

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 11, 2025

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

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

Members Not Present:

Michael J. Remy, Vice Chair

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager
Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager
Jason Martin, Fire Chief
Aaron Costa, Asst. Public Works Director
Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager
Don Lussier, Public Works Director

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

1) 2025 Homeland Security Grant Program - Hazmat Training Award - Fire Chief

Fire Chief Martin addressed the Committee first and stated this item is in reference to the 2025 Homeland Security Grant program. He stated the City of Keene Fire Department has been awarded \$33,000 as part of this grant program. This funding will be utilized to pursue training to allow members to further improve the department's ability to meet the State of New Hampshire Homeland security goals. All funds and equipment awarded by this grant are 100% funded by the program, with no local match.

The following motion by Councilor Chadbourne was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept and expend the 2025 Homeland Security Grant Program – Hazmat Training award.

2) Professional Services Contract—WWTP HVAC Replacement & Grit Chamber Ductwork Insulation Repair Project - Assistant Public Works Director

Assistant Public Works Director Aaron Costa was the next to address the Committee. Mr. Costa stated he was before the Committee to discuss the Wastewater Plant HVAC replacement project. There are a number of HVAC units at the wastewater plant. The one being discussed tonight is an existing unit, which provides airflow for heating, cooling, and ventilation to the administrative spaces at the wastewater plant. The cooling unit itself has been in service for a long time and is at the end of its useful life. There is also duct work in the grit chamber that is in need of repair as well.

Mr. Costa stated the City advertised a Design Build Request for Proposals and received one proposal from Precision Temperature Control. City staff reviewed the proposal and found it met the requirements as outlined in the RFP. Precision Temperature Control is a full-service mechanical contractor with 40 years of operation in the Monadnock region and has performed work at the wastewater plant before.

Mr. Costa stated staff is recommending that the City contract with Precision Temperature Control to perform design and construction services for an amount not to exceed \$396,700. Funds for this work is available in the wastewater plant, HVAC replacement project and the wastewater plant GR chamber duct work insulation repair project.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Roberts.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional services contract with Precision Temperature Control LLC to perform design and construction services for the WWTP HVAC Replacement & Grit Chamber Ductwork Insulation Repair Project for an amount not to exceed \$396,700.

The City Manager commended Mr. Costa's 25 years of employment with the City. Public Works Director Don Lussier echoed the Manager's comments.

3) Relating to the Execution of an Agreement for Engineering Services With Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. (Stantec) for the Design of the Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion Project (75J0034B) - City Engineer

City Engineer Bryan Ruoff stated that the City applied for and received a grant from Northern Borders for the construction of the Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion project. As part of this work, the City advertised a request for qualifications in accordance with federal funding. The first round of advertising did not yield any proposals. The proposal was reposted and the City reached out to a couple of firms who they thought might be interested and received qualifications from two firms.

The two firms were interviewed by a review Committee comprised of City staff in accordance with the Northern Borders selection criteria. The Committee unanimously identified Stantec as the preferred engineering consultant for the project.

The City requested from Stantec a scope of design for the project and after a few review sessions with the consultant, agreed upon a scope and associated fee, which is less than what was stated in the grant amount for the project. Staff has also reached out to the Southwest Regional Planning Commission and Northern Borders to indicate that the City was ready to award the contract and provided them with the grant scope.

Councilor Lake noted he recalled the total project cost to be around 2.4 million dollars and the design cost is coming in at 14% of the total cost. He asked whether this was a pretty standard rate for design costs. Mr. Ruoff stated he would consider this to be an upper level price for

engineering. However, with the federal funding requirements, there is a lot more permitting, a lot of social outreach, and engagement of the community and stated this is a price he would expect and it is in line with what the independent government estimate was.

The following motion by Councilor Roberts was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to execute an agreement with Stantec for engineering services for the design of the Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion Project, for an amount not to exceed \$340,000.

4) Acceptance and Execution of a Grant Agreement with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department for the Jordan Road Salamander Crossing Project - City Engineer

Mr. Ruoff stated the City applied for and received a grant for the Jordan Road Salamander Crossing Project. These are administrative funds through NH Fish and Game and the City will be teaming with the Harris Center for this work. Mr. Ruoff stated one of the conditions of accepting this grant is City Council approval.

The project is estimated at about \$375,000 with a 10% City commitment. City Engineering staff will be in charge of the design of the project. The Harris Center will also be providing volunteer work to meet the financial match of the City.

Councilor Chadbourne noted this project is being located only in one place but there are different crossings throughout the City. Mr. Ruoff stated the City is working with the Harris Center to identify the best location. He stated that 50 to 70 feet north of Peg Shop Road on Jordan Road are vernal pools (wetlands areas), which are the most conducive crossing areas. He stated what the Harris Center has done as part of their initial research in support of this project is to track all the crossings of the endangered species in that area. Based on this, the crossing tunnel will be located under the road with walls built out to make sure that the creatures cross in that location. It is about a 150 to 180 foot window through which they are crossing the area on Jordan Road, and the City is looking to capture as many animals as possible based on the data. The Councilor noted there are also other locations like North Lincoln Street where the crossings happen. Mr. Ruoff stated this could potentially be a future project as well, but what is before the Committee is what the City is working on right now.

Mr. Lussier stated the grant application that was approved was competitive because of the Jefferson Salamander. This is a rare species of salamander that crosses in this area. He stated this rare and endangered species is what made the City's application competitive for these funds. Hence, the reason the City is focused on that area; the funds are competitive and limited.

The following motion by Councilor Chadbourne was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to execute, accept, and expend a grant

agreement with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department for the engineering, permitting and construction of the Jordan Road Salamander Crossing Project.

5) Acceptance of Donations for the Jordan Road Salamander Crossing Project - City Engineer

The City Engineer stated the City will be teaming with the Harris Center for this project. The Harris Center will be doing all tracking work. New Hampshire Fish and Game have already agreed on this project and are on board.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Roberts.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept in-kind donations from the Harris Center for Conservation Education.

6) Acceptance of Donation - Ashuelot River Park Greenspace - Deputy City Manager & Parks and Recreation Director

Deputy City Manager Andy Bohannon addressed the Committee next. Mr. Bohannon stated this item is in reference to a \$35,000 donation to the City to create a conceptual design for the Ashuelot Park Green Space. He explained this is the new park space along Ashuelot Street which was subdivided with the Monadnock Conservancy.

Mr. Bohannon noted this project has been going on since 2014 when members of JCC Properties, Conway School of Landscape and Design and the Monadnock Conservancy partnered with the City to look at what can be done with this green space.

Last spring, City staff came before the Council requesting the submission of an LWCF Grant, which grant was to have been applied for by January 2026. The City did not have all the necessary documents ready to apply for that grant. The City had a design that was previously completed on the total acreage of that lot. However, the grant required a more defined scope. The State suggested the City come back with that more defined scope plan. Mr. Bohannon stated this gives the City more time and it allows the City to place this item in the capital improvement plan and to go through the public process. This is the initial requirement for the LWCF Grant. The other portion is that the City conduct some type of public engagement and a conceptual design.

Mr. Bohannon stated this is a generous gift from this donor and would enable the City to begin to move forward and create this design and come back later in the year with LWCF project.

The following motion by Councilor Roberts was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept a donation of \$35,000.00 from an anonymous donor, and that the money is allocated for a conceptual design for the Ashuelot River Park - Greenspace.

7) Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Round 36 - Patricia T. Russell Park Phase II - Deputy City Manager & Parks and Recreation Director

Mr. Bohannon stated the next item is in reference to the Land, Water, and Conservation Funds. These are 50/50 matching grants for state and local governments. What the City is looking to do is have an increased amendment to the initial grant that the City received for the skate park. The City received a grant for \$225,000, which provided sufficient funds for constructing the skate park. However, when the building was demolished that cost increased. The City received an additional \$117,000 to help offset that demolition that eliminated the ability for the City to put a parking lot in this location. This amendment would enable the City to go forward with constructing a small parking lot and connecting it to the additional parking lot that is already established within Russell Park, making this project fully complete.

Mr. Bohannon stated he has \$75,000 included in the Committee packet as that is the amount staff has estimated for this work but it could be less than that when the budget is put together. He went on to say because this is an amendment and not an actual grant application, it is still going through the grant application process and will be competitive with the other current bids that are in the process. He added this is not a guarantee, but one step for the City to move forward with.

Councilor Lake clarified this is a slight change to the actual project plan. He asked what is being proposed is an amendment to the grant that has already been submitted. Mr. Bohannon stated the City would go through the CIP process because the City will need to add some additional funding as a match for this grant. If the City is not successful with this grant, the City can re-apply for the grant.

The following motion by Councilor Chadbourne was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to execute the submission of the application for Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Round 36 for the Patricia T. Russell Park – Phase 2 project amendment.

8) Transfer of Capital Improvement Project Funds For The Airport Taxiway A Reconstruction Project - Deputy City Manager

Deputy City Manager Rebecca Landry stated the key piece of this taxiway project has been paving. She stated this taxiway has been closed in preparation for this work. The City has a contract with Casella to start this work in September and finish by Thanksgiving. The first layer of the needed two layers of paving was placed (two inches) by November but the asphalt plant closed because we have an early winter. Hence, the second layer of paving could not be completed. She noted it costs the asphalt plant a lot of money to stay open in the winter. The City reached out to DOT and FAA for additional funding but they declined. There was also no extension on this grant, which was awarded in 2020. It is a 3.3 million grant, which comes in three sections. The first section of 1.6 million dollars includes the paving, which expires in February. Ms. Landry noted the second layer cannot be put off until spring until the asphalt plant reopens.

Ms. Landry stated as a result the City signed a change order which required some additional expenses which was a daily expense to keep the asphalt plant open as well as leasing road dryers, fuel necessary to run dryers and some lighting necessary to keep those dryers running. Ms. Landry stated all the necessary testing for the paving material passed and this was good outcome to a very stressful couple of weeks at the airport.

The City's cost for these extra expenses would be around \$50,000 to \$70,000, depending on how much fuel it took to run those dryers. There should not be any significant labor cost because the labor to do the paving was already included in the contract as well as lighting, materials and equipment.

Ms. Landry stated staff has identified two capital improvement projects that can be closed out and the balance used to help fund this additional expense. Staff is requesting that those projects be closed out and the funding that remains in those accounts be moved to the taxiway project. She added the former Airport Director has already come before Council in August to obtain approval to close out the airport fuel tank project of \$36,000 and move those funds to the taxiway project. The motion before the Committee will only include the hazard beacon replacement project. Ms. Landry commended the contractor and airport staff for all their assistance.

Councilor Roberts asked how much the City was able to save because of the additional expense of nearly \$50,000. Ms. Landry stated to redo the first layer would be at a cost of around \$350,000 which the City did not have any grant funding for and added this would have prevented the taxiway from being used for the entire winter.

Councilor Lake asked whether any painting would be required. Ms. Landry answered in the affirmative and stated that work is scheduled for December 17.

The Manager commended Ms. Landry taking on this role and getting this project completed.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Roberts.

On a vote of 4 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Council authorize the transfer of remaining project balance from project 05J0008A, Airport Hazard Beacon Replacement, to project 05J0004B, AIP Taxiway A Reconstruction, to fund unanticipated taxiway paving expenses.

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Terri M. Hood, City Clerk and Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk