

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, May 7, 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 (arrived at 7:05 PM), Edward J. Haas, Laura E. Ruttle-Miller, Molly V. Ellis, and Thomas F. Powers were present. Mayor Kahn recognized that Councilor Mitchell H. Greenwald requested to participate remotely due to family travel; he was participating alone at his location. Hearing no objections from the Council, Mayor Kahn granted the remote participation. Councilor Williams led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt the April 16, 2026 meeting minutes as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Kahn announced upcoming dates of interest in May 2026:

- May 3, 2026–May 9, 2026: Small Business Week
 - The Mayor noted how vital small businesses are to the community and thanked them for their persistence and the vibrancy they contribute to the community.
- May 4, 2026–May 8, 2026: Teacher Appreciation Week
 - Mayor Kahn noted appreciation for Councilor Tobin and all teachers in the schools, charter schools, and private schools in the region for what they do to enrich the lives of students.
- May 6, 2026–May 12, 2026: Nurse Appreciation Week, so the Mayor said to thank a nurse for their dedication to the profession.
- May 9, 2026 at 1:00 PM: Keene State College Commencement Ceremony
 - This year the College would be honoring Senator Maggie Hassan and the past president of Keene State College, Melinda Treadwell. The Mayor encouraged everyone to go down and congratulate the Keene State College graduates of 2026. He said some had observed the remarkable student work over the past several weeks and that the Mayor was very impressed (in his 10 years since departing the College on a regular basis) with the kind of learning and practical applications the faculty were arranging for the students, which align with community businesses, giving the students some expertise and opening possibilities for their professions, communication skills, and critical thinking.
 - Launch of Citizens for Keene State College at <https://www.citizensforkeenestatecollege.com>
 - The Mayor encouraged visiting the website and signing up for announcements on how to participate and advocate on behalf of the College, which plays an important role in the City.
- May 10, 2026: The Mayor wished all a Happy Mother's Day
- May 10, 2026–May 16, 2026: National Law Enforcement Week
- May 15, 2026–May 17, 2026: The Thing in the Spring Festival at NOVA Arts

05/07/2026

- See their website for programming at <https://www.novaarts.org>
- May 25, 2026: Memorial Day Parade
 - Mayor Kahn said he spoke with Rob Campbell of the VFW to ensure everything was arranged for the celebration. Councilors are invited to march in the parade and should form on Gilbo Avenue at 9:45 AM.

Mayor Kahn announced that he met with the Mayor's Youth Council. Many of the students were approaching graduation but engaging with their mentors for a variety of programs that he encouraged Councilors to attend in May and June 2026:

- May 15, 2026–May 16, 2026: Keene High School Drama Club spring production
- May 19, 2026: Keene High Jazz Band and Orchestra, and Keene High School Band concerts
- May 30, 2026–May 31, 2026: MoCo presenting its spring show at The Colonial Theatre
- June 13, 2026: Students are a part of *The Marriage of Figaro* opera production at Peterborough Town Hall

The Mayor congratulated Councilor Laura Ruttle-Miller on receiving a 2026 Trendsetter award. He also congratulated Councilor Laura Tobin in successfully teaching and supporting Keene State College students with their portfolio review related to sustainable product design.

PROCLAMATION – NATIONAL KIDS TO PARKS DAY

Mayor Kahn welcomed Director of Parks and Recreation, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey. Mayor Kahn read into the record and presented Ms. Fisk-Hennessey with a Proclamation declaring May 16, 2026 as Kids to Parks Day in the City of Keene and encouraged all residents to take part in this day by exploring and enjoying the local parks and natural areas.

Director Fisk-Hennessey said the City would be welcoming all families and the community to Fuller Park, which is right in front of the Recreation Center, from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Saturday, May 16, 2026 for a lot of lawn games.

PROCLAMATION – NATIONAL BIKE MONTH

Mayor Kahn welcomed Dwight Fischer, Chair of the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC). Mayor Kahn read into the record and presented Mr. Fischer with a Proclamation declaring May 2026 as Bike Month (including the May 16, 2026 as Bike Day) in Keene, and encouraged all residents to celebrate the community's commitment to active transportation by choosing to walk or bike to work, school, local businesses, parks, and throughout their neighborhoods when possible.

Mr. Fischer said the BPPAC Committee of volunteers is very strong right now and building on the work of past volunteers, and working with partners like Pathways for Keene and the Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative. The BPPAC is also working with a consultant for its master plan update, so he referred anyone with opinions, ideas, suggestions on the bicycle network of trails and bike lanes in and around the city, to please visit the BPPAC website and use the form to submit feedback: <https://keenenh.gov/bicycle-pedestrian-path-advisory->

committee/bike-ped-plan/. He said the Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan Committee needs as much information as possible. He noted Keene offers a healthy and economical alternative to driving, but when the cost of gas goes up, the number of bicyclists goes up. So, he asked everyone to be cautious in traffic and said there would likely be more trail use. He said drivers need to be aware and cyclists need to obey rules. Mr. Fischer said this was a Proclamation they were all happy with. The BPPAC Committee looked forward to taking the Mayor for a bike ride on May 16, 2026.

PROCLAMATION - MUNICIPAL CLERKS WEEK

Mayor Kahn welcomed City Clerk Terri Hood, Deputy City Clerk, Kathleen Richards, and Clerk's Administrative Assistant, Heather Fitz-Simon. Mayor Kahn read into the record and presented the City Clerk with a Proclamation recognizing the week of May 3, 2026 through May 9, 2026, as Municipal Clerks Week, joining the other 234 New Hampshire communities and others across the globe in recognition. The Mayor further extended appreciation to Keene's City Clerk, Terri Hood, and her dedicated staff for their exemplary service to the Keene community.

The City Clerk thanked everyone, noting that she feels very supported in this role, which she said is definitely a calling. She has learned, the more she has performed the role, that it becomes more important to her to uphold all the values that come with the position, which is such a vital role. She said it is a calling, which is occurring in every community behind the scenes that not everybody knows about, but their Clerk is there for them every day. The City Clerk said she has a wonderful staff, and she could not do it without them. She thanked the Mayor for this honor.

NOMINATION

Mayor Kahn nominated Karl Sandy to serve as an Alternate member on the Heritage Commission, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. The Mayor tabled the nomination until the next regular meeting.

COMMUNICATION - REQUEST FOR ROAD CLOSURE OF SUMMIT ROAD FOR THE OTTER ROMP YOUTH TRIATHLON RACE - JUNE 7, 2026

A communication was received from Kelly Fleurette, requesting the closure of Summit Road on Sunday, June 7, 2026, from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM to conduct the annual Otter Romp Youth Triathlon Race. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

COMMUNICATION - TERRI O'RORKE - REQUEST TO ADDRESS NUISANCE DOG BARKING DURING DAYTIME HOURS

A communication was received from Terri O'Rorke, requesting the City Council consider instituting regulations allowing the fining of dog owners whose dogs create a disturbance in neighborhoods due to excessive barking during daytime hours. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.

COMMUNICATION - COUNCILOR JONES - DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION ADDRESSING THE BURDEN ON LOCAL PROPERTY TAXPAYERS

A communication was received from Councilor Philip Jones, requesting the City Council consider adopting a Resolution that would be sent to the Governor, State Senate, House of Representatives, and Executive Council communicating the City of Keene's opposition to the downshifting of costs to local taxpayers. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee meeting on May 14, 2026.

Mayor Kahn thanked Councilor Jones for bringing this forward, particularly in light of the forum held the prior evening regarding downshifting of costs.

COMMUNICATION - BLACK CLOUD BREWING CO. - REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO SERVE ALCOHOL - SIDEWALK CAFÉ

A communication was received from Thomas DuFault, owner of Black Cloud Brewing Co., seeking permission from the City Council for the service of alcohol on City right-of-way in front of their establishment located at 100 Main Street in conjunction with their application for a Sidewalk Cafe. The application referenced in the petitioner's letter is on file with the City Clerk for processing. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

COMMUNICATION - COUNCILORS WILLIAMS, RUTTLE-MILLER, AND WORKMAN - IMPLEMENTATION OF 2025 COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN - HOUSING INITIATIVES

A communication was received from Councilors Williams, Ruttle-Miller, and Workman, urging the City Council to review and take action on the implementing recommendations identified in the 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan, beginning with housing-related initiatives. These include reviewing the City's permitting and approval process, developing a catalog of pre-approved designs for new housing units and ADUs, and identifying neighborhoods that could be rezoned to develop nodes of mixed-use activity. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Joint Planning Board and Planning, Licenses and Development Committee meeting on June 8, 2026.

MSFI REPORTS - CONCERNS WITH PARKING ON MARLBORO STREET AND ENFORCEMENT MEASURES; CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE PROPOSED PARKING LOT AT THE SKATE PARK; REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDMENT TO ALLOW LEASHED DOGS IN WOODLAND CEMETERY; 2026 CONSTRUCTION SEASON UPDATE; AND DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATE

The first Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the communication Concerns with Parking on Marlboro Street and Enforcement Measures be accepted as informational. A second Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the communications relating to concerns and recommendations regarding the proposed parking lot at

the skatepark be accepted as informational. A third Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the request for consideration of an Ordinance amendment to allow leashed dogs in Woodland Cemetery be accepted as informational. A fourth Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the 2026 Construction Season Update be accepted as informational. A fifth Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the Downtown Infrastructure Project Update as informational. Mayor Kahn accepted the five reports as informational.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

Elizabeth Ferland, The City Manager, reported that on May 6, 2026, many attended a town hall discussion on state downshifting. Downshifting is the transfer of financial responsibility for public services from the state to local governments (through reduction of state aid, unfunded mandates, and cost shifts), which results in increased pressure on local property taxes. There were approximately 100 people in attendance, and Cheshire County recorded the session, which would be shared as soon as possible. The City Manager said she recognized Senator Fenton at the town hall for helping organize and facilitate the discussion, but what many people may not know is that the idea for the event actually originated with Mayor Kahn. After hearing questions and concerns from residents about state funding, the Mayor reached out to Senator Fenton, who then helped move the idea forward and coordinated the session. The City Manager wanted to recognize the Mayor's leadership and quiet work behind the scenes. City Manager Ferland thought the discussion turned into a thoughtful and educational opportunity for both residents and local officials; she thought more time would have been useful. She tried to highlight the highest dollar amounts that impact the City but thought there could have been more discussion on some of the formulas that affect school funding and funding related to nursing homes. She said there was a stack of questions (on index cards) and feedback that she will share with the County, School, and Mayor at Senator Fenton's request. There may still be a way to provide answers. The City Manager always appreciates having Margaret Burns, the Executive Director of New Hampshire Municipal Association, present; she has a lot of history and knowledge from working in Concord every day and it was great to have her explain things. City Manager Ferland recalled mentioning to the Council that she would be submitting a policy proposal for state aid for school funding and was hoping to build some traction at NHMA but it did not make it out of the review committee; she did not think the issue was dead. She spoke with Ms. Burns, who said Keene is not the only municipality bringing this up, so it is a very important topic. The City would have to determine how to navigate the issue because it is not really municipal, it is the school, but it is impacting the City dramatically. The City is the last to set its budget, after the County and School. The City Manager thanked the Mayor again for starting a great conversation that would continue.

Next, the City Manager reported on the Proposed FY27 Budget, which Councilors received in their mailboxes on Friday, May 1, 2026. Tonight, she provided them with the Executive Summary and Manager's Comments related to the Budget. The Budget is available online on the Finance Department webpage, and she would post these comments there as well. The City Manager met with the City's Communications team about how to get the community engaged

with the Budget, specifically the FOP meetings. So, they discussed ways to develop excitement around those topics, and the Council should see additional work around that to grab attention.

City Manager Ferland reported that the proposed FY27 General Fund Operating Budget totals approximately \$57 million and remains within the City's Fiscal Policy limits, coming in roughly \$685,000 below the allowable limit. This is because annually, the City Manager starts with the Fiscal Policy before the tax rate calculation, and they adjust as best as possible. The budget maintains core municipal services, supports Council priorities, and continues targeted investments in infrastructure and public safety.

The City's portion of the tax rate is projected to increase by 6.7%. The primary driver of the Budget increase is personnel-related costs, particularly contractual obligations associated with the City's six collective bargaining agreements, which represent the majority of the workforce. Additional pressures include utilities, insurance, maintenance, professional services, and the continued transition to cloud-based technology systems (an expensive transition this year).

The City Manager communicated that this is a service organization and the City's Budget is based around the services that it provides. While there are projects and infrastructure to maintain, the primary driver of the Budget is always wages. The difficult conversation comes when there is a conversation about whether or not to have a service. She said the only meaningful way to make a difference in this Budget is to determine whether the City no longer wants to provide a service. She said this is a service organization and it can be difficult in the community to change services. So, she said looking back year-after-year in the Budget, the primary driver is wages driven around services. The other thing that drives the Budget is projects, such as the Pat Russell Park project and other capital projects, which have consequences beyond the actual funding of the projects (i.e., maintenance). The City Manager tries to talk about that in the Capital Plan and when thinking about the future.

The City Manager said the Budget also reflects continued investment in public safety. Since FY24, the Fire Department has added eight firefighter positions over two budget cycles to support operation of a third ambulance and maintain service levels as emergency call volume has increased. During that same timeframe, the City also added a second Fire Prevention Officer (added help with inspections), a second Deputy Fire Chief position, and an additional part-time administrative position. Collectively, Fire Department wages have increased by approximately \$1.4 million since FY24. She said that was reflected in this Budget due to the time to add personnel, recruit, and add it to the Budget. So, the Council was seeing the effects of contract changes and needs of fire and ambulance services. Because the Department is currently staffed at the minimum number required to operate the third ambulance, the City continues to experience significant overtime costs to cover vacations, sick leave, workers compensation absences, and other staffing gaps. A proposal currently under construction—but not included in this budget—would add four additional firefighters, one per shift, to move staffing above the minimum level on each shift. Councilors could expect additional discussion on this topic in the coming months. The City Manager called it significant, and it would not be cost saving. However, it makes sense because right now every time someone is out, the City is covering it with an overtime shift, which the City Manager called bad business. There was no way they

would have the proposal ready for this Budget, but she had two Councilors working on a special Committee for this purpose and to bridge this gap.

To help stabilize the tax rate and support capital investments, City Manager Ferland said the proposed Budget strategically utilizes fund balance and includes more than \$9.3 million in grant funding for capital projects. Departments continue to be very successful in leveraging outside funding to reduce impacts on local taxpayers. She said that was reflected in grant funding and creativity. She thought about staff creatively seeking grant funding for the Skate Park. In the end, the Council can do something different, but the departments are tasked with being resourceful to solve the problems, and they do well.

The City Manager provided the Budget schedule to the Council. Budget review with the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee would begin the following week with a special meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 5:30 PM. Discussion ensued about how this would be a longer Budget meeting with the outside agencies presenting, and the City Manager noted they did not all receive the allocations they requested.

The Mayor noted the City is not alone in filling public service roles.

REPORTS - CITY OFFICERS AND DEPARTMENTS – ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS – FINANCE DIRECTOR

A memorandum was read from the Finance Director/Treasurer Kari Chamberlain, recommending that the City Council accept the donations as noted below with gratitude, and the City Manager be authorized to use these donations in the manner specified by the donors. A motion by Councilor Powers to accept the donations as noted below with gratitude, and the City Manager be authorized to use these donations in the manner specified by the donors was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

Donations received were as follows:

- Edgewood Center donation in the amount of \$200 to the Fire Department in memory of Henry “Hank” Memmesheimer.
- Savings Bank of Walpole match donation in the amount of \$10,000 for the construction of the Goose Pond Bridge.
- W.S. Badger donation to the Human Rights Committee in the amount of \$250 to support the Keene Pride Festival.
- *Total donations of \$10,450*

MORE TIME - MSFI REPORT - BRITTANY WILLIAMS - CONCERNS RELATING TO CARS CONGESTING ROYAL AVENUE DURING SCHOOL PICK-UP

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the communication “Concerns Relating to Cars Congesting Royal Avenue During School Pickup” be placed on More Time to allow for City staff to initiate discussions with School District staff. Mayor Kahn granted more time.

ORDINANCE FOR FIRST READING - RELATING TO THE PROCESS TO AMEND THE ZONING TEXT AND ZONING MAP - ORDINANCE O-2026-08

A memorandum was read from Senior Planner Mari Brunner, recommending referring Ordinance O-2026-08 to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee for review and recommendation. Mayor Kahn referred Ordinance O-2026-08 to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

RESOLUTION - RELATING TO THE 2026/2027 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET - RESOLUTION R-2026-09

A memorandum was read from Finance Director/Treasurer Kari Chamberlain, recommending that Resolution R-2026-09 relating to the Fiscal Year 2026/2027 budget be referred to the Finance, Organization & Personnel Committee for their review and recommendation, and that a public hearing be scheduled for Thursday, June 4, 2026. Mayor Kahn referred Resolution R-2026-09 to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee on May 28, 2026, and set a Public Hearing for Thursday, June 4, 2026.

TABLED ITEM - REQUEST TO REVIEW RECENT AMENDMENTS TO LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE - ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 18, 2025 (O-2025-15-A)

At the April 16, 2026 City Council meeting, on a vote of 13 in favor and one opposed, a motion to table the matter until the City Council meeting of May 21, 2026 passed. Mayor Kahn continued the Tabled Item until the next regular meeting.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

A motion by Councilor Powers to go into non-public session for personnel matters pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a) was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor. Mayor Kahn invited Human Resources Director Darcy Newport to remain present for the session.

The Mayor called a five-minute recess at 7:45 PM. The non-public session began at 7:49 PM. The public session reconvened at 8:06 PM.

A motion by Councilor Powers 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 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MOTION OUT OF NON-PUBLIC SESSION – MOU – HEALTH INSURANCE BUY-OUT AMOUNT – KEENE CITY EMPLOYEES AFT LOCAL #6288, AFL-CIO


A motion by Councilor Powers was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault to authorize the City Manager to do all things necessary to execute a Memorandum of Understanding modifying the

05/07/2026

health insurance buy-out amount in the current collective bargaining agreement with Keene City Employees, AFT Local #6288, AFT, AFL-CIO to be effective July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2028. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Kahn adjourned the meeting at 8:10 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk