

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, February 19, 2026. The Honorable Mayor Jay V. Kahn called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Randy L. Filiault, Michele A. Chalice, Catherine I. Workman, 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. Councilor Chalice led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES FROM PRECEDING MEETING

Councilor Ellis pointed out an error with the spelling of Planner Megan Fortson's last name in the PLD minutes of February 11, 2026, and noted the same error within the January 26, 2026 Planning Board minutes. Mayor Kahn noted these corrections would be passed along as scrivener errors to the appropriate staff.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt the February 5, 2026 City Council meeting minutes as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Powers. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Kahn announced upcoming dates of interest in March 2026:

- March is Women's History Month and Care Workers Recognition Month
- Tuesday, March 17: St. Patrick's Day
- Thursday evening, March 19: Ramadan Ends

Next, the Mayor shared reminders for the City Council's schedule in March 2026:

- Tuesday, March 3, at 5:30 PM in Heberton Hall: City Council Workshop on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2027 through 2033. Councilors should arrive by 5:00 PM for a meal prior to the meeting.
- Tuesday, March 10, at 5:30 PM: A special meeting of the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee (FOP) to continue review of the proposed CIP. A meal will be served to Councilors prior to the meeting.
- Thursday, March 12 at 5:30 PM: The regularly scheduled FOP Committee meeting will start early for CIP review as well. A meal will be served to Councilors prior to the meeting.

CONFIRMATIONS - ASSESSORS BOARD; *AND* HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Mayor Kahn nominated Christine Houston to serve as a Regular Member of the Assessors Board, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. The Mayor also nominated Thomas M. White to serve as an Alternate Member of the Human Rights Committee, with a term to expire December 31, 2028.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to confirm the nominations was duly seconded by Councilor Powers. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

COMMUNICATION - FARMERS' MARKET OF KEENE - REQUEST FOR USE OF CITY PROPERTY - 2026 FARMER'S MARKET

A communication was received from Kati Woodard of the Keene Farmers' Market, requesting an annual license to operate the Keene Farmers' Market on Saturdays from April 25, 2026, through October 31, 2026, at their usual location in the Gilbo Avenue/Commercial Street Parking Lot. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

COMMUNICATION - COUNCILOR FAVOLISE - REQUEST FOR PRESENTATION OUTLINING THE ROLE OF CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS

A communication was received from Councilor Jacob Favolise, requesting that the City Manager prepare a presentation outlining the role of contractors and consultants in completing construction projects within the City. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee for discussion during their March 25, 2026, regular meeting.

COMMUNICATION - CAROLYN OGREN - REQUEST FOR REVIEW OF WAREHOUSE ZONING AS IT RELATES TO THE POTENTIAL HOUSING OF DETAINED INDIVIDUALS

A communication was received from Carolyn Ogren, asking what protective measures the Planning Board may have in place regarding warehouse zoning being utilized for the purpose of "housing" detained individuals, specifically mentioning the issue in Merrimack, New Hampshire, with Department of Homeland Security seeking a location to set up operations.

Mayor Kahn stated his intention to refer this communication to the Planning, Licenses and Development (PLD) Committee; unless any Councilor raised an objection, which he said might be based on a belief that the federal government has a supremacy right and therefore that this should be filed as informational. Conversely, he said Councilors may believe a discussion with PLD Committee limited to questions about the City's Zoning Ordinance may be appropriate, with the PLD Chair keeping the conversation focused on Keene and not drifting into questions related to other communities.

Councilor Filiault agreed with referring this to the PLD Committee, stating that he thought it was too important to accept as informational. He said the Committee would keep things in check.

Councilor Haas agreed with referring this to the PLD Committee as well, more on the basis that it is educational for everybody anytime there is a review of what is allowed and prohibited in the City's Zoning Ordinance. He agreed that the supremacy clause would rule in this instance and the Committee would not drift into that. Councilor Haas trusted that Chair Filiault would manage the discussion well. Councilor Haas supported looking at and understanding the code.

Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

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

A Planning, Licenses and Development Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the City Manager be directed to submit an Ordinance for first reading relating to establishing a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resiliency (C-PACER) District. A motion by Councilor Filiault to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Jones. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORTS - MARK REBILLARD/KEENE DOWNTOWN GROUP - REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY FUNDED EVENT STATUS - SERIES OF SMALL-SCALE FESTIVALS DURING DOWNTOWN CONSTRUCTION

The first Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommendation was read, unanimously recommending that any available unspent funds from the City's FY26 community events budget be used to help offset the cost of City services for the Keene Downtown Group for two small-scale festivals as part of the "Dig Into Keene" project, with event dates tentatively scheduled for April 4 and June 13, 2026. Costs over the above available funds will be the responsibility of the Keene Downtown Group. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

Councilor Chalice had expressed her thanks at the Finance, Organization and Personnel (FOP) Committee meeting. She wanted to thank the Keene Downtown Group again for the wonderful idea of these small-scale festivals and finding ways to bring people together in a playful manner, while doing their best to acknowledge these circumstances. Councilor Chalice could not speak highly enough about the Downtown Group's efforts.

Councilor Haas requested to be recused from these votes as a sitting member of the Keene Downtown Group Board. Mayor Kahn confirmed that if recused, Councilor Haas could not speak as a source of information and advocate. Hearing no objections from the Council, Mayor Kahn granted the recusal and Councilor Haas stepped away.

The motion to carry out the intent of the first FOP Committee recommendation carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Haas abstained.

A second Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommendation was read, unanimously recommending that the City Council suspend Resolution R-2012-19, the City Council Policy on Funding for Community Events to allow the City Manager to include funding in the proposed FY27 Community Events Budget for the Keene Downtown Group to conduct up to four small-scale festivals as part of the "Dig Into Keene" project, with event dates tentatively scheduled for July 25, September 12, October 10, and November 27, 2026, for consideration by the City Council during budget deliberations. Said funding not to exceed the \$10,000 threshold.

A motion by Councilor Powers to Suspend Resolution R-2012-19, to consider extending Community Event funding status to the proposed events scheduled in FY27, was duly seconded by Councilor Lake. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Haas abstained.

The following motion by Councilor Powers was duly seconded by Councilor Lake: to allow the City Manager to include funding in the proposed FY27 Community Events Budget for the Keene Downtown Group to conduct up to four small-scale festivals as part of the “Dig Into Keene” project, with event dates tentatively scheduled for July 25, September 12, October 10, and November 27, 2026, for consideration by the City Council during budget deliberations. Said funding not to exceed the \$10,000 threshold. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Haas abstained.

Councilor Haas returned to his seat.

FOP REPORT - MARK REBILLARD/KEENE DOWNTOWN GROUP - REQUEST FOR COMMUNITY FUNDED EVENT STATUS - KEENE 250TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION - JULY 4, 2026

Councilor Ellis asked to be recused because of her role Chairing the Monadnock 250 Committee. Hearing no objections from the Council, Mayor Kahn granted the recusal, and Councilor Ellis stepped away.

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the City Council suspend Resolution R-2012-19, the City Council Policy on Funding for Community Events to allow the City Manager to include funding in the proposed FY27 Community Events Budget for the Keene Downtown Group to conduct the Keene 250th Independence Celebration on July 4, 2026 for consideration by the City Council during budget deliberations. Said funding not to exceed the \$10,000 threshold.

Councilor Haas requested to be recused from these votes as a sitting member of the Keene Downtown Group Board. Hearing no objections from the Council, Mayor Kahn granted the recusal and Councilor Haas stepped away.

A motion by Councilor Powers to Suspend Resolution R-2012-19, to consider extending Community Event funding status to the proposed event scheduled in FY27 was duly seconded by Councilor Lake. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilors Haas and Ellis abstained.

A motion by Councilor Powers was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault to allow the City Manager to include funding in the proposed FY27 Community Events Budget for the Keene Downtown Group to conduct the Keene 250th Independence Celebration on July 4, 2026 for consideration by the City Council during budget deliberations. Said funding not to exceed the \$10,000 threshold.

Councilor Chalice wanted to express how impressed she was with the Keene Downtown Group, the extent of the event's organization, the details involved, and the many parties coming together. She said there was an amazing amount of work going into this and she was excited to see both events.

The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilors Haas and Ellis abstained.

Councilors Haas and Ellis returned to their seats.

FOP REPORT - ALLOCATION OF CASINO REVENUE DONATION TO FY27 CIP

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the City Council approve the allocation of the Revo Casino donation in the amount of \$13,788.35 to the FY27 Police Department CIP for the Exacom purchase. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

Councilor Greenwald said he does not think it is appropriate for the City to be expending or receiving money from an organization that is still coming to the City to go through Planning Board and inspections processes, etc. He called it a conflict of interest. Councilor Greenwald said he would vote against this. He said he is all for the City getting money from any source other than taxpayers, but he did not think this was appropriate.

Councilor Williams said he does not like casinos, so he would also be voting against this.

Councilor Favolise said he was hoping this maybe would not turn into a rehashing of the merits of the [casino] agreement like the Council had already discussed last time. He noted that this question came up around the conflict-of-interest piece. Councilor Favolise said that a state statute authorizes this, and it is not that the City is "going hat in hand to the casino and saying please give us \$13,000 for this project." He stated the requirement that if there are dates available, then those dates have to be held in case the host community wants to enter into this sort of agreement. So, Councilor Favolise said he would be voting to take \$13,000 off of what would otherwise be a property tax funded project. He hoped that the majority of his colleagues would do the same.

Councilor Haas noted that as he understood it, the City already agreed to accept this money, and this vote was just to say where it would go. He said voting against this would not change anything; the City would still be accepting the money, it would just not be directed to anything in particular. Councilor Haas agreed with the stated opinions that it is inappropriate for the City to accept money from a business it may be regulating. However, he said this is not like a tax that is general for everybody, which he said would be different. This is a specific fee the City is taking from the casino based on its success. Councilor Haas said he would vote to support the FOP Committee's recommendation but hoped that in the future, the City could re-examine whether to participate in this program.

Councilor Ellis clarified whether Councilor Haas was correct that this vote would only be for the allocation of the money. Mayor Kahn said that was correct.

The motion to carry out the intent of the FOP Committee report carried with 12 Councilors voting in favor and 3 Councilors voting in opposition. Councilors Williams, Ellis, and Greenwald voted in the minority.

FOP REPORT - EXECUTION OF A CHANGE ORDER FOR CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING SERVICES WITH GREENMAN PEDERSON INC. FOR ISLAND STREET 2026 RECONSTRUCTION

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 a change order for Construction Engineering Services with Greenman Pederson Inc. for 2026 construction as part of the Island Street Corridor Improvements Project. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Lake. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

FOP REPORT - COUNCILOR WORKMAN - REQUEST FOR REVIEW AND UPDATE OF 2019 INTER-AGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING INVOLVING LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the request for review and update of the 2019 Inter-Agency Memorandum of Understanding Involving Local Law Enforcement Partners be accepted as informational. Mayor Kahn filed the report as informational.

Councilor Workman extended her deep thanks and appreciation to the FOP Committee, City Attorney Amanda Palmeira, and especially Police Chief Steven Stewart for all having that discussion. Councilor Workman thought that it was important and the only pathway for the public to express those concerns. She hoped Chief Stewart's explanation and the full discussion helped to clarify a lot of things and to reduce some of those concerns. Councilor Workman expressed her appreciation again.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager, followed up on the questions and interest about the Downtown Infrastructure Project bidding process. She reported that the bids would be advertised on March 17, 2026, which includes allowing time for both the City and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services to review recent project changes. The bids are due on April 16, 2026. The Deputy City Manager said that hopefully the project would start soon thereafter.

REPORT - REALLOCATION OF UNSPENT FUNDS FOR THE GRIT CHAMBER DUCT INSULATION REPAIR PROJECT

A memorandum was read from Assistant Public Works Directors / Operations Manager Aaron Costa, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to reallocate unspent funds from the Wastewater Treatment Plant Air Compressor Replacement Project (32JW026A) and Wastewater Treatment Plant Laboratory Renovation Project (32JW008A) to the Wastewater Treatment Plant Grit Chamber Duct Insulation Repair Project (32JW006A).

A motion by Councilor Powers to suspend Section 26 of the City Council Rules of Order to act on this time sensitive matter was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

Councilor Powers explained this time-sensitive item: the City's opportunity to work parallel with a project happening already with the same contractor and with funding available within the City's budget for it. Councilor Powers noted that photos have been provided for the Council. He briefly explained that when a contractor was working on a project at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, it became obvious to them that a part of the ductwork would need to be cleaned in a specific fashion (i.e., more than scrubbing). Councilor Powers said this contractor was already there with the scaffold and equipment set up, and for a reasonable price this work could be done, but it was not listed in this particular project. This motion would move unspent funds (no new money) from the Wastewater Treatment Plant Air Compressor Replacement and the Wastewater Treatment Plant Laboratory Renovation projects—both completed—to the Wastewater Treatment Plant Grit Chamber Duct Insulation Repair Project. Councilor Powers called it a small amount of money, just enough to help with this project.

A motion by Councilor Powers was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault: that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to reallocate unspent funds from the Wastewater Treatment Plant Air Compressor Replacement Project (32JW026A) and Wastewater Treatment Plant Laboratory Renovation Project (32JW008A) to the Wastewater Treatment Plant Grit Chamber Duct Insulation Repair Project (32JW006A). The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ORDINANCE FOR SECOND READING - RELATING TO UPDATE OF CHAPTER 18 PROPERTY AND HOUSING STANDARDS CODE - ORDINANCE O-2025-36-B

A Planning, Licenses and Development Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the adoption of Ordinance O-2025-36-B. Mayor Kahn filed the report. Ordinance O-2025-36-B, Relating to Update of Chapter 18 Property and Housing Standards Code, was read for a second time. A motion by Councilor Filiault to adopt Ordinance O-2025-36-B was duly seconded by Councilor Jones. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ORDINANCE FOR SECOND READING - RELATING TO APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR ZONING APPLICATIONS AND THE DEFINITION OF PRIMARY ENTRANCE - ORDINANCE O-2025-39

A Planning, Licenses and Development Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the adoption of Ordinance O-2025-39, with an effective date of March 13, 2026. Mayor Kahn filed the report. Ordinance O-2025-39, Relating to Application Procedures for Zoning Applications and the Definition of Primary Entrance, was read for a second time. A motion by Councilor Filiault to adopt Ordinance O-2025-39, with an effective date of March 13, 2026, was duly seconded by Councilor Jones.

Mayor Kahn said the effective date was to allow adequate time for departments to finalize the application procedures.

The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ORDINANCE FOR SECOND READING - RELATING TO FINES FOR NUISANCE, MENACE AND VICIOUS DOG OFFENSES - ORDINANCE O-2026-01

A Planning, Licenses and Development Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the adoption of Ordinance O-2026-01. Mayor Kahn filed the report. Ordinance O-2026-01 Relating to Fines for Nuisance, Menace and Vicious Dog Offenses was read a second time. A motion by Councilor Filiault to adopt Ordinance O-2026-01 was duly seconded by Councilor Jones.

The Mayor asked if Councilor Williams had comments. Councilor Williams said he thinks it is interesting that all the dog items come through the Planning, Licenses and Development (PLD) Committee. Mayor Kahn said, as noted during the PLD hearing, there are reasons for the legislature to take a look at this again, but this is what state law provides for the time being.

The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

Mayor Kahn appreciated the work of Councilor Williams and Representative Jodi Newell, two people who saw this through from the beginning to end.

RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF PLANNED FUNDS FOR ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE ROBIN HOOD PARK IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT - RESOLUTION R-2026-05

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2026-05. Mayor Kahn filed the report. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2026-05 was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

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Councilor Williams said that on Keene's east side, he heard a lot from his constituents about needing to save the pool. So, he was very glad the City was doing this project.

Mayor Kahn noted that grant funds associated with this would push the timeline in order to make good use of those funds.

The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR RECYCLING EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT - RESOLUTION R-2026-06

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2026-06. Mayor Kahn filed the report. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2026-06 was duly seconded by Councilor Lake. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

RELATING TO SERVICE CONNECTED TOTAL DISABILITY VETERAN TAX CREDIT - RESOLUTION R-2026-07

A memorandum was read from City Assessor Dan Langille, recommending that Resolution R-2026-07 be referred to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee. Mayor Kahn recalled that this came up at the previous City Council meeting, with a request for a Resolution to be prepared, which was now before the Council. The Mayor referred Resolution R-2026-07 to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Kahn adjourned the meeting at 7:55 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk