

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 10, 2022

5:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Thomas F. Powers, Chair
Michael J. Remy, Vice Chair – Via Zoom
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Bryan J. Lake

Members Not Present:

Andrew M. Madison

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Patty Little, City Clerk
Merri Howe, Finance Director
Dan Langille, City Assessor
Deputy City Clerk, Bill Dow
Asst. City Manager/IT Director, Rebecca Landry
Asst. IT Director, Andrew Mueller
Natalie Darcy, Human Services Manager
Asst. City Manager/HR Director, Beth Fox

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

1) City Manager Remarks

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon addressed the Committee and stated this budget has very little estimated increase on the tax rate. It is raising the municipal portion of the tax rate by .49%. This recommended budget considers the first year of the capital program which goes from 2023 to 2029 and noted the capital program has been updated since the adoption of the CIP in March of 2022. In addition, the debt schedules have been adjusted to reflect recent changes for the Winchester Street Construction project; the Council authorized and increased the bonding for Winchester Street in the amount of \$584,000. This added an additional interest expense to the operating budget by \$9,490. In addition to that, since the approval of the CIP the Thompson Road project was brought before the Committee for design approval in the amount of \$210,000 which was taken from unallocated fund balance. This is a project that will need to be included in the CIP during the next update.

Ms. Dragon went on to say the Committee has heard the Engineer refer to this - the market for goods and services changing and while the City has been aggressively pursuing grants, the widespread access to Federal funding sources has created an increase in demand for both contractors and supplies and this demand has begun driving up costs. Recent projects are being bid substantially above estimates, which is why the City had to come before Council for the Winchester Street project and some projects are generating little interests. In addition, supply chain issues are impacting access to operating supplies and needed supplies for various projects.

The Manager used the Wells Street garage project as an example where repairs are being anticipated this construction season but will likely be pushed off because of a delay in epoxy material.

The budget includes all City revenues associated with State Municipal Aid as known at the present time. The legislature isn't done with their work and hopefully there will be some additional revenue coming in. In addition, the tax rate estimates are based on a projection of no increase in the tax base. At this point in the City's overall tax rate process, both the school and county have adopted their budgets setting the education and the county portions of the overall tax rate. Considering tax rate projections provided during their adoption of those budgets 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 portion of the tax rate, it is estimated to increase the tax rate by .91 cents just for the school. This concluded the Manager's remarks.

Finance Director Remarks:

Finance Director, Merri Howe began by noting there is an online version of this FY 23 budget on the City website. Ms. Howe stated this would be the City's last budget coming out of the finance software Pentamation and formatted in this format. Ms. Howe thanked Rebecca Landry who did the covers for both the CIP and the budget book this year.

Ms. Howe noted the table of contents are color-coded. The orange color represents a link to a revenue page, and the blue to expenditure pages.

Ms. Howe began on Page 2 – Compliance with fiscal policies.

Pages 2 through 4 - Fiscal policy compliance and the budget.

Pages 5 and 6 - Summary of information as to what the anticipated changes are in the revenues and the expenditures for FY23.

Pages 10 through 30 - Information regarding the general fund budget which is the primary operating fund utilized by the City. It accounts for the majority of the City departments and the functions, such as fire, police, ambulance service, maintenance of Parks and Rec., dog licensing code enforcement.

Page 10 - Summary broken down of the City taxes to be raised by department and services that is provided for an average house.

Pages 13 through 28 - General fund revenue and expenditures.

Page 28 - General fund long-term bonds with issue date, maturity dates, rates, original amount principal and balance as of June 30, 2023. Page also has the new anticipated debt for FY23 based on the CIP projects.

Mayor and City Council - Page 34, Cost Center 0001:

Ms. Howe noted the budget is down \$20,000 which is the result of moving an amount budgeted in FY22 for archiving software to cost center implemented this fiscal year - cloud based software.

Councilor Chadbourne asked where the meal provided to the Council during budget review is reflected. Ms. Howe stated it is listed under Council's official expense.

Human Services:

Natalie Darcy, Human Services Manager addressed the Committee and stated Human Services has been tasked with taking the lead on outside agency funding. This year the committee consisted of individuals from Human Services, Finance, and City Council. The committee worked diligently to assure that any organization who wanted to apply for funding had the opportunity to do so. Recommendations for funding are based in part on each agency's response under the following established criteria: The impact on the City if the agency was not in operation; the agency provides a service with direct financial impact on expenditures of City departments; the number and percentage of Keene residents served by the agency; other local service agencies providing similar services; percentage of the total budget spend on direct client services; financial impact in terms of prevention and intervention services that potentially saves future City spending and demonstrated efforts to cooperate and avoid duplication with other agencies.

Ms. Darcy explained the process begins with a public notice published in the Keene Sentinel inviting agencies to apply with a deadline for applications on January 19, 2022. Staff also reached out to agencies who have previously received funding or have previously applied for funding and attached an application for funding. The committee met via zoom to discuss the 13 agencies who had applied for funding. The committee then scheduled zoom meetings with each of the agencies and agents. The committee then met and made recommendations and those recommendations were forwarded to the City manager for budget review. This concluded Ms. Darcy's comments.

Carmen Trafton Director of the Samaritans addressed the Committee next and began by thanking the City for the allocation recommendation. She indicated nothing has really changed with their situation with not receiving funding from the United Way and hence if there is a way to acquire a few more dollars they would be very appreciative.

Susan Ashworth from Home Healthcare Hospice and Community Services stated she would like to speak to Meals on Wheels and the City Express Transportation. She indicated Meals on Wheels provides a daily nutritious meal to City residents who are homebound and frail and helping them to stay safe and independent at home reducing the need for emergency services and other costly interventions such as institutionalization. Ms. Ashworth indicated 57,000 meals were delivered in the City last year to 376 residents of which nearly half of them are over the age of 80, 10% are over the age of 90, and the oldest participant is 104 years old and still able to live independently at home with Meals on Wheels and other services. She went on to say 70% of those they serve indicate that Meals on Wheels is their main meal of the day and half say they don't have enough money for food, which she indicated is not surprising as incomes of our participants are between a 100 to 125% of the poverty level.

She felt as a result they are truly reaching a target audience that needs this service. She felt this will certainly continue to be a need in Keene as the older population grows.

Ms. Ashworth stated not only are people growing older but they are seeing more people who have memory loss issues and it is absolutely critical that they have the meal and the daily safety check in order to remain safe.

She stated her organization is requesting a .36 cents a meal and are hoping the City will continue this appropriation which keeps Keene residents safe in their home.

Ms. Ashworth next addressed the City Express, which is providing public transportation in the City of Keene. The ridership continues to grow as they emerge from Covid. The City Express provide approximately 20,000 rides a year for people from all walks of life for groceries, medical appointments, riding to work. She indicated this is not only for people who can walk to a bus stop but they also provide complimentary paratransit for those who need assistance with wheelchair lift and other mobility aids. They also provide services to by giving free bus tickets to many other social service agencies in the region; City Human Services, Monadnock Peer Support Monadnock Family services, Division of Health and Human Services to coordinate to make sure these clients have mobility to get to other services. Ms. Ashworth went on to say they are working actively with Southwest Regional Planning Commission on some new options for transit in the City including micro transit and looking at routes to make sure they are the most appropriate. She indicated they need a 50% match from the City in order to gain FTA funds to continue the service and asking for that increase because gas costs have increased by 43% and to retain CDL drivers they needed to be given a slight increase to their wages. This concluded Ms. Ashworth's comments.

Mary Jensen of Keene Senior Center stated she sees that the budget has \$10,000 of the \$15,000 that they had requested. She stated she wanted to bring in some new details. They currently have 287 members and of those 193 are Keene residents. They offer seniors an opportunity to be in a location where they are with other seniors, where they can work, workout, work on their mental and physical health while working at well-being at the senior center. Ms. Jensen stated they have collaborated with the Recreation Center to offer programming through the Super Senior program. There's pickle ball, there are programs through Moco Arts, but nevertheless seniors spend a lot of time at the Center.

