

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, March 5, 2026. The Honorable Mayor Jay V. Kahn called the meeting to order at 7:01 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 Haas led the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### MINUTES FROM PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt the February 19, 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 began by honoring individuals celebrating birthdays in March 2026: Councilors Filiault, Chadbourne, and Favolise.

The Mayor also introduced the new Keene Sentinel Reporter covering Keene and Cheshire County governments, Mason Rouser, who is originally from Austin, Texas.

Mayor Kahn announced upcoming dates of interest in March 2026:

- March is both Women's History Month and Care Workers Recognition Month.
- Sunday, March 8: International Women's Day
- Monday, March 9 at 10:00 AM: Keene Serenity Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. The Mayor encouraged Councilors to attend in the CVS plaza next to US Cellular; previously held at Monadnock Peer Support, where Mayor Kahn mentioned the significant renovation over the prior six months, adding an elevator and building out some of the basement area. He encouraged Councilors to see that as well.
- Tuesday, March 10: School Board Election. All wards vote at Keene Parks and Recreation Center on Washington Street. Polls open at 7:30 AM.
- Sunday, March 15 at 1:30 PM: Presentation of *Freedom's Unfinished Journey: Selma, Jonathan Daniels, and the Fight for Voting Rights* at Saint James Episcopal Church.
- Tuesday, March 17: St. Patrick's Day
- Thursday evening, March 19: Ramadan Ends

Mayor Kahn recognized Councilor Favolise, who announced that he would be serving on the New Hampshire Municipal Association's (NHMA) Governance and Administration policy guiding committee. It would kick off April 3, 2026, with meetings continuing on Fridays through April and May 2026. Councilor Favolise explained that this is the first step in NHMA's policy priority setting process for the upcoming legislative session that begins next year (in 2027). The Councilor would be representing Keene in the process. The Council congratulated Councilor Favolise and Mayor Kahn noted that it is good to have a Keene City Councilor represented at the NHMA.

Next, the Mayor thanked those Councilors who attended the Capital Improvement Planning Workshop on March 3, 2026. Mayor Kahn said the conversation and review of the proposed CIP would continue with a Special Meeting of the Finance, Organization and Personnel (FOP) Committee on March 10, 2026 at 5:30 PM. The regular FOP Committee meeting on March 12, 2026 would also start early at 5:30 PM for CIP review. Meals would be served to Councilors before both meetings.

Lastly, Mayor Kahn encouraged any group interested in participating in the Monadnock 250th Independence Day Parade and festivities to register at the event website [monadnock250.com](http://monadnock250.com). Councilor Ellis is Chairing the event. Organizations, school groups, and nonprofit businesses throughout the Monadnock Region were invited to register for the Parade anytime between this date and May 2026. The Mayor asked everyone to sign up and spread the word.

#### PUBLIC HEARING - O-2025-40: RELATING TO SETBACK EXCEPTIONS, ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS, AND PARKING REGULATIONS

Mayor Kahn opened the Public Hearing at 7:11 PM and the City Clerk read the Notice of Hearing. The Mayor welcomed City Senior Planner Mari Brunner and Planner, Megan Fortson.

Ms. Fortson called Ordinance O-2025-40 a sort of zoning clean-up Ordinance, which was first introduced to the Council on December 18, 2025. Ms. Fortson summarized the five proposed changes. First, add “retaining walls” to the list of structures that are exempt from Setback Requirements. Second, update the City’s Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Regulations to comply with the updated New Hampshire law, removing the requirements that: (1) interior doors be installed between attached units, and that (2) units must have access to City water and sewer. Third, increase the amount of onsite parking that can be reduced through an administrative zoning process from 10% to 25%. Fourth, update the remote parking requirements to prohibit creation of remote parking spaces on lots that are primarily residential uses. Fifth, update the parking specifications outlined in Table 9-3 of the Land Development Code (LDC) to specify that parallel parking spaces are allowed in the City of Keene and to establish widths of adjacent driving aisles for one- and two-way traffic.

Ms. Fortson explained that the intent of these changes would be to (1) reduce the number of variances sought for setback issues related to retaining walls and (2) make parking a bit easier for people who can show there is no need for as many spaces dictated under the LDC. Additionally, ADU Regulations must be updated to comply with new state law. Ms. Fortson referred to the Joint Planning Board-Planning, Licenses and Development (PB-PLD) Committee Workshop for the Ordinance on January 12, 2026, when there were no public comments. She reported that the PB-PLD Committee Members had some confusion related to what a “retaining wall” really is and whether it is more aesthetic or structural. There were also some questions related to the parking analysis and potentially removing the requirement for administrative reductions altogether. However, Ms. Fortson said that by the end of the meeting, the Committee voted to keep the wording of the Ordinance as proposed. The Planning Board determined that the proposal was consistent with the 2025 Keene Master Plan and the PLD Committee recommended the Mayor set this Public Hearing. Ms. Brunner added that this Ordinance is really trying to make it easier for residents and people who want to do business in Keene. She said they

may seem like nitpicky changes, but they are meant to make the LDC clearer and easier for people to use.

Councilor Chalice said that as a person who has learned or tried to learn how to deal with all of these codes, she really appreciated City staff taking the time to attend to these little details. She said the public finds it incredibly challenging. So, she said having things go a little smoother is best for everyone.

Councilor Favolise asked about what the process looks like when somebody is applying for parking reduction administratively. He knew what some of the questions were at the Zoning Board level and asked whether those would be the same sorts of questions an administrator is asking, or whether that process would look a little different in terms of the fact-finding. Ms. Brunner replied that it is pretty similar. She explained the difference that at this time in the LDC, a major parking reduction would require a Special Exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment; this includes a parking study conducted by a traffic engineer or another professional who is licensed in the State of New Hampshire, which Ms. Brunner said can be quite expensive. However, with the administrative reduction, the Zoning Administrator would accept a memo or brief analysis by a traffic engineer in lieu of a full study. Ms. Brunner called that the biggest difference for applicants from their perspective. In the LDC, there is a list of criteria that the Zoning Administrator has to consider, and they must find that the applicant meets at least one of those criteria. Ms. Brunner said that it gives the Zoning Administrator more flexibility when there are really common-sense situations (e.g., cars are not allowed or there are other criteria/circumstances making it logical not to require so many parking spaces).

Councilor Williams asked for a brief explanation of the proposed changes to the ADU Regulations. Ms. Brunner explained that the State of New Hampshire sets rules for ADUs that the City must follow. Previously, the state required the City to require an interior door between the main unit and the accessory unit, and now the state requires the City not to require that. So, the City would be striking that requirement, which in Ms. Brunner's opinion was a really good thing. She noted that it was adding a lot of unnecessary cost to ADUs because the door would have to be fire-rated to accompany the fire-rated wall in-between the units. Ms. Brunner explained the other proposed change for ADUs with respect to utilities. The way it was written previously, it made it sound like the ADU had to be connected to City water or sewer even if located in a district without access to City water or sewer. Ms. Brunner explained that this is already covered under other aspects of the LDC. For instance, if located in the Low Density District, connection to City water and sewer is required already, so she said it was duplicative and also confusing. Thus, that portion was stricken as well.

Councilor Haas referred to page 25 of the City Council's March 5, 2026 Agenda packet on the Ordinance O-2025-40, where these proposed changes were reflected in the LDC. He thought that if the proposal was to increase the amount of parking reduction allowed to 25%, then it should also be reflected in the paragraph under "Section 9.2.7. Reduction of Required Parking, C. Major Reduction Request, 1.," as shown on page 25 of the Agenda. Ms. Brunner reviewed the section and agreed that it should be updated in the other paragraph as a scrivener error. Mayor Kahn said the proposed change occurred in one paragraph and not another and Councilor Haas agreed.

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Councilor Jones pointed out that the shortened definition of a *retaining wall* is “actually retaining something.” He said that if the wall is built for aesthetics, then it is no longer a retaining wall. Ms. Fortson said that is correct.

Mayor Kahn opened the Hearing to public comments and there being none, the Mayor closed the Public Hearing at 7:23 PM. Written comments would be accepted up until 1:00 PM on Tuesday, March 10, 2026.

A true record, attest:   
City Clerk

**NOMINATIONS - AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE; AND BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Mayor Kahn nominated Sally Rinehart to serve as an Alternate Member of the Airport Development and Marketing Committee, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. The Mayor also nominated David Mast to serve as an Alternate Member of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. Mayor Kahn tabled the nominations until the next regular City Council meeting.

**COMMUNICATION - TERRY BISHOP - CONCERNS WITH PARKING ON MARLBORO STREET AND ENFORCEMENT MEASURES**

A communication was received from Terry Bishop, expressing concern about parking on Marlboro Street and requesting to discuss solutions related to parking enforcement along this gateway corridor. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

Councilor Greenwald noted that the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee only meets once monthly and the issue in question had been ongoing for years. He hoped that City staff could do a little homework before the actual meeting and come up with solutions for the Committee to choose from, so the Committee could act on it at the next meeting instead of pushing it down the line to the April or July meetings. City Manager Elizabeth Ferland stated that staff would certainly do their best, but she did not know what concerns the petitioner would express at the meeting related to parking and parking enforcement. The City Manager understood that Mr. Bishop was not in support of some solutions the City proposed in the past. So, she said City staff would be at the meeting with comments, but the City Manager was unsure they would be quite ready to offer the Committee a recommendation. It would depend on how the conversation goes.

**COMMUNICATION - MARK REBILLARD / KEENE DOWNTOWN GROUP - REQUEST TO USE CITY PROPERTY - MONADNOCK 250TH INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION - JULY 4, 2026**

A communication was received from Mark Rebillard and the Keene Downtown Group, requesting a license to conduct the Monadnock 250th Independence Day Celebration in

Downtown Keene on July 4, 2026. The event will include a parade, sidewalk sales, and family-friendly activities. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

#### FOP REPORT - PRESENTATION - CITY BUDGETING / CAPITAL PLANNING / PROPERTY TAX RATE OVERVIEW

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending acceptance of the presentation on the City Budgeting / Capital Planning / Property Tax Rate Overview as informational. Mayor Kahn filed the report as informational.

Mayor Kahn thanked City departments and the City Manager for organizing this presentation. The Mayor recalled that the City Council received a letter from a constituent who wanted more visibility about how the City's tax rate is set. Mayor Kahn thought this presentation explained both the expense side, how budgeting takes place, as well as how the tax rate is set. He said it also allowed for some discussion. He thought the meeting minutes provided a good overview of what people could expect of the City's tax rate in the coming year, while the City is going through property tax reassessment. The Mayor called it a good presentation and thanked the City Manager for organizing it.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller noted that she watched the meeting/presentation from home. She pointed out that she would not have understood a lot of the questions asked or what was being discussed if she were not a part of the City government. She thought the information as a whole was incredibly helpful and in depth, but said some things were quickly glossed over because there are people who work in those fields and are entrenched in them every day, so they understand. She said it is important to think about whether someone would understand if they do not work that job. Councilor Ruttle-Miller appreciated the follow-up questions, which recognized that not everyone might have understood the implications of what was stated, indicating that follow-up was needed. She thought it was great that the presentation led to more conversation, which she called really helpful, so she hoped people felt good about that and she thanked everyone.

Mayor Kahn noted that the last comment and discussion was about downshifting of costs and the pressure it is putting on the local property tax rate—not only in the City, but at the School District and the County levels. He thought the City Manager was involved in some conversations that were occurring, which could provide that kind of information in conjunction with the other taxing entities. The Mayor said that would provide more transparency as well.

Councilor Haas asked for this presentation to be posted to the City Assessor's webpage to give it more publicity. The City Manager said yes, except they were thinking about placing it on the Finance Department webpage along with the presentation from the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee meeting and the Capital Planning Workshop presentation.

#### FOP REPORT - PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES AGREEMENT WITH CEDARCREST

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the City Manager be authorized to negotiate and execute a Payment In Lieu of Taxes agreement

with Cedarcrest Inc. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

Councilor Powers thought all of these agreements were for 10 years. The City Manager said no, not all of them are 10 years. This one was proposed as 10 years and she spoke with the Fire Department about a potential plan to phase in the cost of these Class A uniforms, something that the City would currently be unable to fund in its budget.

The motion to carry out the intent of the FOP Committee report carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

#### CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

City Manager Elizabeth Ferland reported another winter weather parking ban on the evening of this meeting. She remarked on how much snow the City had received this season. No on-street parking allowed would last from 11:00 PM on Thursday, March 5, 2026, until 7:00 AM on Friday, March 6, 2026. Anyone in need of overnight parking was directed to use the Elm Street or Gilbo Avenue municipal parking lots. Looking ahead, the City Manager noted that the temperatures were expected to rise into the 50s and potentially 60s during the upcoming week. So, she said to expect snow melt, and noted that City staff would be on the lookout for any sorts of issues that may bring.

The City Manager also provided an update on the City's winter operations budget. She noted that this cost center was 79% expended as of this date. The overtime for this cost center was \$43,000 over budget at this time. However, City Manager Ferland reported good news that overall, the Public Works Department wage lines would be able to absorb this overage. She also reported that the City's Salt Shed was still mostly full at this time, so things would be in good shape even in the case of a few more storms, which the City Manager called good news.

Councilor Chalice reminded everyone that this amount of snow has the ability to feed all of the plants and trees in the local forests. She noted that Keene had been in drought circumstances off and on for an extended period. So, while she knew the snow conditions were rough, she asked everyone to keep in their minds the notion of this moisture percolating down for the City's groundwater as well. Councilor Chalice said the snow is really much needed and she was so grateful for it. The City Manager said that it was a really good point because it is also helpful to fill up the City's wells.

The City Manager mentioned that Councilor Ruttle-Miller provided a great reminder about trying to always step outside of our roles, such as not relying on acronyms the public might not understand. She thought that City Assessor Dan Langille and Finance Director Kari Chamberlain did well during the aforementioned City Budgeting / Capital Planning / Property Tax Rate Overview. The City Manager enjoyed Mr. Langille's spreadsheet and the ability to plug different numbers in to see the outcome for the City's assessment and budget. She found it helpful and said City staff were discussing how to publish an online version that the public could use themselves. City Manager Ferland said it was a great reminder about getting outside of our own roles and thinking about how someone might understand what we are saying.

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Councilor Workman acknowledged the Public Works Department crews, who she saw out filling potholes earlier on the day of this meeting. She reminded the public about the See-Click-Fix app that they can use to report issues they see around the City. She had just used it herself to report several potholes and said they were fixed immediately. Councilor Workman reminded the public that social media is great, but rather than reporting something on social media when they see it, they could also report it through the City's platforms, such as the See-Click-Fix app. Mayor Kahn added that people could go to the City's website at KeeneNH.gov and sign up for City notifications. Councilor Workman said you can get the See-Click-Fix app on your phone.

ORDINANCE FOR FIRST READING - RELATING TO UPDATES TO SECTION 94-321, "STOP SIGNS" IN THE CITY CODE - ORDINANCE O-2026-03

A memorandum was read from City Engineer Don Lussier, recommending that Ordinance O-2026-03 be referred to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee for review and recommendation to the City Council. Mayor Kahn referred Ordinance O-2026-03 to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

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

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2026-07, with an effective date as of April 1, 2026. Mayor Kahn filed the report.

Councilor Roberts asked for continued recusal on this matter. Hearing no objections from the Council, Mayor Kahn granted recusal.

A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2026-07, with an effective date of April 1, 2026, was duly seconded by Councilor Lake. The motion carried unanimously with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Roberts abstained.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Kahn adjourned the meeting at 7:41 PM.

A true record, attest:



City Clerk