

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, January 4, 2024. The Honorable Mayor Jay V. Kahn called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Kate M. Bosley, Laura E. Tobin, Michael J. Remy, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Edward J. Haas, Philip M. Jones, Andrew M. Madison, Kris E. Roberts, Raleigh C. Ormerod, Bryan J. Lake, Catherine I. Workman, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Thomas F. Powers, & Mitchell H. Greenwald were present. Councilor Bosley led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Kahn led the Council in a moment of silence in remembrance of former Mayor, Jim Masiello.

MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Powers to approve the December 21, 2023 meeting minutes as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Kahn announced a Council Workshop on right-to-know on Tuesday, January 9 at 6:00 PM in Council Chamber. Near the end of the workshop, Mayor Kahn would take the opportunity to inquire whether the Council has any other potential changes to the Rules of Order in mind. Councilors should let the Mayor know of any they could think of in advance.

Mayor Kahn also announced that on Saturday, January 20 starting at 8:00 AM there is a workshop on the 2025–2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The workshop should conclude by 11:00 AM. The actual review of the CIP will start with the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee at their January 25 meeting, which will start at 5:30 PM. The full schedule was provided to the Council.

PUBLIC HEARING – RELATING TO A CDBG GRANT APPLICATION – WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS – BASE HILL ROAD MANUFACTURED HOUSING PARK

The Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) has very specific protocols on how these public hearings are handled. The hearing notice identified three separate components: the actual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, the Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan, and the Housing and Community Development Plan; there would be three official public hearings, one for each of the components. Mayor Kahn called the first public hearing to order at 7:07 PM and the City Clerk read the public hearing notice. Mayor Kahn welcomed Jack Ahern, Associate Planner with the Southwest Region Planning Commission, and the CDBG Administrator.

Mr. Ahern explained that CDBG funds are available to municipalities for economic development, public facility, and housing rehabilitation projects that primarily benefit low- and moderate-income persons. The City of Keene is eligible to receive up to \$500,000 per year for

public facility and housing rehabilitation, up to \$500,000 per year for economic development, up to \$750,000 per year for microenterprise technical assistance, and up to \$500,000 per year in emergency funds. Feasibility study funds are also available for up to \$25,000. Mr. Ahern provided the Council with a handout describing the NH CDBG Program eligible activities that include the area Housing & Urban Development (HUD) income limits.

Mr. Ahern continued, explaining that the proposed application to the CDFA was for up to \$500,000 to allow the Base Hill Cooperative resident-owned community to replace its water distribution system at 180 Base Hill Road, Keene, New Hampshire. The manufactured housing park on Base Hill Road, owned by Base Hill Cooperative, Inc., is supplied drinking water by the Keene Water Department, from the City of Keene, NH. Water is delivered to the Cooperative and metered by the City via a meter near the property line adjacent to Base Hill Road. The Cooperative owns the drinking water distribution system after the City meter and is responsible for its operation and maintenance. The system consists of distribution mains and valves that are beyond their expected useful life and in poor condition. The Cooperative has done a good job of making necessary repairs, but frequent leaks and failures persist. The system supplies approximately 5,000 gallons of water per day to a population of roughly 150 people at 51 individual homes. There are no commercial or industrial water uses within the Cooperative and the system does not include treatment or storage.

The water system needs complete replacement. Water system improvements include a new connection to the master municipal metering pit, a new primary service distribution manhole, replacement of all water mains within the Cooperative, installation of isolation valves and flushing hydrants, and replacement of all unit service lines to the unit connection. Improvements also include an additional section of water main to provide redundancy of service to the rear units of the park, installation of an insulated meter pit, installation of water meters for all units, and provision of an electronic meter reader and accessories. Site restoration, pavement trenching and replacement, and erosion controls are also included.

Mr. Ahern introduced a representative of the Base Hill Cooperative, Ronald Bush, to provide additional details. Mr. Bush explained that the Cooperative had been working desperately for the last 4–5 years to replace the water system. The Cooperative received a \$1 million grant from the State of NH to get the project started. However, prices had increased so much in the last two years that the total project cost was now up to \$1.7 million, so they were seeking the CDBG as a gap fund to complete the project. Representatives of City Staff were very cooperative in addressing issues like leaks and other problems. He thought there had been \$60,000–\$70,00 in repairs over the last two years alone, which is challenging for a low-income community comprised of many senior citizens, younger couples, and kids. He described what a great community it is and the efforts to date to keep rental costs reasonable, including having added as many homes as possible. Now, the community needs help in this effort, which would be better for the whole City of Keene.

There were no public comments. Mayor Kahn closed the public hearing at 7:17 PM.

01/04/2024

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk

PUBLIC HEARING – RESIDENTIAL ANTI-DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION ASSISTANCE PLAN

Mayor Kahn opened the public hearing at 7:17 PM and welcomed Mr. Ahren again.

Mr. Ahern explained that if any displacement occurs because of the proposed CDBG project, the Uniform Relocation Act must be followed, which requires that any displaced household or business in a project using federal funds must be found comparable housing or commercial space in a comparable neighborhood at a comparable price. Under the certification section of the application, the City will certify that the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance (RARA) Plan is in place, and if it is discovered that this specific project does displace persons or households, a displacement implementation plan must be submitted to CDFR prior to obligating or expending funds.

Mr. Ahern said that because of the nature of the proposed project, it is unlikely that any sort of relocation would be necessary. However, CDFR requirements still mandate that The City of Keene certifies that it will require the Subrecipient to comply with the Uniform Relocation Act and Section 104(d) of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended.

There were no public comments. Mayor Kahn closed the public hearing at 7:19 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk

PUBLIC HEARING – HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mayor Kahn opened the public hearing at 7:17 PM and welcomed Mr. Ahren again.

Mr. Ahern explained that the Housing and Community Development Plan (HCDP) is a document composed of several key areas, those being: Housing, Economic Development, Health and Human Services, and CDBG Impact Area. Each section details the current conditions, and proposed actions that would help alleviate the need in the area in relation to CDBG funds. This document was last adopted in 2021 with the minimum adoption schedule being once every three years. No substantial changes to the plan have been made at this time. The proposed project meets the listed HCDP goal to, *“Have a variety of housing options available that are affordable, accessible, eco-efficient, and supportive of varied lifestyles.”*

01/04/2024

There were no public comments. Mayor Kahn closed the public hearing at 7:20 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk

RELATING TO A CDBG GRANT APPLICATION – WATER INFRASTRUCTURE
PROJECTS – BASE HILL ROAD MANUFACTURED HOUSING PARK – RESOLUTION R-
2024-03

A motion by Councilor Powers to suspend Section 27 of the City Council Rules of Order to allow discussion and a vote on the same day as the public hearing was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2024-03 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy.

Councilor Roberts wholeheartedly supported adopting this Resolution. He said members of this community came to the City 10 years ago because they were losing a lot of water and there was discontent about the water bills from the City. Ten years ago, he said the Base Hill community was somewhat run down, with many empty lots and trails that posed fire hazards. The residents had worked hard in the time since to make it a proud and growing community with secure housing. Councilor Roberts said the citizens did their part in this effort, and so he hoped the Council would support them with a unanimous vote.

Councilor Madison noted that he used to work for the Granite State Rural Water Association in Walpole, NH. In that role, he worked with many communities like the Base Hill Cooperative. He thought many of the public did not realize that these mobile home communities provide their own water utility services to their residents. Unfortunately, it is challenging when utility prices must increase for so many residents with fixed incomes. CDBGs like this one help make those utilities more affordable, allowing residents to have the same quality of service that those living in larger communities can enjoy. Councilor Madison said that these residents are a solution to the City's housing crisis, and that low-income members of the community deserve a place of their own that they can afford.

The motion to adopt Resolution R-2023-03 carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

CONFIRMATION

Former Mayor George S. Hansel nominated Cody Morrison to serve as a regular member of the Keene Housing Authority, with a term to expire December 31, 2025. A motion by Councilor

Greenwald to confirm the nomination was duly second by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

NOMINATIONS

Mayor Kahn nominated the following individuals to City Boards and Commissions. The nominations were tabled until the next regular City Council meeting:

- Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board:
 - Dian Mathews – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Assessor’s Board:
 - Jason Frost – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee:
 - Councilor Edward Haas – new nomination as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Building Board of Appeals:
 - Donald Flibotte – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Congregate Living & Social Services Advisory Board:
 - Thomas Savastano – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Jennifer Seher – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Medard Kopczynski – re-nominated as an ex-officio member, with a term to expire December 31, 2025
- Conservation Commission:
 - Councilor Robert Williams – re-nominated as an ex-officio member, with a term to expire December 31, 2025
 - Eloise Clark – re-nominated to change from a regular to alternate member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - John Therriault – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Energy & Climate Committee:
 - Councilor Raleigh Ormerod – re-nominated as an ex-officio member, with a term to expire December 31, 2025
 - Jude Nuru – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Charles Redfern – re-nominated as an alternate member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Historic District Commission:
 - Hope Benik – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026

- Russ Fleming – re-nominated to change from a regular to alternate member, with a term to expire December 31, 2024
- Housing Standards Board of Appeal:
 - Donald Flibotte – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Human Rights Committee:
 - Hunter Kirshner – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Daniel Aronson – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Marti Fiske – re-nominated as an ex-officio member, with a term to expire December 31, 2025
 - Ritu Budakoti – re-nominated as an alternate member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Partner City Committee:
 - Mari Brunner – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Councilor Andrew Madison – re-nominated as an ex-officio member, with a term to expire December 31, 2025
 - Michael Giacomo – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2024
- Planning Board:
 - Councilor Michael Remy – re-nominated as an ex-officio member, with a term to expire December 31, 2025
 - Roberta Mastrogiovanni – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Gail Somers – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
 - Tammy Adams – re-nominated as an alternate member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026
- Zoning Board of Adjustment:
 - Richard Clough – re-nominated as a regular member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026

NOMINATION

Mayor Kahn nominated Edward Guyot to serve as a regular member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, with a term to expire December 31, 2026. The nomination was tabled until the next regular meeting.

COMMUNICATION – JUSTIN SOMMA – RESIGNATION – KEENE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A communication was received from Justin Somma, resigning from the Keene Library Board of Trustees. 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 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

COMMUNICATION – CHRISTINA DRETZIN – ENCOURAGING THE COUNCIL TO STOP BUILDING ROUNDABOUTS

A communication was received from Christina Dretzin, encouraging the City Council to stop building roundabouts, which she dislikes and tries to avoid. Mayor Kahn accepted the communication as informational.

COMMUNICATION – COUNCILOR ANDREW MADISON – RESIGNATION FROM BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE

A communication was received from Councilor Andrew Madison, resigning from his ex-officio position on the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee and from his regular membership on the Partner City Committee. A motion by Councilor Powers to accept the resignations with regret and appreciation of service was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

The City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon, began by reporting that the City’s Human Rights Committee—with financial support from several community nonprofits and businesses—is hosting an event for Martin Luther King Jr. Day on January 15 at 6:00 PM at Heberton Hall. Father Greg Boyle (bestselling author and founder of Homeboy Industries, the nation’s largest gang intervention program) will be the guest speaker.

The City Manager also announced a Capital Planning workshop on Saturday, January 20. This workshop will be located at the Library, in both Heberton Hall and Cohen Hall, with the following schedule:

- 8:00 AM–8:30 AM: coffee and snack
- 8:30 AM: introductory comments
- Then groups will visit four small table discussions
- 10:45 AM: wrap-up comments, next steps, FOP timeline, and public hearing.

Lastly, the City Manager celebrated longevity milestones for City Staff:

- 5 years:
 - Carter Hennessey – Parks, Recreation, & Facilities
- 10 Years:
 - Mari Brunner – Community Development

- Heather Fitz-Simon – City Clerk’s
- 25 Years
 - Mitchell Smith – Public Works/Highway
 - Jason Short – Police/Operations
 - Todd Lawrence – Police/Special Services
- 30 Years:
 - Mike Abbott – Fire/Operations

BPPAC REPORT – DR. CHRIS BREHME RESIGNATION FROM THE BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A memorandum read from GIS Technician, Will Schoefmann, recommending that the Council accept Dr. Chris Brehme’s resignation from the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee. 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 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

IN APPRECIATION OF JOHN L. ROGERS UPON HIS RETIREMENT – RESOLUTION R-2024-02

A memorandum read from Elizabeth Fox, HR Director/Assistant City Manager, recommending that the Council adopt Resolution R-2024-02. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2024-02 in appreciation of John Rogers’ 15 years of service was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

A motion by Councilor Powers to enter a non-public session to discuss personnel matters under RSA 91-A:3, II (a) was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor. The Council entered the non-public session at 7:42 PM.

The non-public session ended at 8:00 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. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

01/04/2024

There being no further business, Mayor Kahn adjourned the meeting at 8:01 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk