

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 8, 2025

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Thomas F. Powers, Chair
Bettina A. Chadbourne, Vice Chair
Bryan J. Lake
Michele A. Chalice

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Attorney
Steve Tenney, Police Captain
Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer

Jay V. Kahn, Mayor

Members Not Present:

Kris E. Roberts

Chair Powers called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, welcomed the new Committee, and reviewed guidelines as to how the meeting is conducted. He also thanked Councilor Remy for his service on this Committee.

1) 2025 Homeland Security Grant Program Award - 2025 Tactical Equipment - Police Captain

Police Department Captain Steve Tenney addressed the Committee. He stated the first item is an annual grant received from the State of New Hampshire's Homeland Security Office for the purchase of tactical team-related equipment. These funds are often used to update aging equipment. This year the Department has been awarded \$12,714. These funds will be used to replace eight headsets that work with the Department's radios. These newer headsets use new technology.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice 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 Award - Tactical Equipment grant in the amount of \$12,714.00.

2) Reallocation of Funds from the West Side Downtown Parking Structure Project to the City Hall Parking Deck Maintenance Program - Parking Operations Manager & City Engineer

City Engineer Bryan Ruoff was the next speaker. Mr. Ruoff stated this item is a request to reallocate funds from the West Side Downtown Parking Structure Project to the City Hall Parking Deck Maintenance Program. Staff have been working with a consultant, THA, on the development of the City Hall parking garage rehab plans and specifications for bidding. The City is about two weeks out from being able to bid that project.

Mr. Ruoff stated in 2024 the City hired Weston Sampson to perform an evaluation of existing parking trends and a feasibility study of constructing a parking garage on the west side of Keene.

It was concluded this is not an immediate need to the City. As a result, the planned CIP fiscal year 27 funding for parking garages is now being removed from the program for the foreseeable future. The project and study were completed with unspent allocated funds - approximately \$15,350. What staff is looking to do is to reallocate that to part of the THA project to make repairs to the City Hall parking garage.

Chair Powers clarified these funds are in the Parking Fund, they are not new tax dollars; funds being moved from one project to another within that fund. Staff agreed.

The following motion by Councilor Lake 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 reallocate unspent CIP project funds in the amount of \$15,350 from the West Side Downtown Parking Structure Project (22J002AA) to the City Hall Parking Deck Maintenance Program (22M006).

3) Engineering Services Agreement for the FY26 Stormwater Channel Rehabilitation Project - City Engineer

Mr. Ruoff stated this item is a request for engineering services agreement for a stormwater channel rehabilitation project.

In the last CIP update, Public Works added this program into the CIP for the need to update tax ditches throughout the city. Staff identified the Tannery Brook as one location where the area is completely overgrown and needs to be rehabilitated to minimize potential future flooding. There is another location identified recently, which has also been added to this work to make it more cost effective. What was identified this past year is a portion of the stream embankment along the Martell Court access way to the pump station. This area is eroding rapidly and what is also being included as part of this project is the re-stabilization of that embankment.

The project was sent out for bid and two bids were received. Mr. Ruoff stated consultant selections were not based solely on price it was based on defined criteria. The differences

between the two proposals were significant. Dubois King provided the best reference scope of work and best price proposal. Staff requested to complete this agreement with Dubois King.

Councilor Chalice stated she has noticed pretty significant and impressive state projects for managing floodwaters along the highways in our area. She stated there is one mode of thought: making channels deeper which makes water move faster which erode banks overtime. She asked whether this work is consistent with the State's recommendations of trying to find opportunities for that water to begin to spread and be contained, instead of just trying to fight it by armoring those bank walls.

Mr. Ruoff in response stated what is included in both of these areas, since they are both in the regulated floodplain there is a need for a No Rise Analysis and no increase in storm water flows, so the cubic feet per second won't be increased. What the consultant will look to do is to increase the storage capacity, slow down the flows, thereby, reducing the erosion and providing a sustainable restoration for both locations.

Councilor Lake noted at the end of the background notes, it mentions that the City has \$200,000 in the Program. After the design, \$100,000 will be left in that Fund. He asked whether these are the anticipated amounts that the City was planning on spending. Mr. Ruoff stated there is additional money planned to be allocated for the coming fiscal year and noted it is too early to say whether those funds would be sufficient. Staff want to use the most cost-effective method possible, which could be perhaps using the Highway Division to save costs. If it is beyond the staff's capacity, it will be bid out, but this will depend on what is designed.

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 an agreement with Dubois & King for the Design of the Stormwater Channel Rehab Project (75M01626) for an amount not to exceed \$96,000.

4) Howard Street Sale RFP Recommendation - Deputy City Manager

Deputy City Manager Rebecca Landry addressed the Committee next. Ms. Landry stated staff has been looking at selling City-owned property to meet the housing needs in the community.

Property at 0 Howard Street is a property staff has been looking at. She noted this area is grown over and hence a wetland study was completed before listing the property for sale. The Community Development Department has merged the four or five lots that were much smaller lots on that property and it is now under one acre in size.

The City has received one proposal in response to the RFP that was sent out for the purchase of that property. Ms. Landry explained the City used the RFP process because the City doesn't want to just sell the property, they want a development agreement for housing to make sure it is used for that purpose. Staff is before the Committee tonight to request authority for the City Manager to sign a purchase and sales agreement, which will also include a development agreement for that

property. The sole proposer is Granite State Housing Group. They are proposing to construct 16 workforce-housing units on that property and most likely the initial or preliminary concept would be “fourplexes.” Ms. Landry noted they have a design that will maximize the use of open space, locate all parking together to minimize how much paved parking there is on the property, and the City is confident that their approach is a good one. She felt they would most likely use the cottage court process.

Councilor Chadbourne felt this proposal is in keeping with the master plan goals as it relates to housing and puts the property back on the tax rolls.

Councilor Chalice noted the development agreement would be the City’s last opportunity to have any effect on what happens to that property before it is sold. She noted to the term “*efficient building systems*” used in the background notes and asked whether the city has more specifics about what this means. She asked whether the city has the ability to make sure that all the efficient measures are taken. Ms. Landry stated the City cannot dictate that a developer should for instance use solar or propane versus oil; the city doesn’t have the mechanisms to do that. However, felt it could be discussed during the negotiation process to see what they are willing to do.

The Councilor noted it was mentioned that certain developers have already established energy costs for the developments that they create and felt maybe this can be an issue of making sure the person who does this can meet that type of level. Ms. Landry agreed it is in Granite State Housing Group’s proposal, but agreed it is not a specific definition of what it means to be sustainable. She added this is something the City can prioritize in their negotiation process.

Chair Powers noted this project will eventually go before the Planning Board, it will be reviewed by Code Enforcement and felt any developer who undertakes a project such as this would want to make it the most efficient. Ms. Landry noted the preliminary concept calls for “*high efficiency heat pumps HVAC systems, high insulation tightly air sealer building envelopes, durable low maintenance exterior materials, modular construction*” she felt a number of issues have already been addressed with this proposal.

The Mayor addressed the Committee next. He asked for the total acreage for the property. Ms. Landry stated it was .91 acres. The Mayor noted to the recent proposal the Planning Board approved on Elm Street; 18 units on 2.5 acres. The Mayor noted based on the building standards 16 units on less than an acre is likely on the low end of square footage per unit, which makes him question whether this will be owner occupied housing or whether they will be small rentals. He added this type of density is of concern to the community, especially for abutters. He added this is information that will likely be reviewed during the Planning Board process but if this is information that is available, it would be helpful for Council.

Ms. Landry explained the proposal is not the same as agreement. The proposal provides a design concept for City consideration and for the applicant’s planning purposes. The applicant will have to go through much review but their concept is for 16, 1,100 square foot units.

Councilor Chalice felt there is a market for people who don't even want 1,100 feet square feet; who want to live in much less area in order to have it be more reasonable for their life. She stated she would be looking for consideration to have a broader variety of ownership opportunities in the City for people who are looking to dramatically downsize.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice 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 negotiate and execute an agreement for the sale and residential development of 0 Howard Street, parcel 536-034-000-000-000.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk