

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, July 14, 2022

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Bettina A. Chadbourne

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Police Captain Steve Stewart
Don Lussier, City Engineer
Andy Bohannon, Parks Recreation and
Facilities Director
Beth Fox, Assistant City Manager, HR
Director
Dave Hickling, Airport Director

Chair Powers called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1) Acceptance of Federal Forfeiture Monies – Police Department

Police Captain Steve Stewart addressed the Committee regarding a recommendation to accept Federal forfeiture monies. The captain stated these monies were seized in conjunction with the drug investigation the Keene Police Department and the US Department of Homeland Security investigations. The amount seized was \$22,404.45.

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

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept and expend Federal forfeiture monies in the amount of \$22,404.45.

2) FY22 DOJ Justice Assistance Grant – Police Department

Captain Stewart stated the second item is a recommendation to accept a US Department of Justice Assistance Grant in the amount of \$5,554. He indicated the department co-applies for this grant with Cheshire County and the monies are split in half. Captain Stewart stated this funding supplies iPhones for police cars as well as a few staff in the detective's unit. The department has participated in this grant process for about four to five years which has increased the department's efficiency in terms of being able to get in touch with victims, witnesses. The use of the iPhones also allows officers to be able to take pictures and videos at the scene quickly.

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

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to co-apply with the County of Cheshire, and to accept the U.S. Department of Justice FY22 JAG in the amount allocated to the City of \$5,554.

3) Primex Contribution Assurance Program (CAP) – Workers Compensation – Human Resources

Assistant City Manager, HR Director Beth Fox was the next to address the committee. She stated she was before the committee seeking authorization for the City Manager to do all things necessary to enter into a contribution assurance agreement, known as a cap agreement with the City's workers compensation carrier, Primex through the calendar year 2025.

She explained the cap agreement will provide the City with some protection against premium increases, potentially mitigating the impacts of losses on future contributions. Ms. Fox stated the City has participated in this cap program since 2012. It has benefited from it in past years when sometimes larger increases in contribution are required when the City's experience may not be as favorable during different rating periods. This agreement will provide for protection from and limit rate increases to the amount of 6%,

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

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to enter into and execute an agreement extending participation with Primex³ in a multi-year Contribution Assurance Program (CAP) through calendar year 2025 providing for mitigation in the event of adverse experience, and assurance of predictable contributions for future workers' compensation insurance.

4) Lease Agreement with Thomas Transportation – Airport Director

Airport, Director, Dave Hickling addressed the Committee and stated he has a request from Thomas Transportation to lease parking spaces at the airport. This is similar to the least they had had in the past. Thomas Transportation asked to terminate that lease during Covid as they couldn't really operate their business. Mr. Hickling explained the lease would be for about 40 spaces and would help bring additional revenue for the airport.

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

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a lease with Thomas Transportation for a portion of the Airport terminal parking lot for parking of their customer's vehicles.

5) Engineering Agreement with McFarland Johnson for the Airport Fencing Project – Airport Director

Mr. Hickling stated the next item is for an agreement with McFarland Johnson. He indicated the CIP has a project to construct a perimeter fence to keep wildlife off the runway. The City has a received a scope of work and cost from McFarland Johnson to start this work. The focus of the

agreement will include 30% for design with most of the work being an environmental assessment. There will be a wetland delineation done with this work as well. The airport hired a company to perform wildlife assessment. This project is funded through the FAA – hence the airport will be looking for a grant to cover 90% of that cost, 5% will be a state grant and the City will be covering the other 5%.

Councilor Madison stated there are some members on the Conservation Commission who are interested in this project and asked that they be kept apprised of the environmental assessment. Mr. Hickling indicated the scope of work includes two meetings, with both the Keene and Swanzy Conservation Commissions to keep them updated and they will also be provided minutes of meetings to keep them updated.

Councilor Remy noted a typographic error in the background notes; the \$167,310 is just the Federal portion of the funding and the State would be another \$9,295, which isn't listed.

Councilor Remy made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Remy.

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional engineering services contract with McFarland Johnson for the Preliminary Design and Environmental Assessment for the airport wildlife perimeter fence project.

6) Design-Build Services for the Creation of a New Skatepark – Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

Parks, Recreation Facilities Director, Andy Bohannon, was the next to address the committee. Mr. Bohannon stated this item is a request for the City Manager to execute a professional service contract with Spohn Ranch for the design build services for a new skate park in an amount not to exceed \$225,000 which is the current budget. The City Council allocated \$25,000 in the CIP to help fund and give a commitment for some of the larger donors who came forward after that commitment from the City. The fundraising brought in \$200,000 prior to Covid. This was presented to the Council last fall for purposes of the design services to move this project along but for one reason or another it was delayed.

Mr. Bohannon stated the item was put out to bid and Spohn Ranch was the only bidder but they have been a part of this project since 2014.

Councilor Remy asked once the design was complete whether the committee could see a presentation of the design. Mr. Bohannon agreed they would.

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

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional service contract with Spohn Ranch, Inc. for design-build services required for the creation of a new skate park for an amount not to exceed \$225,000.00 with funding to come from Project Cost Center (90317).

7) Lower Winchester Reconstruction Project – Consultant Selection – City Engineer

City Engineer Don Lussier stated now that the Winchester Street reconstruction project is now fully underway, he is here to talk about the next project in the horizon which will be the Lower Winchester Street reconstruction project. This work would consist of extending the work being done this summer from the Roundabout at Route 101 all the way down to the Swanzey town line. This project will also be participating through the State with Federal Highway funds, which falls under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation System Act. Through this program DOT pays for 80% of eligible project costs and 20% is the local share. The City manages the work, hires the consultants and oversees the work. The City gets reimbursed after the costs have been paid.

Mr. Lussier stated this is a unique project – previously staff had asked Council for authorization to enter into a three party agreement with the DOT, Town of Swanzey and Southwest Regional Planning Commission. However, because Swanzey and Southwest Regional Planning Commission have expressed an interest in extending the scope of the project into Swanzey to pick up some pedestrian amenities; the Town of Swanzey will be part of this project and will participate in public presentations and with the steering committee.

Mr. Lussier added one of the caveats of the funding sources is that the City is required to use a qualifications based selection process. The hiring of the engineering consultants falls into two steps. First you ask them for their qualifications and you select from the field the most qualified firm to do the work. Once you have selected the most qualified firm, then you negotiate a scope of work and a fee for the project; architectural services are also hired in this same manner as per Federal guidelines.

This process was pursued and four firms submitted their qualifications for this project. Two of those firms were selected to be interviewed by the selection team and at the end of the process the team selected McFarland Johnson as the preferred candidate for the work. Mr. Lussier stated McFarland Johnson had done good work for the City such as on the Upper Winchester Street project. Mr. Lussier indicated CHA was an equally qualified firm. However, staff is recommending the Finance Committee authorize the City Manager to execute an engineering services contract for up to \$480,000. This contract will be the first of a couple contracts. This contract will take the City through what is referred to as the engineering study phase – this contract does the geotechnical investigation, all of the environmental studies, evaluates the proposed alternatives or potential alternatives, works with the community to select a preferred alternative for eventually designing and building.

A second contract will be executed once the City knows what exactly is being designed, the number of properties that are going to be impacted. He added staff will be back with the second contract.

Councilor Remy asked for added clarification on what the public engagement portion would look like. Mr. Lussier stated they are planning for a pretty extensive public participation plan for this project. There are going to be seven public meetings in all. The first would be a two listening sessions (one in Keene and one in Swanzey). The City is also planning for “every door direct mail” – where a postcard is mailed to residents which would also include tenants in a particular building. Once the listening session is complete the hope is that the Mayor will appoint a steering committee to help guide this project. This committee will be comprised of business owners,

residents - cross-section of people. These would all be public meetings. There will also be a website and a project specific mailing list for the project. People will also be sent reminders of the public meetings via email. At the end of the process, the steering committee will be responsible for ultimately making a recommendation to the Council on alternatives for intersection treatments, sidewalk locations, how many lanes are needed etc. This meeting will also be advertised in advance, so anyone interested can attend. Councilor Remy asked whether there would be way for people to submit online feedback. Mr. Lussier answered in the affirmative

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

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute an Engineering and Technical Services Agreement with McFarland Johnson, Inc. for the Lower Winchester Street Reconstruction Project for an amount not to exceed \$480,000.00.

8) Thompson Road Repair – Consultant Selection – City Engineer

Mr. Lussier reminded the committee that a few months ago staff had requested funding for this work. Since that time a Request for Proposal was sent out. Although the City does not always recommend the lowest cost for engineering work, in this case, there were two very well qualified proposals, one of them was substantially less than the other. The reason for the quoted amount is predominantly the Turn Consulting firm had already done the geotechnical investigation and preliminary alternatives analysis. Ordinarily a team will be selected to review the proposals. Given the disparity between the prices and the fact that the City already had worked with the one firm and were happy with their work the City, staff did not feel it was fair to ask the other consultant to put in a lot of effort into preparing for a presentation as they probably would not be able to overcome the price hurdle. As a result, staff elected not to do interviews, but selected the firm based on the review of the proposals. Staff is recommending the Finance Committee authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with John Turner consulting Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$60,000.

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

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute an Engineering and Technical Services Agreement with John Turner Consulting, Inc. for the Thompson Road Repair & Stabilization Project for an amount not to exceed \$60,000.00.

Comments from the City Manager

The City Manager addressed the committee next and stated the City has made a decision that it was going to be necessary to close the revenue office on the next two Wednesdays. Ms. Dragon explained the City is in the midst of a financial software transition, and it is requiring a lot of duplicate entry. She added they may need to close more than just the next two weeks, but for now the next two Wednesdays the office will be closed. Wednesday is the slowest day in the revenue office. Ms. Dragon stated the public is going to be notified of this via social media and other online options. Other Councilors will be notified tomorrow. Councilor Madison asked

whether there were other individuals within the City of Keene to assist with clerical work. Ms. Dragon stated this is a difficult project; to be able to register vehicles one has to be certified with the State of New Hampshire. There has been administrative help across the organization for things like folding and sending out letters etc. However, with the actual reconciliation and some of this entry work, only certain people are qualified to do this work and they are going to need the time to do the double entry and the reconciliation. This new system is proving to be a lot of work. In addition, this office is short staffed, the tax collector who has been with the City 29 years is retiring on July 22 and the office is trying to train a brand new tax collector at the same time.

Ms. Dragon stated this transition over the next year is going to be difficult and it is going to move from one function to the next. At the present time the focus is on taxes and motor vehicles and will be moving soon to water and sewer and then on to payroll. The City has small departments, they are all busy departments and City tries to cross train as much as possible.

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

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker