

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

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

**Thursday, September 22, 2022**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

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

**Members Not Present**

Bettina A. Chadbourne  
Bryan J. Lake

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager  
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney  
Fire Chief Donald Farquhar  
Fire Lieutenant Jeremy LaPlante  
Jesse Rounds, Community Development  
Director  
Beth Fox, Asst. City Manager/Human  
Resources Director

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

**1) Amended FY21 Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant Award - Fire Lieutenant/Training Officer**

Fire Chief Farquhar addressed the Committee first and stated that Lieutenant LaPlante was present with him as the author of this grant. He indicated in April 2022 the Committee approved a grant for hazardous materials, operational planning, and technological equipment. Since that grant was awarded, the prices for the items have gone up and hence the City requested from the State to increase the amount of the award to cover the inflationary costs. The original grant was for \$26,934. The State has approved another \$10,817 for total of \$37,751.25.

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

On a 3-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to do all things necessary to apply for, execute, expend and accept the terms of the amended grant agreement for the Hazardous Materials Preparedness (HMEP) Grant application as presented in the amount of \$37,751.25 for the purchase and installation of conferencing equipment and hazmat plan updates.

**2) Acceptance of the 2021 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) - Fire Chief**

Chief Farquhar stated the Department was notified last week they were successful in their application for this year's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG). This grant was awarded for rescue technician training, which includes full price of the classes and the overtime backfill. The

grant award is an amount of \$219,589 and the City's 10% match would be approximately \$21,858 which would come from the Department's training budget line.

The Chief went on to say that the Keene Fire Department plays very large role within the county for all levels of rescue. Within the State of New Hampshire the department is designated as the county-wide swift water, building collapse, and trench rescue team. Also, by default, the department provides a lot of support for surrounding communities with other technical disciplines. The proposed training will be very beneficial for their personnel.

The Manager asked that the motion be amended to reflect \$219,589.09 as the grant award with a 10% City match.

Councilor Remy stated because from what the Chief has stated the City seems to be the county seat and when the City engages with its outside partners, he felt the expenses associated with this should be paid by outside towns that are relying on the City for its service - he added his comment is not tied to this item but as part of a broader conversation. The Chief agreed. Chair Powers added one of the realities of being designated by the State as the agency for hazmat and other rescues is that expenses could be reimbursed. Chief Farquhar stated this speaks to the earlier grants, which Councilor Madison has been gracious enough to lend his expertise on. He added as they take a closer look at how the hazmat materials team is funded and responds, there are some avenues for some better funding, and also speaks to the limited, but needed support from other communities financially. The Chief stated this is something they are softly pushing into as they go through that process.

City Attorney Mullins stated with the issue of being able to be reimbursed for this assistance, it is true the City can be reimbursed, but one of the things that the City has discovered over the years is the statutory process for reimbursement can be vague and stated it would be helpful when the City moves forward with its legislative work to look at some possible amendments to determine who the responsible party is in those situations. At times the responsible party, even though they are the holder of the hazardous materials doesn't have any resources from which to recover from.

Councilor Madison stated leaning on his experience with the State, he can certainly verify the City Attorney's comments. He stated frequently, the Department of Environmental Services encounters a situation where you may have a responsible party, but that responsible party may not be able to lend financial resources or they may not have an insurance company and an individual has perished in an accident.

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

On a 3-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council authorize the City Manager to do all things necessary to accept and expend the FY 2021 Assistance to Firefighters Grant in the amount of \$219,589.09 with a 10% City match.

**3) Authorization to accept a Housing Opportunity Planning Grant for Housing Needs Analysis and Planning - Community Development Director**

Community Development Director Jesse Rounds stated he was before the Committee to request authorization to accept a housing opportunity planning grant for a housing needs analysis and planning study.

He stated staff was before the Committee a couple months ago to request the ability to hire a consultant for this service. At that time, staff had indicated they were attempting to seek a grant to pay for about a third of the cost. He indicated staff is before the committee hoping to finalize both the acceptance of the grant and hiring of the consultant.

The Manager noted this motion is to accept the grant, but it doesn't award the contract and asked for clarification. Mr. Rounds stated at this time he is only asking for approval to accept the grant; he added the manner in which the State outlines the grant is that the consultant needs to be advised that they are hired to be able to obtain the funds.

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

On a 3-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that City Manager do all things necessary to accept and to expend the Housing Opportunity Planning Grant for Housing Needs Analysis and Planning in the amount of \$15,500 from Invest NH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program as funded by the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs for the purposes of hiring a consultant to complete a Housing Needs Analysis for the City of Keene.

**4) Relating to Probationary Firefighters Ordinance O-2022-13**

Assistant City Manager/Human Resources Director Beth Fox indicated this item is a proposed amendment to City Code pertaining purely to probationary firefighters. The amendment has two focuses; the first is to align the Code to the current practice for probationary operational firefighters who work 24-hour shift schedules. The second component is to address a situation where the City has recently hired two probationary fire prevention officers from outside the organization, so they are now subject to the City Code and to amend the Code in a manner that provides those employees who work a traditional five-day schedule, paid holidays off instead of a lump sum holiday pay. Ms. Fox added other firefighters work regardless of holidays and get a lump sum holiday pay. However, these employees who are focused more on serving the public and responding to business activity, don't have to work for instance on Christmas Day.

Ms. Fox explained this code amendment will both clarify current practice for the employees that are assigned to work rotating shifts (24 hours) and provide during the probationary period paid holidays for these newly hired employees.

Chair Powers stated he has provided the Committee with some amended language to the Ordinance, which will not change the intent, but it would make the language clearer. These amendments would be incorporated as clerical changes and would not result in an "A" version of the Ordinance.

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

On a 3-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2022-13.

**5) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 6:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,  
Patty Little, City Clerk