

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 23, 2024

5:30 PM

**Council Chamber,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Thomas F. Powers, Chair
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Bryan J. Lake
Kris E. Roberts

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Finance Director, Merri Howe
Asst. City Manager/HR Director, Beth Fox

Members Not Present:

Michael J. Remy, Vice Chair

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

1) Relating to the Community Development Block Grant Program - Citizen Participation and Grievance Procedure Resolution R-2024-24

Mr. Jack Ahern of Southwest Regional Planning Commission stated he was before the committee with a request for the city to create a Citizen Participation and Grievance Procedure which would be part of the city's housing and development plan. This is a plan that guides the city's decision on whether to act as fiscal sponsoring grantee for community development block grant projects. This formalizes the procedures that are already used that involve public notice, public hearing and taking public comments on CDBG projects. The grievance procedure outlines a plan for citizens to file complaints on CDBG projects the city is acting as fiscal sponsors on.

Chair Powers clarified this is something that has been done in the past, but the language is now being updated. Ms. Dragon agreed and added the grievance procedure is a new addition to the plan.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-24.

2) Relating to the 2024/2025 Fiscal Year Operating Budget Resolution R-2024-20

Councilor Chadbourne referred to Outside Agencies, Page 42 – CASA. There was a department request for \$5,000 but the recommendation is for \$4,000. The Councilor stated she would like to increase the amount back to the requested amount of \$5,000. She noted this money goes toward training volunteers and felt it was critical work that these volunteers do, and it is not much that they are asking for. She added this is to help children who are incredibly vulnerable.

Councilor Chadbourne made a motion to amend the budget for Outside Agencies Line Item 521430 – to change the amount from \$4,000 to \$5,000. The motion was seconded by Councilor Roberts.

Councilor Robert stated this is going to be a difficult decision as everyone has valid stories and unfilled needs. However, there is a process that everyone must go through and while he would support this request it will be an isolated case on his part. The Councilor referred to the committee that reviews all outside agency requests and the process they follow. He went on to say the reason he is going to support this request is because of the insight he has received serving on the school board and the number of homeless children the city has due to negative behavior on the part of the parents.

Councilor Lake stated he agrees with everything that has been said and indicated that CASA does good work and extended his appreciation to them. However, felt the committee has some tough choices to make. While CASA does great work, they have been given raises the previous two years prior and felt the funding being approved for this year makes sense and he will be voting against the amendment. The Councilor added he, however, does understand why the motion was made.

Councilor Chadbourne stated she has sat on the review committee in the past and has seen Councilors come forward thereafter and make amendments far more significant than \$1,000. She noted that the Community Kitchen was given \$25,000 more even after having gone through the whole process. She felt \$1,000 was not a very significant amount and shows a commitment on the city's part to honor the work that CASA does.

Chair Powers felt \$1,000 was a huge benefit to the city for the work CASA does with youth in the community. This is an established program that is working well.

On a 3-1 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee amended the budget for Outside Agencies Line Item 521430 – to change the amount from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Councilor Lake voted in opposition.

The Manager addressed the committee next. She indicated the first change is to reduce the budget in several departments, in both the General Fund and the other funds, such as Solid Waste Parking, Sewer, Water and the Equipment Fund to reflect the lower electric price that has been discussed in the past. It changes the bottom line by \$94,393 and is broken down as follows: Solid Waste \$4,417, Parking Fund \$1,546, Sewer Fund, \$46,738, Water Fund, \$29,953 Equipment

Fund \$1,361, for a total of \$84,015 and then the General Fund is the \$94,393.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee amended the FY25 budget to reduce the amount of \$94,393 for the reduction in projected electricity cost due to a change in provider vendor in the General Fund operating budget and that the following other fund budgets be reduced as follows: Solid Waste Fund \$4,417, Parking Fund 1,546, Sewer Fund, \$46,738, Water Fund, \$29,953, and Equipment Fund \$1,361.00, for a total of \$84,015 in reduction to these funds.

The Manager addressed the next item; Adjust the Compensated Absences Fund for FY25 budget to add \$100,000 to account number 48000000-513040. She noted this is the scrivener's error the Finance Director discussed. It does not change the bottom line, but the expense line needs to be added.

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

On a vote of 5-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee amended the Compensated Absences Fund for the FY25 budget to add \$100,000 to 48000000-513040 Wages Full-Time due to a scrivener's error in order to balance the Compensated Absences budget.

The Manager addressed the next change: To move \$7,000 currently assigned for the Council's tablets to the City Clerk's personnel budget line for additional succession planning. The Manager stated this was not an easy calculation to do and it is not very straightforward. She indicated when the wages and personnel budgeting are changed it adjusts the system automatically. If it is a full-time employee it would adjust benefits as well. The Manager stated they took the simpler route and moved it to the Clerk's elected officials line for elections and the Clerk could use it for coverage. There was a discussion about the City Clerk needing additional time for coverage in preparation for her retirement. This would eliminate the \$7,000 for the chrome books and add \$6,701.00 to the City Clerk's wage lines.

Councilor Chadbourne asked what the backup plan is if one of these chrome books fail. The Manager stated the funds would be taken from the IT budget - Equipment Fund Replacement line. She added chrome books are not currently in that fund; in the past, they have been funded by cable franchise dollars, but it is being moved to the PC Replacement Fund in the future.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee amended the FY24 budget to remove \$7,000 from Account 0100000--527110 – Mayor and City Council Equipment Minor for the replacement of the City Council chrome books and utilize up to \$7,000 to increase the City Clerk's personnel budget for additional succession planning.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee amended the FY25 budget to add \$6,701 to the following personnel budget lines in the City Clerk's personnel budget for additional succession planning from the amount removed from the Mayor and City Council Equipment Computer Minor Account 0100000-527110 to be allocated as follows:

Account 2000000-513040 Wages, Full Time, \$4,715
Account 2000000-517010 Health Insurance, \$942
Account 2000000-517020 Dental Insurance \$39
Account 2000000-517030 Retirement Contribution \$638
Account 2000000-517040 Social Security \$360.00
Account 2000000-517050 Workers Compensation \$7.00

The Finance Director stated after the adjustments the bottom line for the operating budget is now \$52,428,200.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of the fiscal operating budget Resolution R-2024-20-A, as amended.

3) Relating to Class Allocations and Salary Schedules Ordinance O-2024-08

Asst. City Manager/HR Director Beth Fox addressed the committee next regarding an update to the city's salary ordinance that applies to non-union and probationary employees within the organization. The ordinance this year reflects a 3% cost of living adjustment which adjustment is provided for within the operating budget. She noted this adjustment is similar to adjustments that are provided in collective bargaining agreements.

The first section of the ordinance refers to the 3% cost of living adjustment. The next section in the addresses call firefighters which also includes a 3% adjustment.

Ms. Fox noted across the probationary schedules there are more significant adjustments. In order to position the city more competitively in this labor market, the city has increased its starting rates for AFSCME by shortening their current schedule, which is a three step schedule, to a one step schedule. This adjustment makes these rates within a comparison framework for those that are similar to employees in the KCE Bargaining Units.

For probationary firefighters, the city has added a premium increase from 3% to 5% - recognizing the value medic certified personnel, whether they hold only a medical license or a firefighter medic license, brings to the city as a starting employee. Those starting rates are increased more dramatically between 7% to almost 9%.

The Police Department is also seeing an adjustment to their entry rate. That adjustment is almost 10%. Ms. Fox reminded the committee that staff has been before the committee a number of times this year talking about the need to fill positions in the Police Department and staff feels that adjustment was appropriate within the current labor situation.

The two final pages of the ordinance refers to the salary ordinance that applies to about 85 non-union personnel in the organization and the salary job titles within that group. The Parks and Rec Department had talked about the addition of two Recreational Specialist positions and there is provision made for that migration from part time status to full time status, adding a job title to the schedule.

There is also a reclassification for the Fire Department Administrator. There are some additional duties assigned to this individual, particularly in the area of grant support.

Staff is also recommending a reclassification by one grade of the Mapping Technician position to be GIS Coordinator. His influence in the organization is really a coordination across the organization.

Ms. Fox referred to a typographic error: the word “Property” was left off for the title of “Appraiser”.

The final change in the job title list is the addition of the job title of Deputy City Clerk, which relates to the succession plan discussed earlier within the Clerk’s office.

Chair Powers asked about the Utilities Treatment Operator position. Ms. Fox stated an adjustment was made in December 2023 when the title was moved around. At that time she neglected to strike out the old title. This is currently not a position in the system and is being proposed to be deleted.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2024-08.

- 4) **Relating to the Appropriation of Funds for the FY 2024-2025 Bond Issues**
Resolution R-2024-10: City Hall Structural Repairs - Bond FY 25
Resolution R-2024-11: Lower Winchester Street - Bond FY 25
Resolution R-2024-12: Stormwater Resiliency Program - Bond FY 25
Resolution R-2024-13: Lower Winchester Street Sewer Utilities - Bond FY 25
Resolution R-2024-14: Martell Court Bypass - Bond FY 25
Resolution R-2024-15: WWTP HVAC Replacement - Bond FY25
Resolution R-2024-16: WWTF Service Water System Upgrade
Resolution R-2024-17: Lower Winchester St Water Utilities - Bond FY25
Resolution R-2024-18: Water Distribution Improvements - Bond FY25

Finance Director Merri Howe stated there are nine bonds before the committee tonight and these are the bonds that will be funding capital projects approved in March.

R-2024-10: City Hall Structural Repairs – General Fund bond for \$1,258,000

R-2024-11: Lower Winchester Street - General Fund bond for \$805,000

R-2024-12: Stormwater Resiliency Program - General Fund bond for \$3,550,000
Total for General Fund Bonds are \$5,613,000.

The next few bonds are for Sewer Projects:

R-2024-13: Lower Winchester Street Sewer Utilities – Bond for \$418,000

R-2024-14: Martell Court Bypass - Bond for \$3,420,000

R-2024-15: WWTP HVAC Replacement - Bond for \$327,000

R-2024-16: WWTF Service Water System Upgrade - Bond for \$262,000

The total for the sewer fund is \$4,427,000

The next two bonds are for Water Projects:

Resolution R-2024-17: Lower Winchester St Water Utilities - Bond for \$1,004,000

Resolution R-2024-18: Water Distribution Improvements - Bond for \$1,307,000

The total for the sewer fund is \$2,311,000

All bonds collectively are \$12,351,000.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-10.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-11

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-12

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Roberts.

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-13.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-14.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-15.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-16.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-17.

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

On a 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2024-18.

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,
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk