of the special skills required, this position will be a Librarian II, requiring a Master's degree in Library Information Science (MLIS), plus two years of relevant experience.

Part-time workers account for 60% of the average weekly staff hours needed to run the Library at its current level of service. Within the percentage are seven part-time professional librarian positions that require a Master's degree or similar professional training experience. Part-time positions cannot provide people with enough income to provide for their living costs and do not provide healthcare and other basic benefits. It is especially difficult to recruit and maintain staff for part-time positions that require expensive, professional education such as an MLIS. The investment in their education requires individuals to seek full-time work, so they must move on as they gain experience. This puts the Library at a distinct disadvantage at hiring and retaining qualified librarians. For example, in October 2021, the department lost two librarians to full-time positions elsewhere.

The Library asked for two other items that did not get printed in the department request. You will notice that there is no line in the Library's budget for software unique to the library. There was a request for administrative software, at \$4,200 to cover a portion of software costs that are now paid by the Friends of the Keene Public Library and Library Board of Trustees. This amount would only cover a portion of all the software the Library uses, with the hopes of it increasing over time, until it represents the true costs. There was also a request for Library programs and supplies for \$3,600 that would cover only 13% of last year's program support received from the Friends and Trustees. The Friends of the Library and the Library Trustees continue to heavily subsidize Library operations. In FY21, the Friends provided \$54,560, and the Trustees provided \$11,796 in support. Together they provided 31% of the Library's non-personnel expenditures, including 100% of program costs, 80% of equipment purchases, 9% of collection costs, \$1,327 for Makerspace interns, and \$8,631 for general administrative costs. However, the pandemic continued to affect the fundraising capability of the Friends of the Library. They were unable to hold book sales last fiscal year, and this fiscal year they were only able to hold one book sale instead of two. This underscores the unsustainability of the Library's reliance on fundraising for primary services of programs, equipment needs, and support of the collection.

Hopefully this provides some clarification of the Library's full request, which we would love to have the Council fulfill. We understand that there are several other important department needs, so this may not be possible, but if you were to re-look at the budget and to consider funding

something more, if we were to prioritize, we would strongly request that the Librarian I position be funded as Librarian II full-time. Thank you for your time. We would be happy to answer any of your questions.”

Councilor Remy stated that he is curious if they had a financial impact analysis for that single change. The City Manager replied that a full-time position would have been \$100,144, versus the \$65,142 currently in the City Manager’s budget. She continued that she also wants to clarify that the supplementals referenced this evening are in fact listed on page 17. The only items not funded in the City Manager’s budget include the items that are typically funded by the Friends of the Library or the Trustees, and it is her understanding that the Friends intend to continue to support those lines. Therefore, it was not necessary to include them. In regards to the position, they did include the position at a Librarian II level instead of a Librarian I, so it was an upgraded position.

Chair Powers stated that typically, how the FOP Committee handles this is with discussion amongst the evening, and then they will come back to all of these budgets in the very near future.

Chair Powers recognized Jan Manwaring, President of Friends of the Library, and Kendall Lane, Vice President.

Ms. Manwaring stated that she wants to respond to some comments made by Ms. Alexander and Ms. Fiske. She continued that the Friends of the Keene Public Library is a 501c3, and their mission is to support the Library and the staff to become the best library that they can be. To do that, they help the Library with the programming, by paying for food, for example. Recently the Friends paid for the “spice of the month.” The Friends do two programs themselves – Reading with Ribby, with the Swampbats; and the museum passes. There are about 20 museum passes offered to library patrons. The collection desk gives them to patrons when asked, but the Friends do all the legwork. Most are 20% or 50% off, and so on and so forth, and the Friends pays for that. Most recently, the Friends icho-sponsors of the volunteer fair. They joined four other organizations who do not have enough volunteers anymore due to the pandemic. The volunteer fair is Tuesday, May 17, from 3:00 to 7:00 PM in the Michael J. Blastos Room. There will be 25 vendors. They hope some of the nonprofits in the area can get some volunteers, and people new to the area can find out about the area’s rich nonprofit community.

Mr. Lane stated that the Friends raise a substantial amount of money each year for the Library. He continued that their biggest fundraiser is the book sale, which the Mayor always issues a proclamation for the week before, encouraging participation. The Friends raises money through direct fundraising, too. People contribute to the organization, and they also have some reserves set aside that are used to support them. They also get about \$16,000 an year from the casinos, as part of their non-profit relationship with local organizations. The amount of money the Friends allocate to the Library has not changed dramatically over the past five or six years. For 2022, they allocated \$18,000 for programming. They have allocated that same amount to programming for about 5 years. They allocated \$34,300 to a collection development and new

equipment and various materials and service contracts that the Library has. That amount has not changed dramatically over the past five years. The Friends operate on a calendar year, not the fiscal year, so it does not always line up exactly with the City, but this is money that is not part of the City budget. It was \$52,300 for 2022, \$53,200 for 2021, and \$50,000 for 2019. If their fundraising was short in any one year, they drew money out of the reserve to make up the difference, but the Friends have been steady with their support for the Library and they expect that to continue. How the money is specifically spent is a Library determination. The Friends' function is to raise the money and make it available to the Library. They ask the Library to give the Friends a list periodically of how the money is being spent.

Ms. Manwaring stated that one example is the Friends pays to clean the wonderful fish tank in the children's section and recently paid \$1,900 so the Library could have "Biblio Labs," self-publicity software. In addition, should some exciting opportunity come up to better the Library, the Library can always tell the Friends about it and ask for help, and the Friends would be happy to do so.

Chair Powers asked if there were any questions from the Committee. Hearing none, he asked for the next speaker.

AIRPORT

David Hickling, Airport Director, stated that the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport continues to thrive. He continued that there are many based aircraft, and the T-hangars are full, with 22 people on the waiting list, and a strong interest in hangar development. They are currently negotiating with one developer and will be starting with another shortly, and several others have expressed interest in leasing land at the airport to develop hangars. The current economic trends in the field are concerning, but they have not yet seen any effect on the operation at the airport, which is great. The Airport's proposed operating budget is rather straightforward. They have been able to reduce operational expenditures year to year. They have reduced some lines to make up for where they had to increase other lines, but overall, they are reducing the operating budget by almost \$6,000. A lot of effort goes into being fiscally responsible in their operations. Their revenues are trending upwards, with increases in the gross revenue percentage of T-hangars as well as through land leases.

Mr. Hickling continued that the most significant change with the budget presentation is the personnel services supplemental request. In the past 10 years, the Airport has completed over \$15.5 million worth of infrastructure capital projects, in which they received \$14.7 million in Federal and State funding, leaving the City with just 5% of the costs of those projects. They are eligible for that funding because they are part of the FAA National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). Being part of that NPIAS system and receiving that funding means they are obligated to operate and maintain a safe and secure airport for aeronautical activities and along with that comes a staggering amount of Federal regulations. The Airport staff is responsible for maintaining these facilities at the airport. This includes maintaining over 2.5 million square feet

of pavement, which is almost 60 acres, or the equivalent of maintaining both lanes of Rt. 101 from Keene to Peterborough. Along with that are the pavement runway markings, hundreds of runways and taxiway edge lights, lighted signs and markers and navigational aids, acres and acres of grass to mow, and the Facilities responsibilities, including custodial, general maintenance, and landscaping. Winter brings an increased level of responsibilities to maintain the safe operation. They have been able to do all of this very economically, having one line for seasonal staff, and a reliance on staff from other City departments to fill in for snow removal, mowing, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Hickling continued that this has worked well, but when the pandemic hit and they did a continuity of operations plan and started looking at the depth they have with people who actually understand the specifics of these airport rules and regulations, they found they are thin. There are two people. If one person is hurt and another person is on vacation, they are done; they do not have any depth there. They have not been able to maintain anyone under that seasonal line that they could get trained to be able to do that. On page 144 and page 17 they propose to address this concern by eliminating the line for the seasonal position and adding a full-time Maintenance Aide. That will allow them to recruit, train, and retain someone who can learn all of these specific rules and regulations that go into operating the airport. They continue to be fiscally responsible in operating the airport and work hard to reduce their expenses and increase their revenues. He thinks this budget will allow them to continue to provide those services and meet those regulations. It would also give them some safeguard to prevent potential staffing crisis if they lost two people.

Councilor Chadbourne asked what “standby pay” is, on page 144. Mr. Hickling replied they need to have someone who can report to the airport at any time. Obviously, they cannot staff it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but if something happens at 8:00 PM that requires a staff member, they have someone receiving “standby pay” to be able to respond at any time. Councilor Chadbourne asked if that is one of the regular employees or someone else. Mr. Hickling replied a regular employee. Councilor Chadbourne asked if they take turns. Mr. Hickling replied yes.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND FACILITIES DEPARTMENT

Chair Powers stated that this begins on page 109.

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director, stated that also included in tonight’s budget presentation is Cemeteries and Youth Services. He continued that their supplemental requests are on pages 17 and 18. Like with other departments, they worked with the City Manager related to some personnel requests, and as they saw in the City Manager’s message, outlined in page 4, work related to Patricia T. Russell Park Project and some other future projects. They will see where the department ends up in the future and how they continue to deliver their services, but he thanks the City Manager for continuing to work with them on that effort.

Mr. Bohannon continued that the department's narratives and metrics are on page 109 and 104 through 114. The organizational chart is on page 115, revenue detail is on page 116, and operating detail is on page 117-126. Coming up with their budget is a year-round process, working through various plans - the Comprehensive Massive Plan, Active and Passive Recreation Management Plan, Facility Condition Asset Report from EMG for all the different buildings, the Capital Improvement Program that they just adopted, and the JCC accreditation for Youth Services. Last year the City Council updated its goals, a little differently than what they had experienced in the past, highlighting to the Department the need to try to match where they fit in. These six Council goals really impact the Department and Youth Services. It is very important for the Department to understand how they match the Council's goals and continue to deliver their services.

Mr. Bohannon continued that the Department's mission is to provide citizens of Keene with quality community services and amenities, including park and trail systems, balanced environmental stewardship, and diverse programming to inspire and support active lifestyles for all ages. Over the course of the last year and through the future in their vision, the department continues to offer as many diverse programs as they can and trying to get their parks to be able to be accessible to all, to continue to meet that mission on a daily basis.

Mr. Bohannon continued that regarding "Rebounding in 2022-2023," the FOP Committee can see the program numbers rebounding. The department knows they are doing well. They will see, in 2020-2021, those "other programs served" column, that is where all of the youth baseball, adult softball leagues, and so on and so forth, continued to play during the COVID-19 process per the guidance of the Governor. You can see the shift; coming back from COVID-19, the department is doing very well. Their numbers are strong this summer for all of their playground programs. All of the programs they did this year were very healthy. They are building and growing in new programming, through their budget, through assistant recreation coordinators; those folks are really helping the program department blossom and meeting more community needs. The department is meeting its Active and Passive Recreation Management goals, along with the Council's goals.

Mr. Bohannon stated that the department put out a post, regarding the need for competitive workforce. That was in their supplemental request. They worked diligently with the HR Director, the City Manager, and the Finance Director to come up with a plan that would work for them to be competitive. He is happy to say that the summer program on the playground side is fully staffed. For the pools, which has been a heavy debate, they have 11 currently and will have 12 once the background check comes back. They have one more who went for the test and then got injured; the department will hold on to them for the season and hopefully they can pass the test later. They found a pool manager, through an outreach open house. This person is very qualified and the department will be able to change how they do their training, in house, to get more people certificated. That is good news. Also on that front, they worked with the County.

The County passed in its budget for training of lifeguards, so the City will be reimbursed by the County for any of the lifeguard training that the department does. That was definitely a plus.

Mr. Bohannon continued that regarding Facilities, the FOP Committee heard an earlier request from the Library related to their position needs. Instead of hiring another part-time, 20-hour person, the department has a couple of part-time people already who need that extra time and do a good job. It makes sense to hire people they already know, and who they know do a good job, and would probably be more efficient in the increased hours the City gives them than someone new who would need training.

Mr. Bohannon continued that the Parks Division has a full summer crew already; they are off and running. They could use another person or two if they find them, but right now staffing is sufficient. In the Parks program, he wanted to highlight, they worked with Antioch student Kyle Bradford to meet some of the Climate Resiliency Master Plan goals. Mr. Bohannon showed an image, stating that it is one of six 18x24" boards that will be in the park, in different areas. He continued that these educational signs teach people about pollinator gardens, invasive species, some of the parks' different trees, and so on and so forth, so people can bring that piece back into their yards. It is an opportunity to work with the Conservation Commission as well, making sure they are educating the public and meeting their goals at the same time.

He continued that the sign people will be seeing, now that the department has approval to go forward with the Patricia T. Russell Park Project, is a requirement that they have to have, out in front of the park during the whole construction season. He showed a list of some of the projects they have this fiscal year, and continued that the skate park is still ongoing and a bid will be coming to the Council soon. Regarding the Wheelock Park campground repurposing project, for a dog park and disc golf course, the first meeting will be next week for the design process kick-off. The Ashuelot River Park Climate Resiliency Plan implementation has a lot of collaboration happening between Antioch, the Monadnock Conservancy, the Conservation Commission, and the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board. People from the Friends of Ashuelot River Park have been instrumental in making that successful. Lastly, the department will do a Robin Hood Park Concept Plan.

Mr. Bohannon stated that "trails" is not part of the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department's title, but they certainly take care of and promote the trails, and make sure that they have capital plans to keep them moving forward, working with the Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC), and making sure they monitor their level of service. Meeting the Council's goals and the department's goals are key. The Rail Trail Phase III is currently underway, and as part of that project, striping on Park Ave was done successfully very early this morning. They continue to raise money for the Transportation Heritage Trail. The UNH Extension's Downtown to Trails study, recently adopted by the Council, was key and instrumental to making the Wayfinding program happen, with the branding project coming down the road. Those two things are perfect synergy to make the trails a destination. A few years ago, the Council adopted the Goose Pond Stewardship Plan, and that work continues. That

particular group meets once a month and has a sign package that will be going out. They have a couple workshops dedicated to trail maintenance so they can gather volunteers who will learn how to do trail maintenance and utilize those volunteers throughout the year.

Mr. Bohannon continued that regarding Cemeteries, certainly the department monitors them, and keeps them mowed. They are very active. As shown in the budget, the department consolidated some of their cost centers to make it more efficient for the department and reporting purposes. The project he brought to them a couple weeks ago, related to Find Your Loved One, is in the works as they speak.

Mr. Bohannon continued that the Facilities projects meet many of the Council's goals. Parks and programs do, too, but Facilities projects are more on the environmental side. On the fourth floor, Facilities staff recently finished that entryway, which was a long project. This is the handiwork of the department's staff. They did not hire a contractor, and saved tens of thousands of dollars. It took a little extra time, but Facilities staff do a phenomenal job, as showcased in this picture the FOP Committee is seeing.

Mr. Bohannon showed a picture of the newest generator and stated that that has been processed. They have received the blessing and are simply awaiting the check from FEMA. In Facilities, as in Parks, they are constantly looking for different funding opportunities. The City Manager announced last week, related to Congressionally Directed Spending, opportunities they submitted for. Other projects the Facilities Department has include the West Keene Fire Station's Schematic Design and critical improvements, happening this year, and roofs at the Police Station, Rec Center, and the Public Works administration side of the building.

He continued that Youth Services is a little low-key in some respects. Alyssa Bender came on in January and is doing a phenomenal job, working with KHS, increasing Youth Services programming, showcasing different elements and thinking outside of the box. This Tuesday, they had an event called "Behind Closed Doors." It is a mock bedroom for parents of high school students to see, where they can learn from experts and KPD about behaviors teens might have in their bedrooms or different things parents might look for. It was well attended and they will look to do it on an annual basis. It was a good partnership with KHS, and Youth Services hopes to do this with other schools, too. Their mission is to help impact problem behaviors in the community and get youth directed on a right path.

He continued that some of the challenges they face in the Juvenile Diversion program, this coming year and in the future, is that the State has changed it a bit. DHHS has the initial intake, which also means fewer cases for Youth Services. They are still working with as many families as they can. It means they have to create more awareness in departments around Cheshire County, to work with the Juvenile Diversion, get those petitions into their doors, and let them work with them. They are working on alternative ways to outreach with youth, with the Monadnock Youth Coalition, creating more programming between the department and Youth Services. On a Friday night in June, there will be a movie and some community partners. They

are trying to create as many collaborations as possible with Youth Services. Ms. Bender is excited about a project she has created, a young adult diversion program in Hillsborough, where she is from. She brought it here to Keene, and they have had a couple cases already. This program is for 18–21-year-olds who might, for example, be caught for alcohol, vaping, or some other minor offense that would go on their record permanently, to work with Ms. Bender and this program to help keep that off their records. Ms. Bender is doing a great job working with the college and other police departments in the area. Also with the Youth Services department, the summer youth program is right around the corner.

Mr. Bohannon stated that with that, he asks that people follow the department. They want to be “FIT,” which stands for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. People can follow the department on those sites, and Youth Services has a Facebook page, which he highly recommends following to get information about many programs and resources for teens.

Chair Powers asked if Committee members had questions.

Councilor Chadbourne stated that the department has a nice, hefty body of goals, aspirations, and work they are already doing. She asked if the department has had further considerations of creating an app to integrate the trail systems, so someone coming to Keene could use the app and find everything from the Wall Dogs murals to Goose Pond to the Cheshire Rail Trail.

Mr. Bohannon replied that several different apps exist. He continued that he is not sure the City would want to create its own app, but they want to promote one: trailfinder.com. They utilized it in the UNH “Downtown to Trails” study. It has all of the trails. He worked with Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician. He worked with the Trailfinder folks a few years ago. City staff downloaded all of the information, so all of the City trails are in this app, which is free. In addition, what is great about the app is that businesses can populate it. For example, Life Is Sweet has populated it. He put in the Rec Center, City Hall, and the Police Department, and set it so the app shows that there are public bathrooms available at those locations during business hours. Thus, if someone comes into town to bike, they would know some of these locations along with other businesses. The app only allows business owners themselves to enter their information on the app; you cannot do it on someone else’s behalf. The department has worked with the downtown business group to promote the app as much as possible, encouraging business owners to put their information in. It takes less than five minutes to literally put yourself on the map. Councilor Chadbourne replied that walkers, mountain bikers, and more could use this app. It sounds great and she is happy to know about it.

Councilor Chadbourne stated that she has a question about one of the slides Mr. Bohannon showed, about the programs, which listed 2021 and 2022. She continued that regarding “other programs served,” that one does not seem like it quite recovered to what it was. Mr. Bohannon replied that the timeframe of July 20 through June 30, there was the COVID-19 (pandemic), and they are still dealing with it in 2021-2022. There are some “funky things going on” with their adult programs. He is a former softball player. When he started playing, 25 years ago, there

were 75 teams. When he left, when he became PRF Director, there were 55 teams. Now it is down to 20. Thus, there is a real cultural shift within the recreation world, in that segment. That was a big commitment for many folks. Disc golf, mountain biking, and other individual outdoor sports that people can do with their families have increased. Those who have families may be on that travel side of youth sports and going here, there and everywhere on the weekends. This does not capture those numbers. Keene ICE has done a phenomenal job growing its programs, and continues to be full all the time when it is in operation. The “other programs served” are the Cal Ripkin, Men’s and Women’s Softball leagues, and so on and so forth.

Councilor Chadbourne stated that most of them recovered, and there is actually a trend up, and that one did not trend that way. She thanked Mr. Bohannon for the explanation.

POLICE

Steve Stewart, Police Captain, stated that Todd Lawrence, Police Captain, is with him. He continued that Chief Russo is under the weather and unable to join them tonight. The Police narrative, metrics, organizational chart, and operating budget for FY 2023 begins on page 127. Revenue is on page 131, and the expenditure budget summary begins on page 132. The cost centers detail is on page 134.

Mr. Stewart stated that the Police Department’s primary function is to enforce laws, investigate crimes, and prosecute those cases in court. He continued that their mission statement is to protect life and property and maintain order within the city while ensuring fair and respectful treatment for everyone. The mission statement guides their daily interactions with citizens, treating everyone as fairly and respectfully as possible. They currently have 44 authorized sworn personnel; 11 full-time, non-sworn personnel; and 13 part-time, non-sworn personnel. They are operating short two dispatchers, an animal control officer, and three sworn positions, with three other, non-sworn positions still in their initial training phases. To ensure that the department is meeting prudent fiscal spending, they conduct twice-monthly budget audits to ensure funds are properly utilized and being paid for from the correct cost centers. This allows them to both properly manage and account for the department’s budget and helps them meet the Council’s goal of effectively managing finances.

Mr. Stewart continued that examples of their efforts to accomplish more with the budget allocated include some of the grants they receive annually. Last fiscal year, that was about \$90,000. These include Federal grants that assist with technical things, NHDOT grants that assist with overtime for motor vehicle type enforcement activity, Department of Safety grants that assist with conducting narcotics investigations, and Tactical Officers Association grants from the State that help with equipment and training. Additionally, the department’s federal law enforcement partnerships allow for reimbursement of overtime associated with collaborative drug enforcement operations.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the department's training budget does not allow for the extensive training that is required to maintain a contemporary, professionally trained police department. Part of their requested increase for FY 2023's budget is training related. The majority of that additional funding for the training budget is for the field-training program. This increase is a very good start; however, the need for additional training funds will only grow larger, with newly required increases in training hours set forth by the NH Police Standards and Training Council at the recommendation of the LEAC Commission. This additional increase will need to be addressed in future fiscal years. To make up for required training, the department continues to use schedule adjustments to avoid training overtime costs. As of the end of March 2022, the department has conducted over 2,512 training hours. Through February 2022, they adjusted approximately 486 of those hours, which avoid the costs of over \$30,650 in training overtime costs. They have reached their capacity, however, in schedule adjustments and will not be able to increase schedule adjustments any higher than this to mitigate any of the increased costs that the LEAC requirements incur.

Mr. Lawrence continued that this leads to recruitment and hiring. This continues to be the Police Department's biggest non-operational struggle, as Mr. Stewart alluded to when he gave the breakdown of their open positions. Those two full-time dispatcher positions have been open since February 2021 and they are finding it difficult to fill that void. That trend is affecting law enforcement nationwide. Those who apply and actually show up to participate in the initial testing continues to drop, year after year. They continue to seek new ways to recruit the most qualified applicants possible. Many in this room have probably heard Chief Russo say many times, "We must maintain the four primary factors that affect the high level of service we provide: we need to hire the best qualified candidate, provide them with the best equipment to do their assigned job, train them to the highest standards, and hold them accountable to those standards." He continued that they cannot deviate from this. To do this, they hope the Council supports their full budget so they can continue to provide the highest level of service to the community.

The City Manager stated that in the City Manager's budget they did make some changes to training in response to LEAC requirements, as requested by the Police Department. She continued that it is important to remember that they will continue to have to make those adjustments as those requirements begin to come due. They are scheduled over a period of time. Over the next several years, they will have to adjust as the training requirements are increased.

Councilor Remy stated that he is looking at the comparison on page 132. He asked where the training dollars they are referring to are showing up. The City Manager replied that page 135 has a breakdown, "Police Training" and "Police Patrol." She continued that over time tactical training went from \$20,000 to \$25,000, and then the associated wage benefits increased in that line. Over time field training officer, in the next category, was 0 last year and that is now included at \$21,000. Below that are the adjustments for the necessary wage benefit changes.

FIRE

Don Farquhar, Fire Chief, stated that the Fire Department's budget appears on pages 92 to 102. He continued that in support of the written narrative on page 92, he has remarks about the Fire Department itself. They are very much more than just a Fire Department. The department provides technical rescue services and assistance to the entire region. They are one of just four departments in the state that are designated to respond to swift water rescue emergencies. They also provide technician level hazardous materials response services to the region, and provide backup for other statewide teams. The department also provides paramedic level transportation ambulance service to the city, four contract towns, and the entire region through a Mutual Aid compact.

Mr. Farquhar continued that in FY 2021, the department's out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) save rate, through their paramedic level service, was exceptionally high. The OHCA save rate, which is probably the most important metric of measuring the efficacy of an EMS system, was in line with some of the highest performing EMS systems in the country. As a brief side note of interest, on June 2 the Fire Department members will be attending a Celebration of Survival event. The celebration's 10 cardiac arrest survivors will get to meet and interact with teams that helped revive them. The reason those folks are alive is due to the application of the American Heart Association's Chain of Survival, which starts with early recognition, early CPR, rapid defibrillation, and advanced resuscitation by EMS providers. That is the example of the importance of tax dollars, truly lifesaving.

He continued that the department continues its strong historical record of successful Federal and State grant awards, resulting in a total grant award amount last year of over \$650,000. Those grants have deferred tens of thousands of dollars of the operational budget, provided medical supplies, and allowed them to acquire expensive durable medical equipment. They are awaiting the grant award decision on two FEMA grants for this fiscal year. The first is AFG, Assistance to Firefighter Grant, for over \$400,000 and will be used for the purchase of technical rescue equipment and to provide technical rescue training for the firefighters. The second grant, which they will speak more on later with the staffing recommendations, is the SAFER grant - Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response. The SAFER grant is traditionally a little slower than the AFG grant, so they could hear back anytime between now and September. He is confident that they will get the AFG grant and he thinks they have a good chance at receiving the SAFER grant, too.

Mr. Farquhar stated that in response to increased demands for departmental services, the department a few months ago moved from nine shift personnel to ten. That has been accomplished with the existing amount of employees; they did not add any full-time employees. The additional staffing had an immediate, positive impact on service delivery to the city. For the long term, the City Manager formed a Fire Staffing Committee, and the recommendation of that committee is presented this evening. They have extended job offers to two new employees, which brings the department up to full strength, with the exception of the Deputy Chief position,

which is created by promotion, and the Fire Prevention position, which is created by retirement. For both positions, they have been fortunate to receive many qualified applicants and are currently moving through the hiring process for those candidates.

Mr. Farquhar stated that regarding the budget itself, the department revenues are on page 96, and are projected to be a little over \$2.22 million. Overall expenditures, on page 98, and is a little over \$7.8 million. The overall expenditures reflect several approved supplemental requests, which were selected from a larger list of supplemental request proposals, on page 17. Through a thorough process of analysis and prioritization, the Fire Department realized \$61,769 in supplemental funds. Those supplemental dollars break down as follows: \$31,344, which represents both salaries and benefits, for a new, part-time assistant to assist the department administrator. The Fire Department Administrator, Kelly Derosier, is the best boss he has ever had. She is invaluable to the department and her work output is amazing. The department greatly appreciates being able to add that position. An additional \$7,500 in equipment, which will be used to execute some long-term maintenance contracts for the durable medical equipment, such as IV pumps and ventilators. They transferred \$8,000 from their existing paramedic training line item and added an additional \$21,500 to pay for a grant match portion of their previously awarded AFG grant that is currently sending four of their current firefighters to paramedic school. That program started last night and in a year and a half, those four firefighters will graduate from paramedic school and be very competent Firefighter/Paramedics. That is a great example of using grant funding to significantly improve the department. They also added \$1,425 to increase EMS licenses and certifications.

Mr. Farquhar stated that in closing he would like to say that the Keene Fire Department is a high-achieving organization that provides a high return on investment of taxpayer dollars. The members of the department are exceptionally talented and truly dedicated to their mission. He is proud to be their boss, and loves coming to work every day.

The City Manager stated that she has a great group of department heads, and no one gets everything they want in their budget. She continued that they went through a process of prioritizing what is put into the City Manager's budget. They sat down with the Chief and said, "We cannot fund all of [the items on your list]. Which are the most important to you? Which are the most needed?" Then they agreed on those items, and those were included in the City Manager's budget. It is important to say that, because it is the same thing with staffing. When they come together and evaluate staffing across the organization, there is a lot of compromise to be had, and the organization as a whole works together very well to take turns, to say, "Okay, this year I am going to get maybe not everything I wanted in terms of the adjustment, but we're going to make some forward movement." That has been the case every year she has done the budget here at the City of Keene. She is grateful for the work of the department heads to help her make that happen, because it is the only way they can meet their fiscal policies. The Chief has done a great job at doing that, and she thinks this budget meets the needs. They are going to talk about the Fire Staffing Committee Report, because the big changes in the Fire Department will be based on wage changes and needs of the department. The part-time administration

position that is included in there, some additional hours for someone, came about as part of the overall fire inspection conversation and the backlog of activity and ability to schedule appointments. While that position will do many other things, that is a primary responsibility of this part-time position. It became clear during their analysis of the fire inspection program that it was needed. It needed to be someone's job to follow up on those inspections, track them, and monitor them. The other thing that did not happen to this budget, as a result of the City Manager's final budget recommendation, is there are not adjustments to overtime. Last year they made an adjustment to overtime; she thinks it was \$100,000, and she intended to make another one this year. That is not included, because overtime is really tied to fire staffing, and all those numbers change, so that is part of the overall staffing analysis that they will be talking about this evening, at least partially. She assumes they will talk about it a lot more before things are finalized.

Chair Powers stated that now they will give the FOP Committee the opportunity to ask the Chief questions about this presentation, and then slide into the report that the City Manager put together and wants to talk about, regarding personnel.

Councilor Chadbourne stated that on page 99 under 61302, "Assistant Department Head," in 2019 it was \$111,000, and in 2021 it was \$112,000, and then it jumps by \$100,000. The City Manager replied that there was a second Deputy.

FIRE STAFFING COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Chair Powers asked to hear from the City Manager.

The City Manager stated that that the Fire Staffing Committee was created in February, and members included Councilor Powers, Councilor Remy, retired Chief Mark Howard, Chief Don Farquhar, Deputy Chief Chickering, Finance Director Merri Howe, ACM/HR Director Beth Fox, and union members Christopher Staples, Dan Newall, Jason Martin, and Bradley Reilly. She continued that Kelly Derosier and Helen Mattson helped with pulling reports, putting things together, and taking notes at the meetings. They had a good-sized committee with good representation. They had help from the Finance Office to run numbers, and the union members were there to answer questions and give them a good understanding when a number did not make sense, so they could dive deeper into a conversation. She has been in Keene almost five years, and almost the entire time, she has been hearing that the Fire Department needs more staffing. There have been multiple requests from Chief Howard, in the past, for more staffing. It has never really made it, until now, to a deeper conversation.

The City Manager stated that they looked at a variety of different things, like firefighter only, firefighter and paramedic, where staffing is needed, and so on and so forth. They took a deep dive into the numbers, the number of calls, the trends, to understand the time of day, day of week, when the calls were happening, whether the calls were in the community or outside of it, whether the City is making its money back from the contracts with outside communities for

ambulance service, and so on and so forth, to get a good understanding. The Fire Staffing Report included in the agenda packet hopefully will tell that story, as they pulled together a great deal of data to do that.

The City Manager continued that in the packet is a history of the Fire Department, so the Committee can understand when there were changes in the department in staffing, and whether it was an administrative change, an operational change, and when. The most compelling chart, in her opinion, is the one that overlays the staffing with the number of calls and provides trend information. If you look at the data the committee collected, the first block is about the number of calls. The majority of the calls are EMS-related, which is not surprising. The majority of calls in 2021, 65%, were EMS, in town. Then they broke that down to see how long it took to respond to the calls. They did work to determine when the call started, when the call ended, and how long it took to answer that call. They broke it down by hours. Then they looked at staffing. It became very clear that, they have had 40 firefighters since 2009. The activity in the call department, which had been heavily involved, has significantly declined. There used to be 30 active members of the Call Fire Department assisting the full-time firefighters, but last year in 2021 there were only two active members in the call department. One of the recommendations of the Fire Staffing Committee is to work to strengthen the call department. However, they cannot rely on that. Volunteer firefighters not participating at the same level that they used to is a nationwide trend. She is not sure if it is because work culture has changed. She remembers the times when someone would be working for a private company, the tone would go off, and the person (who was a call firefighter) would be allowed to leave their job to respond to their local fire department, and still be paid. That does not happen as much anymore, so she is sure that has impacted the availability of call firefighters. This has been on the decline for some time.

She continued that there were 3,638 calls in 2009 and 5,005 in 2021. That is an increase of 1,367 calls, with the same number of firefighters. She tried to overlay. During that time, did they change the number of firefighters? No, they had not, since 2009. Thus, the number of calls has been increasing, and fewer call firefighters have been coming in, but the City has maintained the same number of firefighters responding to those calls.

The City Manager continued that they also looked at overlapping calls. Since 2010, they have seen a gradual increase of overlapping calls, from 28% of the calls in 2010, to 32% of the calls in 2021. They looked at day of week and at time of day. They wanted to understand this, because if it is only a certain day of the week or a certain time of day that the department is busy, maybe they could staff it differently, in terms of the hours that firefighters are working. However, it is rather consistent. A chart in the agenda packet shows that the department is slightly less busy on Sunday, but only slightly, and 7:00 AM through 10:00 or 11:00 AM seems to be the busiest time. The committee also looked at callbacks, to understand when firefighters were being called back to assist. They know, because they have been looking at their overtime for the past few years and overtime amounts are going up, that the firefighters are tired, and thus do not go back unless it is a second alarm. If it goes to that point, they know it is a real call, and then more firefighters

come in to respond. The first alarm could be smoke that is nothing, or does not turn into a big call, so typically they do not respond until they know for sure it is something real.

The City Manager continued that Mutual Aid is an interesting conversation, because the City needs Mutual Aid; there is no way the City of Keene or community can staff for a fire like the one they recently had on Main St. However, Mutual Aid has to be mutual. Keene does get some assistance with its fires, but when you look at the ambulance service, and at what is happening in the region, many communities are not getting out in time to be able to answer their ambulance calls. That is a concerning trend. The committee's recommendations include monitoring what is happening in the region with ambulance service, which includes monitoring what is happening with the County and whether they are successful in getting their ambulance service up and running, and what happens with DiLuzio. There are a lot of changing things in the ambulance world right now, and they need to monitor it.

She continued that the committee also looked at sick time usage and other overtime drivers. What is driving the overtime? They included some recommendations as strategies to help reduce overtime. If successful, it will help bring down the overall cost. It would involve some contract changes. Fortunately, union members participated in the staffing report and they know where some of these concerns are, and it will certainly be part of the union negotiations. They are right now in the process of negotiating a new contract with the fire union.

She continued that the committee also looked at the ambulance contract revenue. The City has contracts for ambulance service with five communities. She wanted to know if the City of Keene is subsidizing that. The City does not want to subsidize ambulance service for another community. They looked at those numbers in a couple different ways. The City receives a "standby fee" from a community, and then they receive the ambulance billing revenue. One challenge that is clear to see is that the City will bill out a much higher number than they are actually able to collect. That is a matter of what is allowable under insurance, or the rules of Medicare or Medicaid, and what is happening with their billing. The committee talked about how they are coding the calls, and whether they need to make changes there, to make sure they are getting all that they can in compliance with those rules, and whether there needs to be some changes in the language in the ambulance contracts with those five communities. Right now, the City is breaking even. It still makes sense for the City to do this, but they need to do more than that. Thus, they need to look at how they bill out, and whether changes are needed. She already mentioned the County's and DiLuzio's ambulance services, but there is also Brattleboro, VT. What happens in VT impacts the City as well, because they are part of the Mutual Aid system, and there are some changes in how Brattleboro is handling their ambulance services. The City will need to monitor that as well.

The City Manager stated that the other thing that happened during this committee process is that there was an opportunity to submit for the AFG grant that the Chief mentioned. She continued that they did submit that. It would allow the City to bring in four additional firefighters. Those four would be paid fully, including training and equipment, for the first year. After the first year,

it steps down; she does not know the exact percentages, but something like 75%, then 50%, then in the fourth year, it is 100% the community's expense. It is a way to make changes to your staffing levels over a period of time, so they do not have to come up with all the funds at once. The staffing report includes a recommendation that the City hire four firefighters and align that with the AFG grant notification. That notification could come anytime between now and September. Those grants keep being awarded until the money is gone, so unless Keene hears they are *not* getting the grant, they need to wait for it, because if they were to make any sort of change before accepting the grant, they would jeopardize their ability to recoup those funds.

She continued that the City needs to look at its ambulance billing and coding; make some adjustments in the fire union contract and some of the department policies, to address overtime and how it is calculated; and shorten the timeframe for the hiring process. The longer it takes to bring someone in, the more overtime they are paying to bring someone else in to fill that spot. They need to look at the language of their ambulance agreements; increase call department involvement; look for ways to reduce expenses or to increase revenue, including investigating contract and Mutual Aid expenses; and continue to monitor EMS changes in the region. That, in essence, is the staffing report in the agenda packet, and she is happy to answer questions.

Chair Powers thanked the City Manager. He thanked everyone for being here tonight, and stated that this is a lot of information that needs to get out, and he hopes people will share it, because it is important for people to understand. At some point in time, the Council has to vote on this budget, this particular item, and future budgets. A lot of what future budgets are going to look like hinge on what is in this budget this year, because many decisions have been made to get this to a budget that is reasonable, but they still have services they need to provide. This all has a major impact.

Councilor Chadbourne stated that this is a thorough report that really addresses the issues, with solutions. It is impressive and she thanks the committee.

Councilor Remy stated that it was an interesting process to be part of the Fire Staffing Committee. He continued that there was an unbelievable amount of data, and they tried to go through and find the right way to present it. He thinks the charts and the report that the City Manager pulled together is a great way to summarize what the committee was trying to do.

Chair Powers stated that he agrees. He continued that it was a lot of work, for many people, and an opportunity for members of the department to look at things a little differently than they had in the past. It gave them an opportunity to have conversation with other members of the staff who do not get to see what happens on the street, and City Councilors who have not had the opportunity to discuss things in prior times because there had not been that kind of a need. It certainly has come up with a solution, which hopefully is affordable and can be implemented. At the same time, as the City Manager has listed, there are a number of things that need to be reviewed. His feeling is that the Fire Department will handle most of that internally as they go through everything, realign, and do what they need to do to keep up with the workload. Then

when a matter requires Council assistance, it will come forward to the Council. Many people did a lot of great work. The City Manager pulled off quite a task, and he thanks her for her great work.

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

On a roll call vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends to accept the [Fire Staffing Committee] report, which includes a recommendation to hire four firefighters, one per shift, and this will be revisited once the department is notified of the outcome of the AFG grant submission. If awarded, the SAFER grant would temporarily assist with the funding of these positions. Other recommendations of the committee should be pursued immediately.

Chair Powers stated that the FOP Committee meets again on Monday night.

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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