

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, May 28, 2026**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

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

**Jay V. Kahn, Mayor**

**Members Not Present:**

Bettina A. Chadbourne, Vice Chair  
Kris E. Roberts

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager  
Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney  
Brandon Latham, Deputy City Attorney  
Rebecca Landry, Deputy City Manager  
Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager  
Darcy Newport, Human Resources Director  
Jason Martin, Fire Chief  
Gregory Seymour, Deputy Fire Chief  
Richard Wood, Fire Marshal

Chair Powers called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**1. Continued Discussion - Draft Resolution for Consideration Addressing the Burden on Local Property Taxpayers**

Councilor Phil Jones addressed the Committee and stated the draft before the Committee has been updated with help from the City Manager and staff. He stated he would like the Committee's comments and noted to the term "downshifting" and asked if this term was too political and asked if it should be changed to "cost shifting."

Councilor Chalice stated maybe it could say "often referred to as downshifting."

Councilor Lake felt downshifting was fine as it conveys what we are trying to say; it describes the fact that it is coming because cost burden from the state down to the cities and local municipalities.

Councilor Jones stated the City Clerk is going to see the background notes of what is suggested, and they are going to add a codified version, which will come to the City Council at the next City Council meeting.

The Councilor stated he was asked who would get copies of this Resolution. He stated he would like hard copies go to the Governor and local legislators with digital copies going to the Executive Council, Senate, and House of Representatives.

Mr. Kenneth Stewart of 11 Algonquin Drive addressed the Committee and stated this draft is a huge improvement with numbers being included because it makes it much more fact-based and begins to move the City to an engagement on this issue, rather than just a rhetoric back and forth. He thanked City staff for their assistance. He hoped the City could get other municipalities to weigh in with their specific numbers, because that will add up to some very big numbers. For Keene, perhaps we can get help from the County Administrator Chris Coates, and the school district with their numbers. Mr. Stewart stated another term that could also be used is “tax shifting.”

The City Manager stated she reached out to the school and to the county to get their numbers. The County Administrator provided numbers, which she has shared with Councilor Jones and added that this number was large. She went on to say the county focused on two things, the New Hampshire Retirement System and Medicaid. The New Hampshire Retirement System for the county was over \$10 million and Medicaid was \$52 million. The City Manager stated she had a discussion with Councilor Jones and suggested that those numbers be included in a letter rather than in the actual Resolution itself.

Councilor Chalice asked why the number cannot be included in the Resolution. Councilor Jones stated it could be but preferred not to so it wouldn't be too wordy and would be more focused. He added there are other cities waiting for Keene to complete this Resolution. Some of the SB-2 towns did put out efforts and the town of Merrimack sent out a letter.

City Attorney Palmeira stated making changes to the language today would be preferred.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be directed to introduce a resolution for consideration at the next City Council meeting requesting an end to state downshifting and unfunded mandates that increase pressure on local property taxpayers.

**2. Appointment of Emergency Management Director effective July 1, 2026 - City Manager**

City Manager Elizabeth Ferland stated this item is a recommendation to appoint Fire Marshal Rick Wood as the next Emergency Management Director, effective July 1, 2026. This is an appointment that is done by the City Council upon a recommendation by the City Manager, which is why it is coming before the Committee today.

The City Manager went on to say that Mr. Wood has a wide array of experience and he is very well-suited for this position. He is present today should the Committee have any questions.

Councilor Chalice stated she appreciated the amount of information provided both to the Council and the public about Mr. Wood's range of experience and how that relates to this position.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends in accordance with RSA 21-P:39, I and City Code of Ordinances Section 30-58(a), the appointment of Rick Wood as the City's Emergency Management Director effective July 1, 2026.

The City Manager thanked Mr. Wood, who originally came to the City on a three-year contract, for agreeing to stay on with the City. He is moving forward in his revised position including these additional responsibilities.

**3. Execution of Contract - Design Services for Ashuelot River Park Greenspace Playground Consultant Selection - Deputy City Manager - Deputy City Manager**

Deputy City Manager Andy Bohannon was the next speaker. Mr. Bohannon stated this item is for the City Manager to be able to sign and execute a professional service contract with Lu-La Studio. They will be providing the conceptual design for the playground area of the Ashuelot Greenspace. The City put forward an RFP for a natural playground and received four responses, which were competitive. All four candidates were interviewed, and the selection firm went with Lu-La Studio.

Mr. Bohannon went on to say this is a project in collaboration with Southwest Regional Planning Commission and the Monadnock Conservancy.

Councilor Chalice asked whether there will be any opportunity for the public to be involved in this design process. Mr. Bohannon answered in the affirmative and stated this is one of the things that attracted the City to this particular firm. How they plan to engage the public in the design ideas.

Mr. Bohannon noted this funding is from an anonymous donor.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional service contract with Lu-La Studio for conceptual design services required for the Ashuelot River Park Greenspace project for an amount not to exceed \$34,980.00 with funding to come from Project Cost Center (65M002BB-300-O-521020).

**4. Execution of Contract - Fire Department - Professional Health Services (PHS) - Fire Chief**

Fire Chief Jason Martin stated this item is in reference to the Fire Department's annual NFPA 1582 (occupational medical) physicals, which is a requirement for individuals responding to any hazardous materials incidents. The Fire Department sent out an RFP. After reviewing the responses to the RFP, the department is recommending awarding the contract to Professional Health Services (PHS). This contract is for three years, and there is funding available within the Fire Department's budget.

Councilor Chalice asked whether the City has experience with this particular firm. The Chief stated it was based on responses they received from the RFP, but the company is new to the City. He added in comparing PHS' experience with the company whose contract just expired, staff is comfortable PHS will provide the exact same service. He added it might be better as they are coming with their own stand-alone vehicle, whereas in the past staff had to travel to complete these physicals. The Councilor asked whether the department has references from municipalities that have used them in the past. The Chief answered in the negative and added he feels confident they will be able to provide this service.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to execute a contract with Professional Health Services (PHS) to provide NFPA 1582 occupational medical physicals.

**5. Acceptance of 2025 FEMA SAFER Grant - Fire Chief**

Chief Martin stated the language should read as "*requesting permission to apply for the 2025 FEMA Safer Grant*" not "acceptance of the grant." He apologized for the error.

In October of 2024, the City Manager put together a committee to look at Fire Department staffing needs. Ultimately, through that committee a recommendation was made that the City applied for the 2024 FEMA Safer Grant. Unfortunately, the City was unsuccessful (was not awarded the grant).

This request is for the 2025 grant. If awarded the 2025 FEMA SAFER Grant would fund 75% of their salaries for two years, 25% for the third year, then it would be up to the municipality to fund those salaries.

Chief Martin stated in talking with the local FEMA representative, in 2024 grant process, the City was successful in making it through the entire selection process, but were lower on the list for funding; money ran out before they got to the City. He indicated the Deputy Chief has already been researching ways to boost the department's narratives on this issue. It is the same information but looking for better ways to present it to obtain a higher score.

Councilor Lake asked which staff would be impacted by these funds. The Chief stated it would be for new hires.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to apply for the 2025 FEMA SAFER Grant.

**6. Fire Department Staffing Presentation and Consideration of Draft Resolution - Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief**

Fire Chief Jason Martin and Deputy Fire Chief Gregory Seymour were the next two speakers. Chief Martin stated this proposed request is coming out of the same staffing committee referenced in the last agenda item. As indicated previously, this Committee was put together by the City Manager. The proposed request tonight is to add four additional firefighters to the budget starting July 1, 2026.

He indicated they would provide a summary on how the Fire Department currently operates and explain the need for this additional staffing. He turned the presentation over to Deputy Seymour.

Deputy Seymour began by explaining current staffing, which includes the Chief of Department who directly oversees the Department Administrator and Part-Time Administrative Assistant as well as a Training Officer. The Deputy Fire Chief oversees four Shift Commanders, eight Lieutenants, and 32 Firefighters. The Fire Marshal oversees two Fire Prevention Officers.

Daily staffing Citywide consists of:

- One Shift Commander who stays in Car 4
- Three Lieutenants and two firefighters on Engine 1
- One Lieutenant and one firefighter on Ladder 2
- Two firefighters (AEMT/Medic) on Ambulance 1
- Two firefighters (AEMT/Medic) on Ambulance 2
- Two firefighters (AEMT/Medic) on Ambulance 3/Engine 2 (Ambulance 3 cross staffs Engine 2 for structure fires)

Note: Ambulance 3/Engine 2 are new since the last time staffing was increased to 12.

Daily Admin Staffing consists of:

- Chief
- Deputy Chief
- Fire Marshal
- Two Fire Prevention Officers
- Department Administrator
- One Training Officer
- One Administrative Assistant

Station 1 consists of seven Personnel:

Engine 1

- One Company Officer
- One Driver
- One Firefighter

Ambulance 1 (which also accompanies engine one for fire calls)

- Two Firefighter/AEMT or Paramedics

Ambulance 3/Engine 2

- Two Firefighter/AEMT or Paramedics (Ambulance 3 cross staffs Engine 2 for structure fires)

Station 2 consists of four Personnel:

Ladder 2

One Officer  
One Driver  
Ambulance 2  
Two Personnel

If available, personnel from Ambulance 2 move to Ladder 2 for a dispatched fire incident. The ambulance will follow and the fourth member will become part of the crew at the incident. All members of Ladder 2 will respond to structure fire dispatch is available.

#### Citywide Shift Commander

Operates between both stations and Mutual Aid for:

- Daily Operations
- Emergency Scene Management
- Coordination of Mutual Aid
- Coordination of Callback
- Supervision of Company Officers

Unstaffed Apparatus for the department includes:

- Tower/Ladder 1
- Tanker 1
- Engine 2 (which is cross staffed)
- Rescue 1
- Ambulance 4

Note: Those apparatuses are not staffed every day; they are cross staffed with other apparatus. If there is a need for a special call, the department takes a company off an Engine and puts them onto that needed apparatus.

Deputy Seymour went on to review their long list of Departmental Responsibilities:

The Keene Fire Department is one of the only facilities in New England that does all disciplines, which in addition to the Fire Department includes, Transporting ALS, Specialized Rescue, and Technician Level Haz-Mat Team. There are only one or two others in New England which do all of the same things that Keene does and they are much larger than Keene.

He referred to a map, which illustrated that the City of Keene is isolated in this area of the state. There are no other assets around Keene to help split some of the services. The nearest career department is in Concord, NH and Claremont – both municipalities are an hour away and Brattleboro, VT, is 32 to 40 minutes from Keene.

The Deputy Chief next referred to a chart that depicted the number of calls during the period of 2009 to 2025. In 2009 to 2010 the number of calls were about 3,890 (per year). Staffing at that time was 10, minimum 9. This (upward) trend continued through 2021 when staffing was increased to minimum 10. And, in 2024 two more additional staff were added to increase the make the minimum of 12 to staff an additional ambulance. 2025 calls were at 6,662. Keene is the 5<sup>th</sup> busiest community in New Hampshire.

Deputy Seymour continued by showing a chart that provided data on the total incidences, total overlapping incidents, and the percentage of overlapping calls. As calls increased, the level of overlapping calls also increased. The Deputy Chief noted that as we maintain 12 people on duty, typically these 12 are split between multiple incidents at the same time.

The Deputy Chief went on to explain why the Fire Department has so many fire trucks. He explained this is not a fire truck problem but a personnel problem. They run short on apparatus, which requires them to get more apparatus to get the same number of people at a call. An example is, for instance, that Ladder 2 may only have two individuals on it which is not enough people to staff a true emergency call, therefore, we need to supplement that with another engine or ambulance to get enough people to the call.

Next, Deputy Seymour spoke about things that need to be addressed at a structure fire at the same time:

- Victim Search
- Handling Deployments
- Water Supply
- Ventilation

Those are all tasks that have been done at the same time, which is why having personnel there early into an incident makes a huge difference. Because fire can double in size every 30 to 60 seconds, personnel have six minutes to get a victim out of the building. After six minutes, their survivability goes down almost 80%. Because of new fuels, fires today burn 5 to 8 times hotter than fires in the past. Time is always of the essence for what we are doing.

Deputy Seymour then explained why there are fire trucks deployed with ambulances. It is for the same reason but addresses a different problem. Just like fires, medical emergencies are driven by time. Every minute without CPR is a 10% decrease in survivability. After 10 minutes, your chance of survival from a cardiac arrest without bystander CPR is almost nonexistent. Irreversible damage to the heart occurs 20 minutes in the onset of a heart attack. This is not cardiac arrest; this is onset of chest pain from a heart attack or acute coronary event. Some specialty interventions require more than one paramedic at a time. Having the correct staffing shortens the duration of calls. Minimizes that overlapping and gets companies freed up for the next emergency. We dump a lot of staff onto an incident and pull them away as needed. Having the correct staffing shortens the duration of calls, minimizes the overlapping, and gets companies freed up for the next emergency.

The next chart referred to the KFP Call Volume including in-town calls versus calls out of town. Out-of-town calls represent 7% of the total calls and are funded at around 20%.

Next Deputy Seymour explained the average working hours for the firefighters (Top 15) and explained that as call volumes increased the highest average hours worked per week increased.

- FY19 – highest average hours worked per week – 46 hours
- FY21 – highest average hours worked per week – 54 hours
- FY22 – highest average hours worked per week – 64 hours
- FY23 – highest average hours worked per week – 65 hours
- FY24 – highest average hours worked per week – 67 hours

- FY25 – highest average hours worked per week – 75 hours – which is just short of two full-time jobs

#### Call Numbers By Firefighter (Top 15):

This represents how many calls per member go on.

- FY19 – 702 calls
- FY20 – 668 calls
- FY21 – 826 calls
- FY22 – 968 calls
- FY23 – 774 calls
- FY24 – 1,141 calls
- FY25 – 871 calls

He added calls dropped by 200 calls in FY25 when they added in Ambulance 1 in FY24.

Why does any of this matter? The addition of a 13th firefighter on (each) shift:

- Replaces about 8,299 plus hours of overtime with straight time
- Reduce the amount of overtime personnel are being asked to work
- Decreases the total number of annual responses on firefighters
- Works toward achieving a better work life balance for our staff
- Will reduce force in scenarios
- Allows us to continue to grow in a stepwise fashion reducing major asks in the future

The Chief stated the proposal is a staffing request to add four firefighters beginning July 1, 2026, which would be one firefighter per each shift. This request comes from the City Manager's staffing committee and supports the Fire Department's current 12-person minimum staffing model. The model change to 12 members per shift in FY26 in order to have coverage for increased emergency call volume, for 24/7 staff of a third ambulance, and for minimum apparatus coverage for daily operations. We basically went to this model out of necessity. Operationally, this model improved service but, financially it increased overtime exposure and increased overtime and working hours of our personnel.

The problem is, this minimum staffing requires constant overtime. When a position is vacation for vacation, sick time, long term injury, open positions, or other leave, the position must be filled with overtime. Our current reality is that at least one member is off 92% of the time. In FY25, the department had to routinely use overtime just to maintain the minimum daily staff for an equivalent of 24,385 hours of overtime.

As we look for a solution, adding a 13th assigned member to each shift but keeping the 12-member minimum, it would add one extra person to cover some of those overtime hours. The 13th position would offset overtime approximately 95% of the time.

The Chief went on to discuss the Financial Impact. At the end of FY26, the Fire Department is projected to be over budget by \$757,757 (pay and benefit load). The cost to hire four additional firefighters is \$525,460. Overtime savings they could offset is \$527,691. Ultimately, this would be a savings of \$2,231. This proposals uses money already being spent on overtime to create permanent staffing capacity.

In closing, the Chief said, KFD added the third staffed ambulance out of necessity to maintain service against rising call volume. But, this current model relies heavily on overtime. Adding four firefighters, one per shift, would:

- Reduce overtime dependency
- Improve the work life balance of the firefighters
- Lower or minimize the forced overtime rate for shift coverage
- Increase the capacity for callback or the number of firefighters available for callback
- Strengthen hazmat and technical rescue team numbers
- Improve operational readiness by having extra person on duty 5% of the time

When comparing costs, we can hire four additional firefighters for less money than the amount they would save in overtime. This is the same money we are spending already to run this model, but we have the opportunity to increase our operational effectiveness.

Councilor Chalice asked what types of calls have caused this increase. Deputy Chief Seymour stated the largest increase is in EMS; post-Covid and with the closure of Diluzio Ambulance, KFD has acquire the nursing homes calls it previously did not have, which was a steep increase. The department is evaluating those nursing home calls and have decreased the number of what is referred to as “nuisance calls.” New companies in the area like Smart Ride are completing around 13,000 transports for nursing homes annually, which has been a large burden off the department. The department is now only responding to those nursing homes for true emergencies.

Councilor Chalice noted \$2,000 is the difference between overtime versus hiring people. But, what we can’t quantify here is the toll that this overtime is taking on the staff that exists. Council Chalice hoped the public understands that there is more being saved than money.

The City Manager explained if the Council is so inclined to add these additional firefighters that while the cost difference is \$2,000, this is not in the FY27 budget and will be a direct impact to the tax rate. What has happened in the past is the City has over-expanded and then have taken it from other areas at the end of the year.

Mayor Kahn stated he is glad the City Manager explained that the dollars need to be raised first through the tax rate and then recovered during the operating year through efficiencies gained during a year. If that recovery is actually achieved, then those dollars have been banked in a reserve with a reserve being able to be forward funded into the next year. The City Mayor asked how we manifest if neither one of those techniques is being suggested here. The City Manager explained in the Fire Department, we have been paying overtime every time someone is out, and there is not enough money in the budget to pay for all of the overtime expenses. At the end of the year, we need to reconcile the departments; it is just an internal movement. In the past, it has been the Police Department because the Police Department has vacancies they are desperately trying to fill. If that money had not been moved to write the Fire Department budget, that money would have fallen to the Fund Balance. The City has been again this year aggressively pulling funds from the Fund Balance. The City Manager stated, relying on that again for this next year in her opinion is not good idea.

She added the last couple of years the City has also applied a vacancy factor to the Police Department and the City Manager stated what she has done is unfunded two positions. This means we are not raising money for those two positions. If all positions were filled, staff will have to come back and find a way to be able to fund it because they are authorized to hire for all of those positions.

The City Manager stated she recommends hiring these four firefighters. She added if the City is not successful with the Safer Grant, she has concerns about further adjustments. It is an easy decision now because the City is paying this money through over-time. As the City moves forward the goal is to get to 16 firefighters. If the City is not successful in getting the Safer Grant the City is seeing a lot of pressure on the tax rate right now and we are about to go through a reevaluation as well as big projects in the horizon and need to be careful as we move forward into the future. The recommendation tonight is to apply for the grant and then come back and have that conversation if the City is in fact successful.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the presentation regarding Fire Department Staffing be accepted as informational and that the City Manager be directed to introduce a Resolution for first reading at the next City Council meeting related to Funding Fire Department Staffing.

**7. Execution of an Agreement with Wright Pierce for Engineering Services During Construction for the Martel Court Pump Station Bypass Force Main Project - City Engineer**

Public Works Director Don Lussier stated this item is in reference to an agreement with Wright Pierce for engineering services related to the construction of the Martell Court pump station bypass. He explained few years ago there was a failure of a valve in that station and way the station was designed and built there is no way to take the station offline and bypass around it. Staff was able to make some hasty repairs to that valve, however, they were not able to completely repair the valve. The valve has been slowly leaking for the last three years but staff was able to get it down to a level that wasn't a crisis, while the City went through the design and permitting for a permanent fix.

The City is now in a position to start on that permanent fix. All necessary permits have been obtained to install a new crossing underneath the Branch River. Bids were opened today and a bid has been received within the budget price. Mr. Lussier noted the bid still has to be reviewed and their qualifications checked, but the bid does look promising.

Along with that construction contractor, there needs to be an engineer on board to oversee the work to make sure the work is done according to specifications and standards. The project is being funded 100% by City funds but the City has applied for a State aid grant; a DES administered program. The project is on the State aid grant SAG list but there is no guarantee that the City would get funded until the State appropriates funds for that that purpose but this would

happen only after the construction is completed. If it is approved the City would get reimbursed for some portion of the work.

However, because the City is on the list and eligible, Mr. Lussier stated he wanted to make sure the City is retaining that eligibility. The City used the State requirements in terms of consultant selection etc.

The City received one bid for this project and it was from the design engineer. Staff is happy with their work; they completed the design, obtained the necessary permits and the City was able to negotiate a price and contract. Staff is recommending a contract with a Wright Pierce.

Councilor Chalice asked whether it is a long-term fix and whether it would need to be moved to a different place. Mr. Lussier stated this would be a long-term fix, and the pump station will remain at this location in the floodplain. It has flood-proofing systems in place that will be protected from flooding.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute an agreement with Wright Pierce for the scope of Engineering Services during Construction for the Martel Court Sewer Pump Station Bypass Force Main Project (32JM012A) in an amount not to exceed \$465,000.

**8. Execution of a Contract Change Order for Construction Services with Vortex for the FY26 Stormwater Spot Repairs Project - City Engineer**

Mr. Lussier stated this contract change order is with Vortex for stormwater spot repair. Last year there was a contract executed for stormwater spot repair, which was partially funded with State funding. It was a Clean Water SRF-funded project. That project was completed. At the same time, the Highway Division identified a number of drain lines that they thought were good candidates for lining in a similar way.

The City put in a request for proposals from contractors and received some bids. However, because Vortex was already in the City working under this other contract (having done a lot of work last summer), they were very cost-effective. They provided the City with attractive pricing. Staff is here tonight to request an extension of that work. Vortex have agreed to maintain those same unit prices and extend their contract to include additional work. This is just adding additional scope to the work that they did for the City last summer.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a contract change order with Vortex in an amount not to exceed \$78,000 for the FY26 Stormwater Spot Repairs project.

**9. Relating to Water & Sewer Utility Charges - Ordinance O-2026-07**

Mr. Lussier stated about a year ago, he was before the Council regarding the Water and Sewer rates and how they had not been updated since 2022, and there have been significant increases in costs since 2022. Mr. Lussier stated that he rather than put in place small incremental annual increases rather than a large increase every five or six years.

He went on to say cash flow for utilities is still in a very tenuous position. He noted we are seeing people are conserving water, but the City's cost of doing business is still going up. The proposal is a 5% increase on the fixed and monthly fees that people see on their bill.

Councilor Chalice asked whether there is anything the public could do to mitigate the City's rising costs. Mr. Lussier stated the City's costs are not really driven by consumer behavior. A large portion of the cost structure is based on staffing which is a fixed cost. The lease rental rate the City pays to locate the facility on FAA land is a fixed cost. He added personnel and chemicals are two components that have gone up in price as well as replacement parts and equipment.

The Chair noted instituting meter reading electronically versus having to go to every single house has reduced our operating cost. Mr. Lussier agreed it has. Councilor Chalice asked whether the public is aware of the efficiencies the City has gained by using electronic meter reading. Mr. Lussier stated this process was put in place before his time as the Director and wasn't sure what communication has been sent out to the public.

Mr. Lussier added the 5% increase is not something that would happen every year. He explained there was a 15% cost increase between 2022 and 2025 but stated did not feel a 15% increase in one year would have been palatable, so a suggested 5% per year until the 15% is reached is what is being suggested. He added that the long-term goal is to have annual rate increases that match the regular cost of living increases; whatever the rate of inflation in the economy is.

The Chairman noted having water at home is one of the cheapest costs. Mr. Lussier indicated the cost of water delivered to your home is less than one penny per gallon.

Councilor Lake asked if this increase is reflected in the anticipated revenue for the Water Fund in the 2026-2027 Budget? Mr. Lussier stated it was anticipated in this year's budget.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2026-07 with an effective date of July 1, 2026.

**10. Fiscal Year 2027 Wage Schedules - Ordinance O-2026-11**

Human Resources Director Darcy Newport was the next speaker. Ms. Newport stated she was before the Committee regarding Ordinance O-2026-11, which requests replacing the existing wage and salary schedules for non-union employees. The revised schedules include a 3%

cost-of-living increase. She noted the national CPI is trending right around 3.8% with the Northeast having a broader range of somewhere between 2% and 4%. Hence, the 3% feels like a responsible increase. Ms. Newport stated this would also align with what is happening within the bargaining unit.

Ms. Newport stated there are also a few title changes. The first is the Assistant Planner position focused on sustainability and the other is the Fire Marshal. These are two additional positions that were discussed during budget review. The only other change is in Human Resources. Ms. Newport stated there are two individuals in her department whose title are Benefits Assistant, which doesn't feel appropriate for the nature of their responsibilities. One is the Benefits Administrator and the other is essentially focused on recruitment and development of people. To be more aligned with what is happening in the industry, her proposal is to change their title to Human Resources Administrators. There is no budget implication for this title change.

The City Manager stated the two positions that were referenced, the Assistant Planner/Sustainability is a change of a part-time position to a full-time position with the difference being paid for by donations. The Fire Marshal position is moving from a contract position onto the salary schedule. These positions have no financial impact.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2026-11.

#### **11. Relating to the 2026/2027 Fiscal Year Budget - Resolution R-2026-09**

The City Manager explained today is the night the Finance Committee makes recommended changes to any of the budget items that are about to follow and then votes on each item. The next step is the budget hearing, which will be at the Council meeting. Items will then be tabled until the next Council meeting, where the full Council will vote on all the budget-related items, bonds etc.

Tonight the Committee has several Resolutions related to the budget, both the operating budget and the capital plan. During the budget discussion, some items were changed which is 2026-09-A and those changes include \$3,500 being added in the Mayor training budget line. \$15,000 in the Parks and Rec Summer Night Chapel, boiler replacement project. There is a subtraction of \$33,000 for the in-kind contribution to the CIP project, Jordan Road salamander project. Ashuelot River Dam project is being pushed out as staff continues to seek grant funding for that project. This project had originally been included in bonding and there was a small interest payment calculated at \$3,600. Those net changes reduced the bottom line by \$18,100.

There was also discussion about the four additional firefighters.

The City Manager stated there is also one other additional change, which is another reduction: Solid Waste Fund - Personnel numbers were overstated - wage lines need to be reduced by \$62,055.

Fire Department is an increase in the bottom line by \$525,460.

Councilor Lake clarified the Resolution before the Committee includes all the changes just mentioned. The City Manager stated where it says R-2026-09-A, those are the changes that the Finance Director included. Those are the ones discussed during budget review.

Next to that section are changes that were discussed tonight, the firefighters, and the reduction in Solid Waste wage lines, which would end up being R-2026-09-B.

The City Manager added Solid Waste is not part of general taxation. It is a separate revolving fund; it won't impact the bottom line for taxation. The only change tonight is the firefighters, which would increase the bottom line by the \$525,460.

Councilor Lake stated he would be offering one additional change. On page 41 under the Elected and Appointed Officials under the Council's official expense in Line 524430, there is a supplemental request for \$1,770 dollars, \$450 of that is for a subscription to the Sentinel. The Councilor did not feel this is something that Council should be having the taxpayers purchase for Council. He felt if Councilors want a subscription to the local newspaper, this is something they should pay for. He added the Councilors are already paid a salary to compensate for their time and to expend as they need to carry out their duties. He stated he would be asking that this item be deleted from the budget. Councilor Chalice stated she agrees with this suggestion.

The Finance Director explained that the updated Resolution R-2026-09-B language would be as follows: That the sum of \$32,941,678 be raised by taxation during the current year, which, together with \$46,758,701 for estimated operating revenues aggregating the total \$79,700,379 is hereby appropriated for the use of the several departments of the City Government, and further that the sum of \$5,446,533 be appropriated for capital expenditures and capital reserve appropriations in the City proprietary funds, funded by the use of capital reserves, fund balance, and current revenues, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, as attached hereto and made a part thereof.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2026-09-B.

- 12. Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the FY 2026-2027 Bond Issues: Ashuelot River Green Space, Ashuelot River Dam Repair or Removal, Downtown Infrastructure Improvements & Reconstruction Project, Gilbo Ave Solar Pavillion Project, Lower Winchester Street Reconstruction, Roadway Preservation & Rehabilitation Program, Robin Hood Park Improvement Project, Stormwater Resiliency Program, Martell Court Bypass Project, Downtown: Sewer Improvements Program, Water Distribution Improvements Program.**  
**Resolution R-2026-10**  
**Resolution R-2026-11 (withdrawn)**  
**Resolution R-2026-12**

**Resolution R-2026-13**  
**Resolution R-2026-14**  
**Resolution R-2026-15**  
**Resolution R-2026-16**  
**Resolution R-2026-17**  
**Resolution R-2026-18**  
**Resolution R-2026-19**  
**Resolution R-2026-20**

- Resolution 2026-10: Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the Ashuelot River Green Space Project. That the sum of \$200,000 be appropriated for the Ashuelot River Green space project.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-10.

- Resolution R-2026-11: Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the Ashuelot River Dam Repair or Removal Project.

Kari Chamberlain, Finance Director/Treasurer stated the Ashuelot River Dam Repair or Removal is being withdrawn.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends withdrawal of Resolution R-2026-11.

- Resolution R-2026-12: Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the Downtown Infrastructure Improvements & Reconstruction Project. That the sum of \$3,932,830 be appropriated for the downtown infrastructure improvements and reconstruction project.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-12.

- Resolution R-2026-13: Appropriation of Funds for Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion project. The sum of \$439,200 be appropriated for that project.

Councilor Chalice clarified that the assertion is that this is the one project that we actually have the potential to make back (monies) in terms of the energy that is being generated over time from the solar project. The City Manager stated this allocation is actually just a small portion of the overall project because the City received the Northern Borders grant for this project. The project

in its entirety is over \$2,000,000. This portion of the project that is being contributed by the City will be offset over time by the energy savings we will see from the generated power.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-13.

- Resolution R-2026-14: Relating to the Appropriation of Funds for the Lower Winchester Street Reconstruction. That the sum of \$143,550 be appropriated for that project.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-14.

- Resolution R-2026-15: Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the Roadway Preservation & Rehabilitation Program. That the sum of \$500,000 be appropriated for that program.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-15.

- Resolution R-2026-16: Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the Robin Hood Park Improvement project. That the sum of \$1,117,000 be appropriated for that project.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-16.

- Resolution R-2026-17: Relating to the Appropriation of Funds for the Stormwater Resiliency Program. That the sum of \$3,509,300 be appropriated for that program.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-17.

- Resolution R-2026-18: Relating to the Appropriation of Funds for the Martell Court Bypass Project. That the sum of \$825,000 be appropriated for that project through bond funding.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-18.

- Resolution R-2026-19: Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the Downtown Sewer Improvements Program. That the sum of \$1,369,200 be appropriated for that project through bond funding.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-19.

- Resolution R-2026-20: Relating to Appropriation of Funds for the Water Distribution Improvements Program. That \$1,690,200 be appropriated and raised through bond funding.

The following motion by Councilor Lake was duly seconded by Councilor Chalice.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-20.

### **13. Relating to Funding for the Downtown Infrastructure Project** **Resolution R-2026-21**

The City Manager stated this item is for motions needed to fund the difference in the Downtown Infrastructure Project that was discussed and presented by the Public Works Department. Staff would be requesting the reallocation of bond proceeds and project balances that are left in multiple projects as well as the additional appropriation of \$1.2 million to be appropriated from the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance.

The following motion by Councilor Chalice was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a vote of 3 to 0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2026-21.

### **14. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Terri Hood, City Clerk and Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk