

12/07/2023

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, December 7, 2023. The Honorable Mayor George S. Hansel called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Bryan J. Lake, Michael J. Remy, Michael Giacomo, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Philip M. Jones, Andrew M. Madison, Kris E. Roberts, Raleigh C. Ormerod, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Catherine I. Workman, Kate M. Bosley, and Thomas F. Powers were present. Mitchell H. Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant. Councilor Powers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt the November 16, 2023, minutes as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Hansel reminded the Council that the Wednesday, December 27 MSFI meeting was moved to Tuesday, December 12. The PLD and FOP Committees are holding their regular meetings on December 13 and December 14. The FOP Committee meeting on December 28 was canceled. Further, the Mayor announced that at the final Council meeting of the year on December 21, the outgoing and incoming Council group photos would be taken in the Council Chamber. Mayor Hansel also announced that a Council workshop was scheduled for Tuesday, January 9 at 6:00 PM on the right-to-know statute; and it is important that Councilors make every effort to attend this workshop.

Lastly, Mayor Hansel announced a veterans' homelessness event on Friday, December 8, that was targeted toward landlords to educate them about the programs available to help homeless veterans in NH. The Mayor invited all to attend and stated his hope that it would spread to other needs in the community. The event is hosted by Harbor Care, a statewide non-profit organization.

PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDMENT TO THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE – CHARITABLE GAMING FACILITY – ORDINANCE O-2023-16

Mayor Hansel noted that at the Joint Planning Board-Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee workshop on this Ordinance, substantive changes were introduced. Therefore, Mayor Hansel opened the public hearing and immediately continued it until the January 18, 2024, regular meeting at 7:00 PM.

APPOINTMENT – AD HOC ROADWAY SAFETY PLAN COMMITTEE

Mayor Hansel appointed the following individuals to the new ad hoc Roadway Safety Plan Committee: Elizabeth Dragon (City Manager), Bryan Lake (Councilor), Ockle Johnson (Keene

State College), Erin Roark (School Administrative Unit 29), J. B. Mack (Southwest Regional Planning Commission), Frank Linnenbringer (NH Department of Transportation, District 4), Autumn DelaCroix (Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee), Fred Roberge (disability advocate), and William Lambert (NH Department of Transportation, Highway Safety Section).

The Committee's charge is to: oversee the development of a comprehensive Safety Action Plan for the City of Keene; provide guidance and general direction to City of Keene staff and engineering consultants as they collect and analyze roadway safety data and generate a draft work product; ensure that the plan development process provides for the equitable representation of all roadway users and stakeholders, and that the final document addresses the diverse needs of those groups. In addition, the Committee would assist in the development of specific roadway safety improvement priorities and recommendations. Ultimately, the Committee will make a recommendation to the City Council with respect to adoption of the draft plan and a roadway safety performance goal.

A motion by Councilor Powers to confirm the appointments as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant.

COMMUNICATION – COUNCILOR MITCHELL GREENWALD – CONFLICT OF INTEREST – ORDINANCE O-2023-16 & ORDINANCE O-2023-17

A communication was received from Councilor Mitchell Greenwald, notifying the Council of his conflict of interest for Ordinances O-2023-16 and O-2023-17. He believes that depending on how he considers the issue, it could be either a benefit or a detriment to his business interests. Therefore, he should be recused from the discussions and votes on the issue.

A motion by Councilor Powers to grant the request to abstain was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried on a roll call vote with 13 Councilors present, and 12 Councilors voting in favor. Councilor Remy voted in opposition. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant.

COMMUNICATION – JOSHUA GORMAN – ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

A communication was received from Joshua Gorman, submitting his resignation from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. A motion by Councilor Powers to accept the resignation with regret and appreciation of service was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant.

MSFI REPORT – MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH KEENE STATE COLLEGE – LOCKER ROOMS

A Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with Keene State College, to include a Development Agreement and Lease, for the purpose of the installation by Keene State College, at its cost and expense, of locker rooms, together with required utilities, including but not limited to water and waste water services, at the Keene Ice location. A motion by Councilor Filiault to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant.

MSFI REPORT – POWERPOINT PRESENTATION – AD-HOC LOWER WINCHESTER STREET PROJECT

A Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee report read, recommending that the Lower Winchester Street Reconstruction Project advance to preliminary design of a proposed action including the following elements:

1. Provide two travel lanes in each direction from Rt. 101 to Krif Rd.
2. Replace the intersections at Krif Rd. and Matthews Rd. with roundabouts.
3. Construct a raised median from Rt. 101 to Krif Rd.
4. Construct a raised median from Krif Rd. to Matthews Rd.
5. Construct a dual use center turn lane from Matthews Rd. to the town line.

A motion by Councilor Filiault to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. Councilor Lake asked if bike lanes and sidewalks were intentionally excluded from the plans. The City Manager replied that sidewalks and bike lanes are assumed to be a part of the plan. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant.

MSFI REPORT – POWERPOINT PRESENTATION – ROBIN HOOD PARK CONCEPTUAL PLAN

A Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee report read, recommending the Robin Hood Park presentation be accepted as informational. Mayor Hansel filed the report as informational.

MSFI REPORT – REPORT OUT – SAFETY CONCERNS ON THE EAST SIDE OF KEENE AND STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

A Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee report read, recommending the report from the City Manager relating to safety concerns on the east side of Keene and strategies to address homelessness be accepted as informational. Mayor Hansel filed the report as informational.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

First, the City Manager reported that Public Works Director/Emergency Management Director, Kürt Blomquist, would be retiring on December 29. After 30 years of service, Mr. Blomquist decided it was time to pass the torch. The City Manager shared copies of the press release formally announcing his retirement. Throughout his City career, Mr. Blomquist played a significant role in overseeing numerous projects that have improved safety, sustainability, and quality of life for our residents, businesses, and visitors. In addition, his leadership and experience as the City's Emergency Management Director was invaluable to the City Manager during severe weather events and during the Covid-19 health emergency. The City Manager said she could not imagine getting through the health crises without Mr. Blomquist in that role. The City Manager said she would always be grateful to Mr. Blomquist for his efforts coordinating our response locally, with the state, and the region. The City has been very fortunate to have Mr. Blomquist on our team for the past three decades and the City Manager wished him nothing but happiness, good health, and a long well-deserved retirement. On Thursday, December 28, there would be a general mid-day open house in Council Chamber to honor Mr. Blomquist and his career.

The City Manager continued, explaining that she was in the process of reviewing Mr. Blomquist's job description, which had not been updated in a long time. The City Manager intended to finalize the job description and have the position posted by December 15. The job would be open until filled and she anticipated the process taking several months to complete. During this process, the City Manager assigned additional oversight responsibilities (in the same way it happens now when Mr. Blomquist is out of the area) to Duncan Watson, Assistant Public Works Director, who will be handling all issues for streets, fleet, and solid waste. Aaron Costa, Assistant Public Works Director, would be handling all issues for water and sewer. The City Engineer, Don Lussier, would be handling all engineering and construction project issues. By Code, the City Manager would become the interim Emergency Management Director. In 30 days, when the City Manager is past the NH retirement restrictions, she intended to contract with Mr. Blomquist to complete the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan and to move our Emergency Operations Center (from the basement in City Hall to the second floor training room). This space is much better suited and has most of the technology we need in place; some modifications to this room would be needed, so it can serve as both our current training room/staff meeting space and when necessary, serve as the Emergency Operations Center. Contracting with Mr. Blomquist for these duties will allow the time to bring on a new Public Works Director and for a recommendation to be brought forth for the Council to consider as our next Emergency Management Director.

The City Manager was also happy to report that the Airport now has a Marketing & Communications Plan. This has been on the list of projects for several years and was a long-time recommendation of Councilor Greenwald as a member of the Airport Development & Marketing Committee. The City's brand consultant (Guide Studio) helped to put this together and ensure it is also in line with the City's larger branding efforts, by utilizing themes and language from the

broader City platform. As there will be new signage and visual identifiers at the Airport over the next couple of years, there will be a presentation at the December 13 PLD Committee meeting.

Next, the City Manager reported on the Upper Winchester Street Reconstruction Project. The City's bridge contractor, ED Swett Inc., was scheduled to install the bridge girders for the new Island Street Bridge on Thursday, December 14. The contractor would be using two cranes on each side of the bridge to lift and place the girders. A total of six girders would be installed.

The City Manager also shared a reminder about the holiday party on December 14. Many administrative offices will close during that time to allow those who wish to utilize their lunch hour to attend the luncheon.

The City Manager shared updates on the Cheshire County ambulance backup agreement. On December 7, the City Manager once again reached an agreement with the County. Instead of a 3-year term, it is a 1-year term. The late addition of the language related to billing for calls that exceed 20% of our call volume was removed. The City Manager hoped this agreement would be executed quickly. She would keep the Council updated.

Lastly, the City Manager shared a proud moment for a City employee, Christian Tarr, Utilities Maintenance Manager in Public Works. Mr. Tarr's son, Aiden, was awarded the Fred B. Sharby Award. This award was created to honor a young man who was killed in the coconut grove fire in Boston 1942; he was a Keene High School football player who saved his girlfriend and then lost his life trying to save her parents and others that night, when 492 people perished. The Fred B. Sharby award is the highest athletic award at Keene High School, given to the student athlete who exemplifies Mr. Sharby's character on and off the field, sacrificing self for the betterment of the group, and exceling in the classroom and field of play. Aiden Tarr was voted to receive the award by his peers and coaches.

PB-PLD REPORT – RELATING TO AMENDMENTS TO THE PERMITTED USES IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE, DOWNTOWN GROWTH, AND COMMERCE DISTRICTS ORDINANCE O-2023-16

A Joint Planning Board-Planning, Licenses, and Development report read, with the PLD Committee unanimously recommending amending the definition of a Charitable Gaming Facility to include the definition of Commercial Hall under New Hampshire RSA 287E. Further, the report read, with the PB unanimously finding that that the amended Ordinance O-2023-16-A was consistent with the 2010 Comprehensive Master Plan. Lastly, the PLD Committee unanimously recommended formalizing the public hearing previously set.

Mayor Hansel referred the report to the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee.

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MORE TIME – MSFI REPORT – STEPHEN BRAGDON – SAFETY ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE DRIVEWAY AT 82 COURT ST; & STAFF RESPONSE TO NO PARKING REQUEST – 82 COURT ST

A Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee report read, unanimously recommending placing this item on more time until the next meeting. Mayor Hansel granted more time.

ORDINANCE FOR FIRST READING – RELATING TO CLASS ALLOCATION AND SALARY SCHEDULES – ORDINANCE O-2023-19

A memorandum was read from the Human Resources Director/Assistant City Manager, Elizabeth Fox, recommending that Ordinance O-2023-19 be referred to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee for their review and recommendation. Mayor Hansel referred Ordinance O-2023-19 to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee.

ORDINANCE FOR FIRST READING – RELATING TO LIFE SAFETY PERMIT AND INSPECTION FEES – ORDINANCE O-2023-20

A memorandum read from Donald Farquhar, Fire Chief, recommending that Ordinance O-2023-20 be referred to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee for their review and recommendation. Mayor Hansel referred Ordinance O-2023-20 to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee.

RESOLUTION – RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING THE CLASSIFICATION AND TOTAL COMPENSATION PROJECT – RESOLUTION R-2023-40

A memorandum was read from Human Resources Director/Assistant City Manager, Elizabeth Fox, recommending that Resolution R-2023-40 be referred to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee for their review and recommendation. Mayor Hansel referred Resolution R-2023-40 to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee.

RESOLUTION – RELATING TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF UNANTICIPATED HIGHWAY REVENUE – RESOLUTION R-2023-41

A memorandum was read from Public Works Director, Kurt Blomquist, recommending that Resolution R-2023-41 be referred to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee for their review and recommendation. Mayor Hansel referred Resolution R-2023-41 to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee.

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RESOLUTION – RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE PROJECT –RESOLUTION R-2023-42

A memorandum was read from Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, recommending that Resolution R-2023-42 be referred to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee for their review and recommendation. Mayor Hansel referred Resolution R-2023-42 to the Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee.

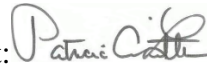
NON-PUBLIC SESSION

A motion by Councilor Powers to enter non-public session to discuss land matters under NH RSA 91-A:3, II (d) was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant. The Council entered non-public session at 7:24 PM. Discussion was limited to the subject matter. The session concluded at 8:48 PM. A motion by Councilor Powers to keep the minutes of the non-public session, non-public as disclosure would render the proposed action ineffective, was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. On roll call vote, 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Greenwald was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Hansel adjourned the meeting at 8:49 PM.

A true record, attest:



City Clerk