

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, June 2, 2022. The Honorable Mayor George S. Hansel called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Bryan J. Lake, Michael J. Remy, Gladys Johnsen, Michael Giacomo, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Philip M. Jones, Andrew M. Madison, Kris E. Roberts, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Catherine I. Workman, Mitchell H. Greenwald, Kate M. Bosley, and Thomas F. Powers were present. Having declared a quorum physically present, Councilor Ormerod—who had the Council’s permission to participate remotely—stated his location and no one was present with him. Councilor Giacomo led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Hansel reminded the Council of the vacation schedule, which will start with the cancelation of the July 27 and 28 MSFI and FOP meetings, followed by the August 4 Council meeting, as well as the August 10 and August 11 PLD and FOP Committee meetings. The Council will return to its normal meeting schedule for the August 18 meeting.

MINUTES FROM THE PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt the May 19, 2022 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

PROCLAMATION – CARDIAC ARREST

Mayor Hansel welcomed Lieutenants Jeremy LaPlante and Aaron Cooper of the Keene Fire Department, to receive a proclamation declaring June 1–7, 2022 as CPR/AED Awareness Week in Keene and he encouraged all residents to express their sincere thanks to the members of the Keene Fire Department, whose dedicated service reflects great credit upon themselves and the City of Keene for exceptional emergency services.

PROCLAMATION – SWAMP BATS

Mayor Hansel welcomed Kevin Watterson, President of the Keene Swamp Bats, who began by thanking Lt. LaPlante for saving his life once, calling their proclamation well deserved. Mayor Hansel presented Mr. Watterson with a proclamation extending his official congratulations to the Swamp Bats and all affiliated members, volunteers, and players on this 25th anniversary of their inception. The Mayor called upon all citizens in Keene and the greater Monadnock Region to congratulate the Swamp Bats on this milestone and to join the Mayor at the Swamp Bats opening day on June 8 at Alumni Field. Mr. Watterson thanked the Mayor, City Council, and City Staff in particular. He said the Swamp Bats could not have done this for 25 years without a community partner that believes in them and guides them at every turn.

PUBLIC HEARING – RELATING TO THE FISCAL YEAR OPERATING BUDGET

Mayor Hansel opened the hearing at 7:11 PM and the Deputy City Clerk read the hearing notice. Mayor Hansel explained the procedure for this public hearing and that the budget would be adopted at the Council’s next regular meeting. He welcomed the Finance Director, Merri Howe, and asked for introductory comments from the City Manager.

The City Manager presented to the City Council and the public the operating budget for 2022–2023, which includes the first year of the most recent Capital Improvements Program. The budget process began in late February and worked its way through the FOP Committee through the month of May before arriving at the City Council. The budget can be found on the City’s finance webpage under the financial documents tab. The City Manager said that her budget memo at the beginning of the document does a pretty good job highlighting changes in the budget. She continued saying that the municipal team has worked diligently to structure a proposed City budget with little increase on the City portion of the tax rate, raising it slightly by 0.49%, which projects a \$0.06 change in the municipal portion. The proposed budget complies with the City Council’s fiscal policy, which aims to limit property tax increases to a rolling three-year average CPI net of any expenditure required by law. This year, the calculation was 2.6% of \$27 million dollars, or \$704,000.

The City Manager continued explaining that the operating and capital budget proposals support the vision of the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan, City Council Goals, and Fiscal Policy to continue moving the City toward a sustainable future, while striving to maintain overall affordability. The budget includes proposals to further advance Council goals around communication, information sharing, and public engagement. This budget also incorporates strategies to utilize resources in a manner that will minimize the burden to the property taxpayer. Strategies have been included to reduce debt, lesson interest expense in the operating budget, and utilize additional capital reserve accounts to fund projects over time. The first year of the Capital Improvement Program 2023–2029 has been updated and modified in the proposed FY 2023 budget to reflect the changes that have occurred since the adoption of the Capital Improvement Plan in March 2022.

The City Manager continued that in accordance with Council goals related to capitalizing on funding opportunities as they arise—and specifically Federal funds that have become increasingly available—the City has submitted applications for the next round of Congressionally directed funding projects to Congresswoman Kuster’s Office for: Downtown Water Main Replacement Project—\$1,630,600, Island Street Water Main Replacement Project—\$893,700, Downtown Stormwater Resiliency Project—\$2,159,300, Stormwater Main Lining Program—\$920,800. The Manager continued the City has also submitted applications to Senator Shaheen’s Office for the Fire Station 2 project—\$7,500,000, Recreation Center Renovation—\$1,466,000, Multi-Use Parking Facility (Design)—\$1,200,000, and The Transportation Heritage Trail—\$1,996,000 (80% of \$2,458,000). These are all projects in the Capital Plan. If successful, at moving forward even just one or two of these projects, it will be a welcome relief to our Capital Improvements Plan, which the City Manager said continues to be squeezed by escalating project costs.

The City Manager said the budget includes City revenues associated with State municipal aid as we know them. Not included is SB 401, which is anticipated to be signed by the Governor and could increase our highway block grant funds by \$463,000 (this would again be a welcome relief as asphalt pricing has increased 32% since this time last year).

The City Manager explained that the tax rate estimates are based on a projection of no increase to the property tax base, which is a good conservative estimate. At this point, in the City’s overall tax rate process, both School & County have approved budgets, setting the education and County portions of the overall rate. Considering tax rate projections provided during adoption and the

recommended City budget, the total property tax rate is estimated to increase by 3.25% combined. The largest increase is estimated in the school's portion of the budget. The local and State education portion of the tax rate combined is increasing by \$0.91.

The recommended FY 2023 Operating and Capital Budget being reviewed this at this meeting was recommended by the FOP Committee with only a few adjustments. The City Manager explained that the Committee voted to recommend an increase to the Senior Center from the proposed \$10,000 to \$15,000, which would be level funding from the year before and a new line to support the work of the Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging Coalition (MDEIB) that formed in summer 2021. Currently, the YMCA serves as their fiscal sponsor and the group is fundraising to bring on an executive director. The two adjustments increase the bottom line by \$15,000. This new budget total would still be within the fiscal policy by \$11,000.

In addition, the City Manager said she had been working with the Human Services Director to update our agreement with Southwestern Community Services related to homeless shelter services funded as part of outside agency requests. The City Manager is also working with the Director to implement a similar agreement with Hundred Nights. These agreements help to further define the process when someone needs shelter and ensure they are receiving case management services.

Overall, the City Manager concluded Staff feels this budget reasonably supports the City services provided to the residents of Keene, advances the goals set by the Council, includes contractual obligations, and supports the City's infrastructure program through continued funding of the CIP plan.

Mayor Hansel welcomed comments on the various sections of the budget.

There were no public comments on the following sections: Mayor and City Council expenditures, Community Funded Events, Capital Appropriations, Employee Benefits, Risk Management, City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, City Clerk, Assessing Department, Finance Department including Human Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Fire Department, Library, Parks, Recreation & Facilities, Police Department, Airport, Community Development, Public Works, Parking Fund, PC Replacement Fund, Solid Waste Fund, Sewer Fund, Water Fund, and Fleet Services Equipment Fund.

The only section for which there was public comment was **Outside Agencies**:

- Carmen Trafton on behalf of Good Samaritans thanked the City Council for all they did for pedaling for prevention, which she last presented to the City Council. There would be another ride on September 10, which is World Suicide Prevention Day. She continued on the topic of outside agencies, stating that she appreciated the past support and this year's allocation because they do not receive funding from the United Way. While the full \$13,000 requested was not achieved this year, she sought any extra funds available in future years for suicide prevention. She said the need has never been greater than this time, with the pandemic creating a lot of anxiety and stress in the community. She shared a new 988 suicide prevention national hotline rolling out July 1. She said her agency has never been busier and they are doing a lot with very little. Their budget is approximately \$50,000 annually and

everything is done with volunteers and donations; she is the only part-time staff person. They were founded by a family and have been serving this community for 41 years. They never charge for services or programs. They work with all area schools, including on curriculum. They also work with families, businesses, individuals, and organizations. Their phones are constantly ringing. Their slogan is “You’re Never Alone.” She thanked Andy Bohannon, Director of Parks, Recreation, & Facilities, for helping to coordinate activities. She thanked the City, stating that the need is great.

- Mark Scoville of the non-profit organization, Let It Shine, stated that they are working to bring back the Pumpkin Festival this year. He thanked the City Council for their consideration and allocation of funds. They appreciate the support and coordination of the City, and they look forward to bringing back the festival on October 22.
- Sally Malay represented the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative, of which she is the Executive Director. She works to advocate for families and children. She was present to state her position more clearly than she did at the FOP Committee. She stated that the Collaborative is grateful for the support from the City. Last year they were financed and supported at \$10,000 and she said that unfortunately the FOP Committee was not able to fund them at the same amount this year; \$5,000 was allocated. She wanted to ensure the City Council was informed about what the Kids Collaborative does. She continued that they are an independent, nonprofit organization. They serve families in Keene Housing, but operate independently of them. Keene Housing provided the start-up funding in 2015, which is being phased out over time. They need to raise \$150,000 from individuals, grants, foundations, corporate sponsors, and partners like the City of Keene. They serve 600 kids in Keene Housing properties, the Housing Choice Voucher program, and last year they took on three new properties through Southwestern Community Services. Last year, the \$10,000 City funding allowed them to increase the number of families they serve. They partner with more than 40 different youth program providers in the community. She said the need in this community is more important than ever to provide access to opportunities and experiences for which they would not otherwise have the funds. Not only do they provide financial help, but the services are free. The Collaborative removes the barrier for families focused on work to put food on the table. It allows their kids have the opportunity to gain life skills and help them progress on an upward social mobility so they can be successfully engaged members of our community. She said the average income of the households served is \$23,000 annually. By the time these children get to middle school, there is a six-hour learning gap compared to their peers from more affluent households. Research shows that 65% of children born into poverty remain in poverty through adulthood and the Collaborative wants to break that cycle. Parents and guardians in more affluent households spend an average \$7,000 annually on these experiences outside of the school. 250 of the 600 children served attend Keene schools and 44% received special education services, which is three times higher than the district average. She said the impact is the experiential learning opportunity that provides confidence, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, team work, and mentorship from educators and adults in the community, all of which helps their academic progression at school. The \$10,000 from the City would result in \$150,000 of program fees

going directly back into the Keene economy. The other impacts are reducing juvenile crime, reducing truancy, enhancing school achievement, less tobacco and vaping use, and reduced illegal drug use. The Collaborative's goal is to also increase the special education rate of service, which would ultimately decrease the burden on taxpayers. She urged reconsideration of the same support as last year. Regardless of the Council's final decision she appreciates the partnership with the City.

- Joanna Zambella, a Kids Collaborative Board member, spoke in support of increasing their funds. She said it is also important that no one else in the State is doing what the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative is. It is a powerful program and there is significant data to back-up the program. What she wanted to impress on the City Council was that these are Keene kids impacted and that a \$5,000 cut would be anywhere from 50–100 kids not having an experience that could change their lives because. The collaborative helps break the cycle of poverty to help kids be productive members in our society. She recalled being close to making bad decisions once, but said she was very lucky. She said that when a child loses access to a program, they could lose hope and accept a negative fate. She said that \$5,000 would have a massive impact and asked the City Council to consider increasing the amount to help the children who are the future of Keene.
- Ellen Avery, Executive Director for the Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC.), said their global headquarters are based in Peterborough and they serve all 34 towns in the Monadnock region, including those in Cheshire and Hillsboro Counties. She said this was their first request to the City and perhaps the City Council thought it an odd request given that the HCS transportation service is already in Keene. However, she was proud to say there is no duplication of effort between the two services. The City has been funding HCS for some time and they take Keene residents to Keene destinations. She said CVTC has been in operation since 2008 and they offer transportation outside the City for more specific types of medical treatments; all their trips have been medically based. They took Keene residents last year mostly to Dartmouth Hitchcock in West Lebanon (43 rides), Monadnock Community Hospital (7), Brattleboro, Concord Hospital, many vaccine trips, Merrimack, Winchester, Boston, New London, Manchester, Springfield, MA, and Northampton Ma. Last year they served 36 individuals and are filling a gap for those who need specialized medical treatment somewhere else. They requested \$1,500 from the City. She said the City this past year came in at number 8 out of 34 towns for number of rides requested. She said there is no fee for the individual riding and the funding for mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers is through the FTA. They were hopeful the City Council would see they are filling a gap and would allocate them \$1,500.
- Rabbi Dan Aaronson of 166 East Surry Road identified himself as a member of the Human Rights Committee, but was present representing the Monadnock Interfaith Project and their team of faith leaders. He could also be speaking on behalf of so many people and faith leaders' faith and consciences to consider the real needs of those in Keene experiencing homelessness as the City Council sets its budget. He understood that the budget is largely set for the upcoming fiscal year, but said the needs of our unhoused brothers and sisters are

regrettably not going away. As the Ad Hoc Housing Stability Committee continues to deliberate support to those experiencing homelessness in the City, he hoped the ideas and letters submitted in recent months would make it to the top of the Committee's agenda, including the one submitted by Councilors Lake, Williams, and Workman. His colleagues present at the last ad hoc Housing Stability Committee meeting were heartened to know the Committee was wrestling with ways to mitigate the harmful effects of homelessness in Keene. He said it was their hope that the Committee would think creatively about overcoming the obstacles to enacting some of those proposals or others. He said it all begins by asking what it would take to accomplish the unimaginable. He said there are no easy answers, and some remedies would cost money when there is little to be allocated. However, he said we are talking about human beings created in the image of the divine and therefore he said we have a responsibility to find answers, as inconvenient as they may be, and to find the funding to provide remedies even if it means making very difficult budget decisions. He cited, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me. But if I am only for myself, who am I. If not now, when?" He said it is the sad truth that there will always be unhoused people in our City who cannot for a myriad of reasons access the City resources. By allocating funds to the organizations that they heard from tonight and outreach, camping, and other remedies, the City Council can help restore dignity to the most vulnerable. He said we need only see within every human the image of the divine and ask what it would take. He asked we as a society will not do this, what are we; if not now, when?

Hearing no general comments on the budget, Mayor Hansel closed the hearing at 7:45 PM, except for written public comments, which will be accepted until 4:00 PM on Tuesday, June 14. Written comments must be signed and submitted to the City Clerk by that date and time to be added to the Council agenda. Amendments could be offered by City Council at the next regular meeting.



A true record, attest:

Deputy City Clerk

**FOP REPORT – FY21 HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GRANT
– HUBBARD CONSULTING LLC – FIRE LIEUTENANT/TRAINING OFFICER**

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Council authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute a professional service contract with Hubbard Consulting LLC for an amount not to exceed \$15,000 for the delivery of a Hazardous Materials Response Plan. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – AIRPORT LAND LEASE – AIRPORT DIRECTOR

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a land lease agreement with Mr. Lance Miller. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – CHESHIRE RAIL TRAIL PHASE THREE - CONSTRUCTION CHANGE ORDER #2 – CITY ENGINEER

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a contract Change Order with Adams Trucking & Excavation, Inc. for an amount not to exceed \$41,000 (Subject to NHDOT approval). Funding to be provided by Project Cost Center 90057-F. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy.

Councilor Giacomo asked if the \$41,000 represented 20% or 100% of the project. The City Manager replied 20%. The City Manager said the total amount is \$40,878.50, of which the City's share is \$8,275.70. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT – COUNCILOR LAKE – RECOMMENDED OPERATING BUDGET ADJUSTMENT – KEENE SENIOR CENTER

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending the communication from Councilor Lake be accepted as informational. Mayor Hansel accepted the report as informational.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

The City Manager reported that the 2022 construction project updates were in the Councilors' mailboxes. Construction season has begun, and the biggest project will likely be the Winchester Street reconstruction project, which is expected to commence at the end of this month. This season, the work will focus on the Key Road/Riverside Plaza intersection up to the Wendy's entrance. The contract requires that one lane will be always maintained, but delays should be expected. Public Works will create a project specific website to help communicate updates and for the public to notify Staff of problems. There will also be weekly email updates available to anyone wishing to subscribe.

The City Manager also shared that Councilors received a pool update in their mailboxes and information on summer programs at their desks. Pools open June 13. She said they have finished what we could do with the money they had at Robin Hood Park. She said there are still things to be done with the pool; however, the bathrooms have been upgraded to current ADA standards including new showers, sinks, toilets, benches, changing areas, water fountains, paint, and LED lights. There is more work to do, but the City Manager concluded that this was the first phase.

MSFI REPORT – CHARLES REDFERN – REQUEST FOR SIGNAGE IDENTIFYING TRAILS

A Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee report read, recommending the communication be placed on more time. Mayor Hansel granted more time.

ORDINANCE FOR FIRST READING – RELATING TO PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES – ORDINANCE O-2022-06

A memorandum read from HR Director/Assistant City Manager, Beth Fox, recommending that the City Council refer Ordinance O-2022-06 to the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee for their review and recommendation. Mayor Hansel referred the Ordinance to the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee.

ORDINANCE FOR SECOND READING – RELATING TO CLASS ALLOCATIONS AND SALARY SCHEDULES – ORDINANCE O-2022-05

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read on a vote of 5–0, recommending the adoption of Ordinance O-2022-05. Mayor Hansel tabled this Ordinance until the next regular meeting.

FOP REPORT – RELATING TO THE 2022/2023 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET – RESOLUTION R-2022-09-A

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read on a vote of 5–0, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2022-09, as amended to include an additional \$5,000 to the Senior Citizens Center to reflect a level funded allocation of \$15,000 and to include an allocation of \$10,000 to the Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coalition, with the disbursement of funds contingent upon further approval by the City Council of the Coalition’s plans for operation once finalized. Mayor Hansel tabled the Resolution until the next regular meeting.

FOP REPORTS - RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR MUNICIPAL BUILDING ROOFS; RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR ROAD REHABILITATION; RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE SALT SHED REPLACEMENT; RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE WELLS STREET PARKING STRUCTURE MAINTENANCE; AND RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE 3MG WATER TANK REPAIR – RESOLUTION R-2022-10, RESOLUTION R-2022-11, RESOLUTION R-2022-12, RESOLUTION R-2022-14, AND RESOLUTION R-2022-15

Reports read from the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee unanimously recommending the adoption of Resolutions R-2022-10, R-2022-11, R-2022-12, R-2022-14, and R-2022-15. Mayor Hansel tabled the Resolutions until the next regular meeting.

06/02/2022

FOP REPORT – RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARKS AND FACILITIES INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL RESERVE - RESOLUTION R-2022-18

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2022-18. Mayor Hansel filed the report. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2022-18 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy and the motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT – RELATING TO THE BRIAN A. MATTSON PARKS AND RECREATION CENTER – RESOLUTION R-2022-20

A Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure Committee report read, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2022-20. Mayor Hansel filed the report. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt Resolution R-2022-20 was duly seconded by Councilor Giacomo. Discussion ensued in support. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT - RELATING TO AN APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS AND USE OF UNASSIGNED FUND BALANCE FOR THE FY 2022 FIRE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL BUDGET RESOLUTION – R-2022-21

A Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee report read, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2022-21. Mayor Hansel filed the report. A motion by Councilor Powers adopt resolution R-2022-21 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy and the motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Hansel reminded City Council that any amendments proposed to the City budget must be submitted in writing to the City Clerk by Tuesday, June 14 at 4:00 PM.

Councilor Filiault reminded the Council that the State of NH still owes the City of Keene \$11 million in past Rooms and Meals Taxes, which he will remind the Governor of later this month.

The City Manager said the memorial service for Brian A. Mattson will be held at 1pm on June 11 at the Keene Recreation Center.

Councilor Remy reminded everyone of the Taste of Keene on Saturday, June 4.

There being no further business, Mayor Hansel adjourned the meeting at 8:06 PM.



A true record, attest:

Deputy City Clerk