Since opening last August, the Center has had over 5,000 people up for events that includes exercise, lunches, art, classes, art programs, and other cultural, social and intellectual pursuits. What they most often hear from people is that they are lonely and they would like to be with other people their age. Because the Center does not permit drinking, smoking or gambling, a lot of people prefer to be at this location.

As a result they are asking for the full \$15,000 be approved. In other states Senior Centers are funded through the State in a way that does not happen here. The Center raises the rest of the money through low membership fees but keep the fee low to be able to have more people join. They write grants, conduct events in order to raise more money.

Sally Malay of 5 Morgan Lane was the next speaker – Director of the Keene Housing Kids Collaborative. Ms. Malay stated that they are a nonprofit organization. Their mission is to build a foundation for successful adulthood for families in low income households that are struggling to make ends meet; they help their children by providing access to opportunities and experiences to help them reach their full potential. Most of these children live in Keene. They serve Keene Housing and most recently formed a new partnership with Southwestern Community Services; two of their properties are in Keene so the number of children that they service have increased. It is a total of nearly 600 children, 80% of those children live in Keene

Ms. Malay stated they are grateful for the investment the City has provided over the past few years and continue to ask for that support.

Their families have an average income of \$23,000 this doesn't provide a lot other than to get food on their table. Statistics and research shows that 65% of these children will remain in that income bracket through their adulthood and Keene Housing Kids Collaborative is aiming to help increase their social mobility to change their outcome. Research also indicates there is a 6,000 hour learning gap for these children by the time they get to middle school compare to peers from more affluent households.

Affluent households spend up to \$7,000 per year per child on these experiential learning activities that children are able to participate.

Last year the organization helped 193 children participate in activities. Prior to the pandemic. 2019 was the peak year with 270 children participating, which resulted in 786 activities which equaled to 20,000 hours of activity hours for those children. These children and their families need this engagement as we come out of the pandemic, both for social engagement and also for their academic progress. 44% of these children are receiving special education services and that is three times the district average. Hence there is positive gains for the school district for the intervention that they can provide by having this positive impact on children's lives.

Ms. Malay stated they raise around \$100,000 which is directly reinvested back into the Keene economy through the different partners that we have. They have approximately 40 different community partners and expect to continue this for 2022. Already for this year they have 138 children engaged in their services. The social return on investment is also very heavily researched; they can help reduce juvenile crime, truancy, enhancing school achievement, reducing tobacco and vaping, and illegal drug use. Nobel Prize winner, James Heckman has calculated a 13% return on investment for this early childhood intervention.

Ricki Greenwald Board Chair for Keene Housing Kids Collaborative addressed the Committee next. She indicated she has been part of this organization for seven years and was first introduced to the organization at a breakfast she was invited to attend. Listening to testimonials from parents and children about how their lives have been positively affected has left a lasting impact on her. She indicated this organization was a brainchild of Josh Mann from Keene Housing.

Ms. Greenwald noted their organization is unique - there is nobody like them in the State of New Hampshire that provides this type of service.

Ms. Greenwald went on to say one of the things that makes them unique is that they are in partnership. They have a data sharing agreement with SAU 29. The Keene Housing Kids Collaborative has quantitative and qualitative research, they have beautiful testimonials from parents and children as to how this is truly changed the lives of their children. Data also shows that children who participate in activities do much better in school and are happier socially and which contributes to a happy family. Ms. Greenwald felt investing in children is investing in the future of our community. She urged the City to match at least what has been given in the past.

Pierre Morton, Chair of the Monadnock Diversity Equity and Inclusion and Belonging Coalition began by noting that they are the last stop historically in the Underground Railroad in NH. Keene is the City of Jonathan Daniels. He noted to the proclamation put forward by the City Council and the Mayor which states "*We are diverse and inclusive City*" – this was approved last Juneteenth.

He referred to the work that has been recommended to the Racial Justice and Community Safety Ad Hoc Committee which was convened in 2020. He felt the representations tonight, whether it be for the elderly, children etc. is so that Keene can become a beloved community.

He indicated they are in the process of conducting fundraising to accomplish the recommendations that have been put forth. The first step in their process is to be able to hire a Multi-Cultural Director (\$55,000 over 2 years). They also want to be able to support community businesses that have signed the pledge or are getting ready to sign the pledge to be a more diverse workplace.

In closing Mr. Morton stated he loves this community, he has been here since 2019 and couldn't have picked a better place with better people. His sons are Puerto Rican and Italian and they also love this community. However, there is still more work to do and their color at times gets in the way and they can be perceived or treated differently.

The Manager in response thanked Mr. Morton for all his work and asked if this was a Regional Coalition and whether Mr. Morton was talking about doing this work in communities around us. Mr. Morton answered in the affirmative. The Manager clarified they will be seeking the same type of support from these other communities as well. Mr. Morton answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Mark Bodin President of Savings Bank of Walpole addressed the Committee next and stated this is not just a dot on the map for them; this is where they live and work – this community is their home but there are many things that we are missing in. He indicated when he looks at the future of this region it has to become a welcoming community.

With this coalition, a small group of people first started meeting at the hospital – individuals like Don Caruso and Kendall Lane were involved in it. Then the City formed the Racial Justice Committee. As a result, the group has banded back together; the YMCA has stepped up to be the

hosting organization, they now have nonprofit status, the Savings Bank of Walpole put up \$10,000 as startup money. Mr. Bodin then talked about what has happened since George Floyd's murder, close to 15 States have passed restrictive voting laws to restrict voting from under-represented populations. He stated this Coalition gives him hope and hoped the City can get behind it and help the City become what it should be.

The Manager noted this item is not included in the budget book. By the time Mr. Morton contacted her, the budget was already off to the printer. This is an item the Council would consider as part of any amendments they want to make and be brought forward to the full City Council.

Ms. Ellen Avery former resident of Keene and currently serving as the Executive Director for Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC). Ms. Avery stated they provide no fee transportation to those without access to transportation because of their age, their ability, their economic situation or a life circumstance. They serve 34 towns all in the Monadnock region and this was their first request to the City for support. Ms. Avery noted they are a partner with probably the largest transportation provider outside of the school system, which is HCS. She explained that CVTC does is that it takes residents of Keene to those specialty medical appointments outside of Keene. In 2021, CVTC had 54 rides that went up to Lebanon and they have are 21 sites listed in their application. Ms. Avery stated they are augmenting what HCS does.

The numbers in Keene are growing and Keene is coming in at #8 out of 34 communities CVTC serves. They do not collect money from individuals because of the FTA funding they receive. CVTC has 57 volunteer drivers and they never closed their doors during Covid. They have been in business since late 2008. Ms. Avery stated they are looking for a donation of \$1,500 from the City.

Councilor Chadbourne asked whether CVTC provide their service through HCS and whether HVS hires CVTC to transport individuals to Dartmouth Hitchcock Lebanon. Ms. Avery stated HCS refers individuals to CVTC.

Keith Thibault representing Southwestern Community Services (SCS) was the next speaker. He explained SCS is a local community action agency that serves Cheshire and Sullivan counties and has been around since 1965. He thanked the community for their ongoing support.

Mr. Thibault stated each year SCS calculates the assistance it provides to each community and request 1% of that funding up to \$10,000. Last year SCS provided over 4.5 million dollars in direct assistance to Keene residents.

The assistance is provided through the Headstart program that helped almost three dozen families, WIC nutrition program which assisted 275 different households providing over \$225,000 in vouchers for food and other basic needs, energy assistance program to help with home heating fuel and assisted 596 households last year and provided \$699,000 to local fuel vendors on behalf of Keen residents.

Unclassified Items – Cost Center 00003 - Page 39 and 40:

The Finance Director stated this is where community funded events are outlined. Every year the Clerk's office sends out applications and this year the deadline for applications was January 24, 2022. This year the community funded events budget has an increase of \$16,793 which includes the return of the Keene Pumpkin Festival and the acceptance of Taste of Keene as a community funded event this year.

Other items included in this cost center include the Partner City, Planning and Zoning Board, Marketing and Development, Energy and Climate Commission, Conservation Commission, Historic District and Heritage Commission. The Manager noted, in addition, in this section of the budget is the second payment for the Branding and Communication effort. The City has a contract that spans over 2 fiscal years and this is second payment for that contract

Councilor Lake clarified Taste of Keene has only been held once. The Manager agreed and added it has been included as a potential community event. This will be their second event, which will qualify them. If they are not approved this line will be reduced by \$10,000.

Councilor Remy stated if the Committee was going to discuss Taste of Keene in any depth, he would need to be recused as he was the person who put in this request. Chair Powers noted the Committee will not be taking a vote on the item tonight.

Mr. Alan Stroshine of 27 Salisbury Road addressed the Committee next. Mr. Stroshine stated he is the race director for the Clarence to DeMar Marathon. He indicated they are in the planning process for the 44th running of the marathon but have been a community event only since 2012 when the City partnered with them and they took over this event to make it into a true community event. They took one year off because of Covid 19 and expressed his appreciation for the City's support to allow them to come back last year despite the fact that they were still in the midst of a pandemic. Mr. Stroshine stated they have made a number of adjustments and through partnership with the City and emergency planning they were proud of the event they were able pull off despite lack of crowds at the finish line but the streets were filled with supporters.

Kevin Watterson of 10 Westview Avenue Keene addressed the Committee on behalf of the Keene Swamp Bats. He indicated they are entering their 25th anniversary season and specifically have inherited the City's fireworks on July Fourth about 15 years ago. It is a large event trying to get around 5,000 people in and out of Alumni Field safely. He stated the community event funding has been meaningful to them to operate in a more professional capacity and also brought them closer to fire and police - their guidance has assured safety.

Last year they had their first rain out in 19 years and moved the event to the end of the year.

Mr. Watterson stated this is a meaningful event for the community and they will continue to conduct this event until someone wants to take it over.

Jan Manwaring of 50 Belmont Avenue representing Pathways for Keene stated this is their annual four on the fourth. She indicated their mission is to use the funding they raise to help the

trails in the City of Keene and this year they focused on the bridge that is going over Route 101 and have a \$50,000 goal. She indicated they appreciate being given community event status.

Elizabeth Sayre of 290 Main Street Keene was the next speaker. Ms. Sayre addressed the committee on behalf of the Kiwanis Club of Keene and thanked the City for their continued support with the tree lighting event. She indicated as Mr. Watterson had stated this too is a wonderful family event for the City.

The Manager noted a clarification for the calculation for community events she applied a \$10,000 maximum.

Employee Benefit - Cost Center 00081- Page 44:

Ms. Howe stated this item has an increase of \$ 158,946 which represents unions contract under negotiation and related benefits. As of June 30, 2022, all but one union contract will expire and they are all currently under negotiations. She turned the presentation over to Asst. City Manager/Human Resources Director Elizabeth Fox.

Ms. Fox stated employee benefits is an area where employee related costs are consolidated which are not allocated elsewhere for a variety of reasons, in addition to capturing COLA there are some benefit if they are budgeted collectively. What is reflected here are costs such as life insurance the City provides for all employees full time employees or those working over 30 hour week, disability insurance, funding to support costs related to the City safety program, the Wellness Program. This cost center funds training; tuition assistance it also funds parking space rental for City employees. This cost center also includes a cost center that was taken out of the Human Resources budget in 2017, consulting services for labor issues – it includes a line item for about \$20,000, which considers the fact that the City has a number of open agreements the Finance Director eluded to.

Councilor Chadbourne asked whether there was any cap on how much tuition assistance is given out. Ms. Fox stated tuition assistance is a portion of the budget which decreased this year. Some years there will be cap and is usually related to the number of courses the City supports. When there is a cap it is because there are lots of requests and the City is trying to help everyone. The Councilor felt this was a good benefit to offer.

Risk Management – Cost Center 00082 – Page 45:

Ms. Howe stated this line shows an increase of \$16,748. This is for general liability and the airport liability insurances.

City Manager – Cost Center 00030 – Page 49:

Ms. Dragon stated the only change in her budget is related to a stipend for an Assistant Emergency Management Director. In the past, Chief Howard worked closely with Director Blomquist to fill the emergency management role but Covid reiterated that this role could be much more time consuming than originally planned. While there is a small stipend for the Emergency Management Director, there wasn't currently a stipend for the assistant – this is the \$1,500 for the year, and the associated retirement and social security.

The Manager added in her Memo, she mentioned two changes to the salary schedule which will be advancing. Those two changes will be related to putting in place a Deputy City Manager position with the retirement of the Economic Development Director Special Projects and reallocating those funds to the Deputy City Manager position and then adjusting the roles of the individuals for fulfilling the Assistant City Manager role. In addition to that, the Council has spent a lot of time talking about the need for better communications with the public and surrounding areas. Hence, in this budget, salary schedule change, not in the budget itself, there will be the addition of a communications and marketing position and this will be accompanied with the elimination of the Assistant IT Director position and the reallocation of those funds to that role as well as many of the duties that are currently in the IT Department right now.

City Attorney – Cost Center 00100 – Page 52:

Attorney Mullins stated this year there is a fairly significant change based upon the authorization from the City Council to provide for an Assistant City Attorney. He thanked the Council for their consideration and added this individual has already proven to be a wonderful addition to the City. This change is primarily reflected at the top half of the budget.

Attorney Mullins stated the second half of the budget is pretty much the same – except that the training lines have changed somewhat to maintain licenses associated with the Bar Association.

City Clerk – Cost Center 00200 – Page 56:

City Clerk Patty Little noted their budget came in within the base numbers supplied by the finance department. She stated they are very fortunate City Manager supported several supplemental requests - some are one time requests and others are added to the baseline budget. Ms. Little stated their fiscal year objectives this year were scheduled to run a State primary and a State general election this fall. She indicated one of the goals that the department has not had and one that is quite important to her is to verify the integrity and completeness of several permanent record series. They include the City Charter, Rules of Order, Zoning Amendments, Road layouts. Those documents are derived over time, through actions of voters in the election with ballot changes or charger changes and actions by the City Council. Various documents are created after the Council's action. The purpose of this exercise is to audit the completeness of those record series, and to create finding aids, so that upon her retirement someone can easily find, what she refers to as “needles in the haystack”. This process will probably take more than this fiscal year to complete but something that will have a long-standing value to the organization.

Ms. Little stated they are also looking at the licensing chapter; over the years staff identified several areas that need review as to whether they are appropriate and serve the needs of the public and organization. Various types of licenses such as sidewalk cafes, obstructions on the sidewalk etc. The Clerk’s office is working in tandem with the City Attorney's office and the Economic Development Special Services Director who is also doing chapter changes to Chapter 40 of the licensing chapter.

Another item is the civic clerk agenda management which has a module for boards and commissions. Staff will be populating that database in the next several months that will better organize board members and have them posted simultaneously to the web page.

The last item is the record center. Ms. Little stated staff is a little concerned with the capacity of the record center in terms of those records that are scheduled for destruction. There is the tendency of departments when it's time to destroy a record to move forward with that process which has created a few records that really need to be reviewed in the archives rooms. If a record has no value, it needs to be disposed of appropriately. This concluded Ms. Little's comments.

Assessing – Cost Center 00400 – Page 64:

City Assessor, Dan Langille noted with the re-evaluation behind them they will be moving towards more normal business. He indicated their budget is pretty straight forward and is mostly staff driven. There is a decrease of about \$53,000 compared to last year's budget mostly because the department is still in the transition process where previously the department had four staff members and are now moving to three full time staff members.

Other than that, the operating expenses are pretty minor with no significant changes and there are no supplemental requests.

Councilor Chadbourne asked whether there are plans to add a position or a different type of position. Mr. Langille stated they are going to try and maintain the three staff members and this is mostly because most of the work has been moved online, such as property records, mapping system applications; trying to take a advantage of the technology that is available to them

Chair Powers asked how the department plans on handling upcoming retirements. Mr. Langille stated that was addressed in last year's budget.

Finance – Cost Center 00600-00603 – Page 69:

Ms. Howe began by introducing the Assistant Finance Director Rob Constable who would be presenting the finance budget. Mr. Constable stated if the FY 23 budget is compared to the FY22 budget, personal costs are actually going down; about \$33,000 or 1%. The reason for the reduction is that an employee has opted out of the City health plan.

Page 35 - Revenues are down but if you exclude debt service or capital bond sales, the revenues are actually flat from year to year.

Mr. Constable went on to say that the finance department is actually the core of the budget process and everything that happens in this book goes through finance. Finance is very important to the organization – they purchase items, pay employees, the accounting and purchasing departments are part finance.

With reference to the new software, the first step would be to get the tax bills issued hopefully within a couple of weeks.

In January 2023 they will be moving* over to the new payroll system as well as Human Resources will be transitioning over as well. By June 2023 sewer and water will move over as well.

Human Services – Cost Center 01000-01002 – Page 69:

Human Services Manager, Natalie Darcy stated Human Services which is a division of the Finance Department is responsible for the day to day administration of general assistance. She explained general assistance is administered in an accordance with the written, approval of City of Keene General Assistance Guidelines. General Assistance in accordance with RSA 165 includes assistance with eligible basic needs, such as rent, mortgage, utilities, prescriptions, medication, cremation assistance, home, heating, fuel, and homeless assistance, while providing excellent professional customer service.

She indicated this past year, because the New Hampshire Emergency Rental Assistance Program, the need for rent, electric and home heating fuel were at a minimum. Human Services has spent however, considerable time, effort, and financial resources assisting homeless individuals and families in the Keene area.

In addition to money spent on homeless shelters, Human Services spent approximately an additional \$45,000 in hotels and motel expenses this fiscal year. To date Human Services has also seen since July 1, about 100 individuals who have applied for homeless assistance. Human Services is a part of the mapping process to better coordinate services between agencies in regards to housing and servicing homeless needs. This project aims to improve practices in promoting housing stability, homeless prevention and cross agency communication and identifies program policy overlaps and gaps to inform next steps and align resources to maximize benefit to community residents facing homelessness. Human Services have been meeting weekly with area shelters and attend and participate in the monthly Greater Keene Homeless Coalition meetings and other agencies that provide services such as mental health, substance misuse, and other services to help families and individuals succeed.

Ms. Darcy stated it is always their mission to keep individuals in their homes, especially in a time when there is a .6% vacancy rate of area apartments. When an individual family present as homeless, following an eviction, the department takes action to find that family a place to stay, whether it be shelter or hotel assistance. Staff works with clients to move them along in the process, and attempt to leave shelters and hotels as quickly as possible, and find more permanent housing.

Human Services is also working with other area welfare directors from other towns to assure that the proper town is assisting the needs of their residents and absorbing those costs. Going forward this next fiscal year, the need for general assistance will increase, as new RAP funding will be wrapping up at the end of July. In addition to the need for rent and electric, the cost of home heating fuel has the potential to skyrocket, and the need for homeless assistance will continue to grow.

Councilor Chadbourne asked whether the \$45,000 for hotel expenses would fall under rent or shelter services. Ms. Darcy stated it falls under rent. The Councilor asked whether rents also include mortgage payments – Ms. Darcy answered in the affirmative. With respect to heating fuel, the Councilor noted SCS has a fuel assistance program and asked why the City provides this assistance as well. Ms. Darcy stated when SCS' funding allotment has expired, they need assistance and also because they don't get funding before December first - the time period between October 15 and December 1, individuals come for assistance.

Councilor Chadbourne asked what kind of transportation assistance Keene provides. Ms. Darcy stated Keene will provide transportation to a Keene resident who for instance is in a Manchester shelter and was being sheltered back to the Keene area. The department also helps elderly residents who are not able to get assistance with transport from one motel to the other; these are unusual circumstances.

Councilor Chadbourne questioned the burial costs and clarified this is when an individual has relatives who can't afford burial costs and also asked whether this was State law where the City need to house homeless and the same would also be true with burial. Ms. Darcy stated they have an allowable level of assistance of \$1,100 per burial. The Cremationist Society of New Hampshire works with the City and accepts that \$1,100.

The Manager commended Ms. Darcy for all her work with the department, trying to navigate some of the homeless issues in our community; being very proactive with the welfare directors in the area around us and partnering with shelters.

Human Resources – Cost Center 00500 – Page 81:

Ms. Fox began by commending people who work for the City – a dedicated group of people she has had the privilege of working with. She indicated her department works very hard to support employees, support departments. She indicated post pandemic the department is looking forward and excited for the challenges and opportunities the new software is going to present for the department.

The changes in the HR budget this year are primarily attributable to staffing adjustments that were made in the budget last year, providing for the ability to have two HR Assistants instead of just one assistant and a full time administrative person. This model was implemented last July. With the upcoming retirement, the department wants to make sure they are also ready to face that change.

IT – Cost Center 00700-00701 – Page 85:

Asst. City Manager/IT Director Rebecca Landry and Asst. IT Director Andrew Mueller were the next two speakers. Ms. Landry stated her department is also looking forward to the new finance software. Staff hopes that once it is implemented, it may have the potential to start centralizing some of the functions in the City that are quite desperate which are now done manually or done in separate systems. For example, use credit cards - if there is data in one department that can used in another department.

In the coming year IT will be focusing more on cybersecurity, using the CIS controls, at least half have been installed.

The department is also planning to migrate from the current Microsoft Office version, which is a local on-premises version to Office 365 in the Cloud. This will also give the City some document management capabilities and some project management capabilities that the City does not have at the present time.

One of the differences in the budget this year, is the creation of a couple of accounts that didn't exist - cybersecurity accounts (page 88 – account 62195). This will include things like penetration testing software, network scanning and assessment applications. They will be continuing with the monitoring services, the City has an organization that is able to see what's going on, on devices on our network, and running various programs to alert themselves and the City. Included in that line item is cloud backup and restore software and training for email awareness and security training for users.

Another new line item is 62785, which is cybersecurity software - also includes similar items just mentioned.

Councilor Remy asked where funding for these new services are coming from. Ms. Landry stated last year there were some of the services in tech services, professional services and training, and those were consolidated. The department did ask for more funding this year and the manager was able to accommodate that request. Councilor Remy stated he was not challenging the request just trying to figure out the funding.

Ms. Landry went on to say last year Finance created cost center 00701, Cloud Based Software and the department is continuing the trend to move more applications to the cloud to the extent that it makes sense financially and as far as data security and access goes. This year it is organized more by department instead of by application. So there are more applications in 628 level accounts.

PC Replacement

With PC Replacement there has been an interesting trend over the last 10 to 15 years. The cost of computers were far more affordable. Hence the funds being collected from departments ended up being more than what was necessary to replace those computers. The way that was handled was to discount the fees that IT was charging each department. However, at the present time cost of computers on average are 50% higher than it was two years ago which has become a difficult challenge. It is not only more pricey but also difficult to get in a timely manner. IT staff has tried to hold on to computers for much longer.

The way IT has handled this issue, is that PC Replacement line item in just about every department has been increased. Staff tried to cushion that blow by only increasing the fees enough to account for half of the increase for cost of the equipment, with the hope that that will come down over time.

Councilor Chadbourne asked whether the price increase was due to Covid and not having necessary supplies. Ms. Landry agreed pandemic did have an impact. Also, the uneasy time globally has affected shipping. Staff is not projecting an immediate recovery of PC cost but hope to see that over the next 3 to 5 years some type of recovery would happen.

The Manager noted with respect to the salary schedule changes. Mr. Mueller is going to be promoted in the organization.

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

FOP Meeting Minutes
May 10, 2022

FINAL

PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,

1. Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk