

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, January 15, 2026. The Honorable Mayor Jay V. Kahn called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Randy L. Filiault, Michele A. Chalice, Bryan J. Lake, Jacob R. Favolise, Laura E. Tobin, Robert C. Williams, Philip M. Jones, Kris E. Roberts, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Edward J. Haas, Laura E. Ruttle-Miller, Molly V. Ellis, Thomas F. Powers, and Mitchell H. Greenwald were present. Catherine I. Workman was absent. Councilor Filiault led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES FROM PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt the December 18, 2025, and January 1, 2026, meeting minutes as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Powers. The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Kahn led the Council in honoring Councilor Tobin, who celebrated a January birthday.

The Mayor shared upcoming dates of interest in January and February 2026:

- Monday, January 19: The City of Keene would be closed for Martin Luther King Jr./Civil Rights Day.
- Monday, January 19 at 5:30 PM at Heberton Hall: The Keene Public Library hosting a screening of the documentary *Here Am I, Send Me: The Journey of Jonathan Daniels*, in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The screening would be followed by a Q & A session with producers and directors Larry Benaquist and William Sullivan.
- Tuesday, January 27: International Holocaust Remembrance, which commemorates the liberation of Auschwitz by the Russian Red Army during the Holocaust in 1945.
- Saturday, February 7, from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM in Downtown Keene: the Annual Ice and Snow Festival, featuring 14 ice carvers (up from 12 the previous year), along with many fun family activities.
- Tuesday, February 17 at 6:00 PM at Heberton Hall: screening of the documentary *Shadow Falls North* as a part of the Human Rights Committee's Black History Month programming in February. This documentary focuses on the overlooked Black History of New England and efforts to reclaim it. A follow-up discussion would take place on March 5, 2026 at 6:30 PM at the Historical Society of Cheshire County, which has an ongoing project relative to Black History in the Monadnock Region.

Lastly, Mayor Kahn reminded all Councilors that the City Clerk emailed an electronic Statement of Special Interest form for their completion per Section 15 of the City Council's Rules of Order, with a submission deadline of January 31, 2026. Councilors should contact the City Clerk for assistance using the electronic submittal form.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION - STEVEN LEVY - OWNER OF TOY CITY

Mayor Kahn was honored to recognize the owner of Toy City, Steven Levy. The Mayor knew that many of Keene's past generation of parents, grandparents, or children walking into Toy City recall being greeted by a simple yet profound question: "Tell me about your child [yourself]."

Mr. Levy's question was a first step in a thoughtful search for the perfect toy. Mayor Kahn said Mr. Levy had been a steward of tradition and a champion of child development for decades, wielding the potent tool: an unwavering belief in the transformative power of play. The Mayor stated that this legacy was hard earned. Mr. Levy's family ran Toy City in Manchester, New Hampshire, when he was a child, and he watched his father Maury grow the business into nine toy stores under multiple names across New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts. Mayor Kahn noted that as the child of a toy store entrepreneur, Mr. Levy often became the curator of "misfit toys," which would not sell. He seemingly inherited his father's entrepreneurial spirit, earning a business degree in 1977 from Babson College in just three years, and running a toy store on Main Street Keene two days after graduating. That foray in Keene captured Mr. Levy's heart and Toy City turned into the final and most enduring of his father's legacy. The Mayor said Mr. Levy was drawn to Keene's welcoming community, which he made his permanent home, greatly aided by his love for Susan, a single mom of three, who he would marry and raise a family with at the store.

The Mayor said Mr. Levy was more than an owner: he was a character, a local legend. When selling the local *Keeneopoly* game, Mr. Levy dressed up as Mayor Monopoly and declared himself Mayor of Toy City (during a local Mayoral campaign). His playful spirit spilled over into his home on Court Street, where a Playmobil Soldier could be seen peering out of the second-floor window; much to his wife's chagrin, Mr. Levy added. In a world obsessed with the newest, fastest, and loudest, Mayor Kahn said Toy City stood as a testament to the timeless joy of a wooden block or a completed puzzle inside the store. There were no rush transactions; there was a conversation, curiosity, and deep-seated generosity. Mr. Levy was known to quietly fulfill a Christmas wish for children, even when a family could not afford the gift, ensuring the magic of the season was accessible to all. He guided his life and store by a simple philosophy: for toys to be truly satisfying, they must be rewarding and interactive.

Today, the City of Keene honored Mr. Levy's lifelong commitment to preserving the art of toys and crafts. The Mayor said Mr. Levy offered not just items on a shelf, but experiences that enriched childhoods, strengthened families, and bridged generations. Although the Mayor said there were wishes for Mr. Levy's continued participation supporting families in the Monadnock Region, Mayor Kahn recognized that Mr. Levy had more than earned his retirement. Mayor Kahn said: Let all who seek joy, growth, and a piece of nostalgia know this truth, Toy City has been more than a store, it has been a living testament to the irreplaceable value of play-based learning. The Mayor said Mr. Levy stands as an example of what is good, generous, and kind in the City of Keene. Mayor Kahn proclaimed that the City recognized and honored Steve Levy on January 15, 2026 for his lifelong dedication to toy craft and the invaluable contributions he has made to the community. The City celebrated Toy City as a testament to the importance of play and human connections, extending deepest gratitude to Mr. Levy for his generosity as he entered a well-earned retirement. The Mayor presented Mr. Levy with a symbolic Key to the City of Keene.

Mr. Levy was overwhelmed; he always just considered himself a guy who sold toys. It was not until the announcement of the retirement that so many people told him that he and the store were much, much more. Never in his wildest dreams did he think he would be standing in front of the Keene City Council with the Key to the City for selling toys. Mr. Levy said he could not be any

more humble or grateful to his community. Mayor Kahn thanked Mr. Levy's family for attending.

PUBLIC HEARING - CDBG GRANT APPLICATION - 657 MARLBORO STREET

Before opening the public hearing on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, Mayor Kahn reviewed the process to follow, including for new Councilors. The Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) has very specific protocols on how these public hearings are handled. The hearing notice identified four separate components: the two actual CDBG applications, and their corresponding Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plans. The Mayor would open and close each of these four segments separately. Upon the close of the second hearing, he would call forward Resolution R-2026-02. Upon the close of the fourth hearing, he would call forward Resolution R-2026-03. As these applications were time sensitive, he noted that he would seek Suspension of the Rules of Order to allow immediate action upon the Resolutions.

Mayor Kahn opened the public hearing at 7:17 PM to address a proposed CDBG application for 657 Marlboro Street and City Clerk Terri Hood read the notice of hearing. The Mayor welcomed Jack Ahern, Associate Planner with Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC), and Carolyn Sweet of Keene Housing to address the grant request.

Mr. Ahern began by providing a brief overview of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program before reviewing the details of this application. He explained that CDBG funds are available to municipalities for economic development, and public facilities and housing rehabilitation projects that benefit primarily low- and moderate-income people. The City of Keene is eligible to receive up to \$500,000 per year for public facilities 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 in emergency funds. Feasibility study funds are available for up to \$25,000. Mr. Ahern provided a handout describing the NH CDBG Program eligible activities, including the area income limits determined by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Mr. Ahern described the proposed application to the CDFA for up to \$500,000 to support rehabilitation of a Keene Housing property located at 657 Marlboro Street in Keene, New Hampshire. This building is one of nine properties, and 48 total housing units, which Keene Housing acquired from Cheshire Housing Trust upon their dissolution in 2021. The building, constructed in 1875, consists of four permanently affordable housing units. As is common with structures of this age, Mr. Ahern said the building needed energy efficiency and accessibility upgrades. Lead-based paint was known to be present throughout the building and would require substantial abatement to provide a safe and healthy living space for tenants; at this time, only two of the four units were occupied due to this issue.

Mr. Ahern said the proposed project would consist of lead remediation in various areas of the building, and Keene Housing would ensure the proper storage and disposal of any and all hazardous materials from the site. Other improvements aim to modernize the building's energy efficiency and accessibility. These activities would include installing new windows and doors,

replacing appliances and lighting fixtures, low flow plumbing fixtures, and additional insulation of the building. Keene Housing would provide \$250,000 to serve as match funding for the project. Mr. Ahern said the proposed project would align with goals set forth in the City of Keene's Housing and Community Development Plan to, "*Have a variety of housing options available that are affordable, accessible, eco-efficient, and supportive of varied lifestyles,*" and to, "*Have housing that uses ... green building standards that improve energy efficiency and conserve resources.*" Mr. Ahern introduced Carolyn Sweet, a representative of Keene Housing, to provide more details about the project.

Ms. Sweet thanked the Council for considering this proposal. She added that at this time in the four-unit building, there was a one-bedroom apartment and three, two-bedroom apartments; only two of them were habitable. She said that with this proposed application, Keene Housing would be maintaining two units of affordable housing and adding two more units of affordable housing stock to the City. These units would be permanently affordable as a part of Keene Housing–Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation. She agreed with Mr. Ahern that this would be a part of a larger project, in which Keene Housing would remediate the lead out of most of the buildings that it acquired from Cheshire Housing Trust. Ms. Sweet said Keene Housing had seven units vacant at this time as a part of another full lead remediation project; the 657 Marlboro Street project became so expensive that it was out of the scope of the other remediation project and had to become something separate. Ms. Sweet welcomed questions.

Mayor Kahn opened the Hearing to public comments and there being none, he closed this Public Hearing for the proposed CDBG application for 657 Marlboro Street.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk

Mayor Kahn opened the second Public Hearing regarding the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan for 657 Marlboro Street at 7:23 PM. He recognized Mr. Ahern again to address the Plan.

Mr. Ahern explained that if any displacement takes place as a result of the proposed CDBG project, the Uniform Relocation Act must be followed. This 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 would certify that the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance (RARA) Plan is in place, and in the event that it would be discovered that this specific project does displace people or households, a Displacement Implementation Plan must be submitted to CDFA prior to obligating or expending funds. CDFA requirements 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.

Mr. Ahern said Keene Housing anticipated that temporary displacement may occur during construction and abatement activities. A comprehensive Displacement Implementation Plan was drafted and would be made available to the City upon request and submitted to CDFA upon

award of grant funds. He noted that Keene Housing would be in a position to provide any displaced tenants from the subject property with comparable housing and moving assistance services, without issue. Mr. Ahern introduced Carolyn Sweet from Keene Housing.

Ms. Sweet noted that tenants housed within Keene Housing have project-based vouchers that allow them to pay 30% of their income toward their rents; Keene Housing rents are managed at the federal and state levels. She did anticipate that the two tenants currently occupying the building would be displaced for up to three months, which is within the guidance of the 12-month period. Those tenants would most likely be displaced within the building to units that were rehabbed already; they would be in the second phase. They would have a choice to move to another Keene Housing unit or onto the market, should they choose.

Mayor Kahn opened the Hearing to public comments and there being none, Mayor Kahn closed the Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan Public Hearing at 7:26 PM.

A true record, attest: 
Tessie Wood
City Clerk

**RESOLUTION - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT APPROVAL - 657
MARLBORO STREET - RESOLUTION R-2026-02**

A memorandum was read from Jack Ahern, Associate Planner for the Southwest Region Planning Commission, recommending that the City Council adopt the attached Resolution [R-2026-02] for federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to the NH Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA); and further to adopt the Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan specific to this project. Resolution R-2026-02 read for the first time.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to suspend Section 27 of the Rules of Order to act on Resolution R-2026-02 was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt Resolution R-2026-02 was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

PUBLIC HEARING - CDBG GRANT APPLICATION - COMMUNITY KITCHEN

Mayor Kahn opened the third Public Hearing at 7:29 PM to address a proposed Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for The Community Kitchen and the City Clerk read the notice of Hearing. Mayor Kahn welcomed Jack Ahern, Associate Planner with Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC), and Barb Weisman, Executive Director of The Community Kitchen (TCK), to address the grant request.

Mr. Ahern said the proposed application to the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) was for up to \$500,000 to support improvements to TCK's facility located at 37 Mechanic Street in Keene, New Hampshire. The Community Kitchen operates a Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry that together serve approximately 4,000 unduplicated individuals annually and distributed more than 400,000 meal equivalents to the residents of Keene and surrounding areas in 2025. TCK's facility on Mechanic Street is a two-story, historic brick structure, which is more than 100 years old. While substantial renovations have been completed, including prior CDBG-funded improvements, Mr. Ahern said continued investment would be required to maintain safe and efficient operations.

Mr. Ahern explained that the proposed project would include two major upgrades: (1) the installation of a freight lift and (2) the purchase of a stand-by generator. The freight lift will improve operational efficiency by reducing labor hours required to unload and store deliveries. The generator will ensure uninterrupted operations during power outages, enabling continued service through emergencies and disaster events. Additionally, the project would include several minor spot improvements: the replacement of two rooftop HVAC units, new flooring in the dining area, a new rear entryway, additional cooler space, and pavement improvements. Mr. Ahern said the proposed project would align with the goal set forth in Keene's Housing and Community Development Plan to, "*[make] improvements to The Community Kitchen.*" He introduced Ms. Weisman to provide additional details about the project.

Ms. Weisman explained that The Community Kitchen has proudly served this community for more than 40 years as Keene's primary emergency food provider. Its Pantry and Hot Meals Programs serve seniors, families, working people, and children who simply need food—no referrals, no barriers, and no judgment. TCK's Mobile Pantry Program had expanded to reach those who cannot access the Kitchen. Ms. Weisman said The Community Kitchen also partners with Hundred Nights to provide hot, nutritious meals for people experiencing homelessness. In 2025 alone, the Community Kitchen served nearly 400,000 meal equivalents to 3,571 unique individuals through the Pantry and prepared more than 40,000 hot meals. That was a 10% increase over 2024's service numbers. Ms. Weisman explained that the need in Keene and throughout the region is growing and TCK is working every day to meet it. She said that it is possible almost entirely through the generosity of individuals, businesses, municipalities, and Cheshire County. The Community Kitchen receives no state or federal operating funds. Their donors give because they want to feed people and she said The Community Kitchen takes that responsibility seriously. That means it relies on targeted funding sources like the CDBG to support the infrastructure that makes its services possible.

Ms. Weisman explained that this CDBG request included three critical projects that would directly affect Keene's ability to respond to hunger, especially in times of crisis. First, the generator: while The Community Kitchen certainly cares about protecting the food in its five walk-in coolers, its ability to stay open when the Community needs it most matters far more. The Community Kitchen is listed in Keene's Hazard Mitigation Plan, but without power, the organization cannot distribute food, prepare meals, or serve as a community resource in a major storm, prolonged outage, or emergency. Ms. Weisman said hunger does not pause; in fact, it escalates quickly and those who never needed help before may suddenly find themselves on the receiving end, needing a helping hand. So, she said Keene needs an operational food safety net

and this generator would allow The Community Kitchen to be there when everything else goes dark. Second, the freight lift: at this time, it took staff about eight hours of labor to move one truck load of food from the back lot to its second-floor warehouse, using an outdated conveyor belt; a freight lift would reduce that time to about 20 minutes. Ms. Weisman said that it would not only enhance efficiency, but also safety, dignity for TCK's staff, and time that can be redirected toward serving the public during emergencies or peak demand, when speed and flexibility really matter. Third, the HVAC replacement: the existing rooftop units were 17 years old at this time and beyond their expected lifespan. Ms. Weisman said that every time the units failed, operations stopped. Food storage, meal preparation, and volunteer services all depend on those systems. She stated that this would not be a luxury or an upgrade, but an essential maintenance that keeps Keene's food safety net intact. Together, Ms. Weisman explained that these investments would ensure that TCK could continue doing what this community relies on it to do: feed people, stabilize families, and respond when the need is greatest on behalf of thousands of Keene residents who depend on The Community Kitchen each year, the volunteers who dedicate their time to service, and TCK staff who are so deeply committed to this mission. Ms. Weisman thanked the City Council for its consideration, partnership, and for building a stronger and more resilient community.

Councilor Jones asked a process question after having reviewed both applications. He recalled that Linda Mangones formerly managed grants for the City of Keene and asked if there was no longer a manager or if the process had changed. City Manager Elizabeth Ferland replied that Ms. Mangones had retired from that role a few years prior. The City Manager explained that Southwest Region Planning Commission is the City's Grant Administrator and prepares grant applications with nonprofit organizations. Councilor Jones confirmed that it was still the same process.

Mayor Kahn recognized the significant role Carolyn Sweet of Keene Housing plays in preparing these proposals and thanked her for the work she does.

Mayor Kahn opened the Hearing to public comments on The Community Kitchen's Housing and Community Development Plan.

Michele DellaVita was present representing two organizations. First, she read a statement as Director of Leadership of the Greater Monadnock Collaborative, which is the regional Chamber of Commerce, *"The Greater Monadnock Collaborative strongly supports The Community Kitchen's plan to install a generator system to ensure continuity of services during power outages, events that often affect not only Keene, but surrounding communities across the region during emergencies and all year round. The Community Kitchen serves as critical infrastructure. If The Community Kitchen has power when others don't, it allows them to continue feeding community members and allows them also to support first responders and volunteers at moments when reliable services are most needed. We also support the request for funding to upgrade additional equipment that will improve efficiency and capacity, strengthening their ability to meet growing demand. Investments like this enhance regional resilience and ensure that our essential services remain available when our community needs them most."*

Ms. DellaVita shared a second statement on behalf of the Monadnock United Way, for which she is Board Chair, *“The Monadnock United Way is proud to support The Community Kitchen and the Monadnock Food Pantries Collective, a network of local pantries that strive to provide nutritious food to people in all corners of our region. Food pantries are an essential lifeline in every community. Strengthening The Community Kitchen’s capacity to meet significantly rising needs will have a positive ripple effect throughout our broader food security network. We respectfully urge approval of this grant, so The Community Kitchen can continue serving as the vital anchor in our region’s fight against hunger.”*

Mark Bodin, President of Savings Bank of Walpole (SBW), said he thought that everybody knows SBW is involved in basically every organization in this community and proud to do that. He said it is really an unfortunate reality that The Community Kitchen is one of the most vital organizations the City has, and that the community had just seen the tip of the iceberg of how much the demand would start to increase. Mr. Bodin said that toward the end of 2025, SBW recognized the needs and invested another \$20,000 above what it usually did in TCK, and he said that it was not going to stop. Mr. Bodin stated that SBW was invested in terms of human resources, intellectual resources, and would continue to support TCK. He said at this point, with everything coming up, he could not think of another organization more important for this community to invest in; especially if more money could come in from other sources to help, such as small businesses contributing. Mr. Bodin encouraged everybody to really support this.

Hearing no further public comments, Mayor Kahn closed the Public Hearing for The Community Kitchen CDBG Housing and Community Development Plan.

A true record, attest: 
Emily Ward
City Clerk

Mayor Kahn opened the Public Hearing for The Community Kitchen’s Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan at 7:41 PM, and recognized Jack Ahern, Associate Planner for the Southwest Region Planning Commission, to address the Plan.

Mr. Ahern explained that if any displacement takes place as a result 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 in the event that it is discovered that this specific project does displace persons or households, a Displacement Implementation Plan must be submitted to Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) prior to obligating or expending funds. Because of the nature of the proposed project, it is unlikely that any sort of relocation will be necessary. However, CDFA 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.

Mayor Kahn opened the floor to public comments and questions about the Residential Anti- Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan for The Community Kitchen and hearing none, he closed the Public Hearing at 7:42 PM.

A true record, attest:



Tessie Workman
City Clerk

**RESOLUTION - COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT
APPROVAL - COMMUNITY KITCHEN - RESOLUTION R-2026-03**

A memorandum was read from Jack Ahern, Associate Planner for the Southwest Region Planning Commission, recommending that the City Council adopt the attached Resolution [R-2026-03] for federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to the to the NH Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA); and further to adopt the Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan specific to this project. Resolution R-2026-03 read for the first time.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to suspend Section 27 of the Rules of Order to act on Resolution R-2026-03 was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt Resolution R-2026-03 was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

RESIGNATION - SARAH VEZZANI - PLANNING BOARD

A memorandum was read from Planner Megan Fortson, recommending the Council accept Sarah Vezzani's resignation from the Planning Board, with gratitude for her two years of service. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to accept the resignation with gratitude for service was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

**NOMINATIONS - BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE;
CONGREGATE LIVING AND SOCIAL SERVICES LICENSING BOARD; HUMAN
RIGHTS COMMITTEE; PLANNING BOARD; AND TRUSTEES OF TRUST FUNDS AND
CEMETERY TRUSTEES**

Mayor Kahn nominated the following individuals to City boards and committees:

To the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee: Jacob Robertson, nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board: Ian Matheson, nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Human Rights Committee: Jennifer Porschitz,

nominated to serve as an Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Planning Board: David Bergeron, nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Trustees of Trust Funds and Cemetery Trustees: Michelle Howard, re-appointed to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Heather Scheck, appointed to serve as an Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028.

Mayor Kahn tabled the nominations until the next regular meeting.

COMMUNICATION - VICKY MORTON - CONCERNS REGARDING CURRENT KEENE TAX RATE AND REQUEST FOR CREATION OF A CITIZEN'S BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A communication was received from Vicky Morton, expressing concern with the property tax rate and requesting the creation of a Citizens' Budget Advisory Committee to help explain the current situation and possibly offer creative solutions to reduce the current tax rate.

In response to the request to create a Budget Advisory Committee, Mayor Kahn explained that City staff would provide a public presentation at the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee meeting on February 26, 2026. That presentation would address some of the questions in Ms. Morton's letter, including: how the City's tax rate is established, how the municipal budget and Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) processes work, and how the public can participate in those processes. It would also include an overview of the one-page budget guide. The Mayor recalled public participation in the budget process having been pretty lean the previous year, so he called this pre-step an attempt to alert the community to the upcoming CIP consideration, followed by Budget consideration. This overview would precede those hearings and provide the public with an introduction and overview before getting into the specifics.

Councilor Filiault agreed with the Mayor. Councilor Filiault said there are budget hearings, and they are called the Finance, Organization and Personnel (FOP) Committee meetings. He said that every year he had been on the Council, it would be lucky if two or three people showed up to those meetings. Mayor Kahn said the public should please feel welcome to participate.

Councilor Haas thanked City Manager Elizabeth Ferland for responding in this fashion, providing an overall presentation of the Budget and the Budget process. Although there are plenty of FOP meetings that people can attend to learn the details, Councilor Haas said it would be pretty opaque to many people. So, he thought some kind of presentation along these lines would really serve a lot of people. He said the City does a great job with the CIP and the budget should get the same kind of exposure, so Councilor Haas saw this as good step in that direction. Mayor Kahn agreed that it would be good to provide that initial insight to the community.

Mayor Kahn accepted the communication as informational.

COMMUNICATION - THOMAS BURTON - REQUEST FOR INCREASE TO DISABLED VETERAN PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

A communication was received from Thomas Burton, requesting consideration for an increase to Keene's optional property tax credit for 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans, from the current \$4,000 to the statutory maximum of \$5,000 authorized under RSA 72:35. Mr. Burton notes in his communication that, effective July 13, 2025, the New Hampshire Legislature amended RSA 72:35 to increase the allowable optional credit for veterans with total and permanent service-connected disabilities. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee.

FOP REPORT - 2025 HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM AWARD - 2025 TACTICAL EQUIPMENT

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending 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. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne. The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

FOP REPORT - REALLOCATION OF FUNDS FROM THE WEST SIDE DOWNTOWN PARKING STRUCTURE PROJECT TO THE CITY HALL PARKING DECK MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending 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). A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne. The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

FOP REPORT - ENGINEERING SERVICES AGREEMENT FOR THE FY26 STORMWATER CHANNEL REHABILITATION PROJECT

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending 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. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

The Mayor said he looked at a Zoning Map and saw that Tannery Brook is near Black Brook. City Engineer Brian Ruoff confirmed.

The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

FOP REPORT - HOWARD STREET SALE RFP RECOMMENDATION

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending 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. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

Mayor Kahn agreed with Councilor Powers' description that this would be the City acting for the benefit of its Comprehensive Master Plan and goals for the City, so the Mayor called it a good step.

Councilor Williams acknowledged Councilor Lake for his work a few years prior, noticing that these parcels could potentially be found, assembled, and sold to someone who would build.

The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

City Manager Elizabeth Ferland began by following up on something the Council had discussed a few times: creating an online opportunity for people to volunteer. She explained the [Landing Page for Volunteer Opportunities](#), which soft launched on the City of Keene website thanks to Deputy City Manager, Rebecca Landry. The page hosts an online form to sign up to volunteer. At this time, opportunities included Green Up Keene, parks or trails beautification, landscaped area maintenance (e.g., roundabouts, rights-of-way, etc.), youth sports coaching, and a box for "other." This page will evolve and grow as more volunteer opportunities are identified. For instance, she imagined an effort around invasive plants. The City Manager called it a wonderful opportunity and thanked Councilor Tobin for initiating the idea.

Next, the City Manager explained a Brownfields Assessment Grant the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) was pursuing. The application requires a municipal sponsor, and the City would serve in that role. This arrangement would be similar to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) model with the Southwest Region Planning Commission, where the regional entity works with local nonprofits to apply for and administer grants, with the City or County serving as the municipal sponsor. Under the City Manager's existing authority, she is permitted to authorize grant applications. At this stage, the City's involvement would be limited strictly to sponsorship. If awarded, the anticipated administrative burden on City staff would be minimal, consisting primarily of participation in an Assessment Coalition led by MEDC and involvement in the site selection process. The potential benefit could be significant, with at least two properties in Keene that could ultimately benefit from Assessment funding. If successful, the City Manager would return to a future City Council meeting for authorization to accept the grant and to further define the City's role moving forward.

The City Manager also presented Councilor's with copies of the upcoming Capital Improvement Planning (CIP) schedule. During the February 26, 2026 Finance, Organization and Personnel (FOP) Committee, the Finance Director and City Assessor would explain how the City's tax rate is established, how the municipal Operating Budget and CIP process works, and how the public can participate. This session is intended to provide background information in advance of the formal CIP review, which begins at the following FOP meeting. The City Manager shared the 2026 CIP schedule:

CIP Kickoff – FOP Committee Meeting and Council Workshop

- **Date:** March 3
- **Location:** Heberton Hall
- **Time:** Council Workshop begins at 5:30 PM
 - Food available for Council, Planning Board members, and staff (coordinated by the Clerk's Office)
 - Presentations begin at 6:00 PM
- This meeting formally kicks off the CIP process. The format includes a round-robin session with project poster-board stations, followed by a PowerPoint presentation.

FOP Committee Special CIP Review Meeting

- **Date:** March 10
- **Time:** 5:30 PM
- At this special meeting, the FOP Committee conducts a detailed, section-by-section review of the CIP book.

FOP Committee Regular Meeting – Continued CIP Review

- **Date:** March 12
- The Committee continues reviewing the remaining sections of the CIP book during its regularly scheduled meeting.

City Council Public Hearing

- **Date:** March 19
- City Council holds a Public Hearing on the proposed CIP, offering an opportunity for public comments.

Final Adoption by City Council

- **Date:** April 2
- Final adoption of the CIP by the City Council has been scheduled.

The City Manager said the public is encouraged to attend these meetings, ask questions, and provide comments on proposed capital projects. Public participation is an important part of the City's long-term capital and fiscal planning process for large infrastructure projects; it is where the majority of the City's new dollars are spent.

The City Manager also reported that City staff, with support from Mayor Kahn, were working closely with the City's nonprofit partners—Southwestern Community Services (SCS), Hundred Nights, and the UCC Church—to open a winter warming shelter. Last year, Hundred Nights utilized its resource room for this purpose; however, for a variety of reasons, their Board voted not to do so this year. As a result, the City Manager said the City worked collaboratively with this group to address both immediate needs and long-term planning required for the community's cold-weather emergency response. In the near term, the City would be partnering with Hundred Nights and the UCC Church to support an overnight warming shelter, through a Memorandum of Understanding with the City's Human Services Budget funding the staffing necessary to operate the space. The goal was to open by January 20 and operate through March 31. Longer term, the City Manager said all partners agreed on the importance of continuing these discussions to move toward a more predictable and planned approach for the future. She thanked the City's nonprofit partners—especially the UCC Church—for once again stepping up to help, as well as the Mayor and City staff for their collaboration and thoughtful, quick approach to problem solving. The City hopes that other nonprofits and churches will also contribute (i.e., volunteers, food, or supplies). The shelter hours would be 9:00 PM to 7:00 AM.

City Attorney Amanda Palmeira introduced the new Deputy City Attorney, Brandon Latham, who came from a New Hampshire municipal law firm. The City Attorney appreciated having another municipal mind on board. Deputy City Attorney Latham also brought experience working with an internship through the City of Concord, as well as with the New Hampshire Municipal Association. City Attorney Palmeira said he brought all the great experience she was hoping for and she thanked Deputy City Attorney Latham for his support. Mayor Kahn congratulated them both.

ECC REPORT - ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY & RESILIENCY (C-PACER) PROGRAM

An Energy and Climate Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the City Council amend the City Code of Ordinances to include the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy & Resiliency or "C-PACER" Program as a voluntary funding mechanism for energy-efficient upgrades, building insulation, cost-effective and renewable energy, and water conservation measures for development projects in Keene. Mayor Kahn referred the recommendation to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

RESOLUTION - RELATING TO THE REALLOCATION OF UNSPENT BOND FUNDS FOR THE WWTP SERVICE WATER SYSTEM UPGRADE PROJECT - RESOLUTION R-2026-04

A memorandum was read from Assistant Public Works Director Aaron Costa, recommending Resolution R-2026-04 "Relating to the Reallocation of Unspent Bond Funds" be referred to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee for their consideration and a recommendation to the City Council. Mayor Kahn referred Resolution R-2026-04 to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee.

NON PUBLIC SESSION

Mayor Kahn introduced Abigail Ham, the new City Hall writer for the Keene Sentinel. He had appreciated her coverage, which he thought was helping the City fill positions on committees.

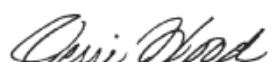
A motion by Councilor Greenwald to go into non-public session to discuss litigation pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(e), and legal matters pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(L) was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent. Community Development Director, Paul Andrus, was asked to remain in the room for the non-public session. The session began at 8:16 PM.

The public session reconvened at 8:58 PM. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to seal the minutes of the non-public session held this evening as divulgence of the information would render the proposed actions ineffective was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Workman was absent.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Kahn adjourned the meeting at 9:00 PM.

A true record, attest:



City Clerk