

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, October 1, 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 Powers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt the September 17, 2026, 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 October 2026:

- All of October: Domestic Violence Awareness Month
 - Relative to that, Mayor Kahn said to check out the Keene Sentinel article from today about some changes for Monadnock Center for Violence Prevention in our community
- October 3:
 - Keene High School Homecoming Parade at 11:00 AM taking off from Savings Bank of Walpole followed by a football game against opponent Merrimack High School at 1:30 PM
 - Resurrection of the 1980s International Zucchini Festival in Keene. Mayor Kahn said that for years, it was a pretty interesting thing that made world, national, and global news for the City of Keene, preceding the Pumpkin Fest. The event is taking place between 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM at the Wyman Tavern. It is a humorous thing to dress up like a zucchini.
 - The People's Park Petite Pumpkin Painting Party is being held at 1:30 PM at 100 Church Street at the pocket park.
- October 4–October 10: Fire Prevention Week: A reminder the Fire Prevention Parade will be held October 4 at 1:00 PM. There will be a viewing station for Councilors on Main Street near Cherry Garden.
- October 6–October 8: Radically Rural. Check out the Hannah Grimes Center's website to find out more registration information.
- October 8: The annual Fireman's Dinner. A reminder that the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee meeting that evening has been canceled to allow all Councilors to attend. Please be sure to RSVP to the Fire Department.
- October 9: New Hampshire's 24th Annual Advanced Manufacturing and High Technology Summit at Grappone Conference Center, Concord
 - Mayor Kahn said this would be a conversation about Advanced Manufacturing Week. But it concludes next week on Friday, October 9, 2026 with New Hampshire's 24th annual Advanced Manufacturing and High Technology Summit at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord. This is a good get together of a

lot of the advanced manufacturing industries and from Keene and around the state.

- The weekend of October 10: Keene Bottle Show and Sale between 9:00 AM and 2:00 PM at Keene High School.
- Sunday, October 11: Firefighters Memorial Day
- Monday, October 12: Columbus Day A/K/A Indigenous Peoples' Day – City Offices will be closed
- Tuesday, October 13: US Navy 251st Anniversary
- October 18–October 24: New Hampshire History Week
- October 22: New Hampshire Business and Industry Association is launching the NH Optics Alliance co-founded by Steve Fortier (who co-chairs it with the Mayor), Sarah McGregor (a Physics professor at Keene State College), and Matt Zabko (of Bond Industries). Mayor Kahn said that would be the kickoff of the organization, and it would not be held in Concord or Manchester, but here in Keene at Keene State College. So, he called it nice recognition for the optics manufacturing industry in Keene.

Mayor Kahn led the Council in congratulating Councilor Williams who was elected to serve on the Balance of State Continuum of Care Executive Committee. The Balance of State Continuum of Care coordinates resources, services, and community partnerships across 223 New Hampshire municipalities to support individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness in finding stable, permanent housing. Mayor Kahn said it looks like a good place for some local conversations we are having and thanked Councilor Williams for his service.

Lastly, the Mayor announced that the Monadnock United Way Campaign theme for this year is “Local Community - Lasting Change.” He encouraged Councilors to contribute to the City of Keene United Way Campaign; pledge forms were provided on their desks: scan the QR code on the form provided if you would like to do a one-time donation. Check the box indicating you are donating as part of a “Workplace Campaign,” and select the City of Keene as the organization. You can also choose to do a payroll deduction by filling out the paper form and returning it to the City Clerk.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION - MANUFACTURING WEEK

Mayor Kahn noted that Electronic Imaging Materials recently earned the BarTender Platinum Partner status, from Seagull Scientific. This is the highest level of certification, reflecting 25 years of partnership, expertise, and dedication to delivering the label and barcode solutions customers need in sectors like logistics, manufacturing, and healthcare.

The Mayor welcomed Alex Henkel, President of Electronic Imaging Materials (EIM). Mayor Kahn read into the record and presented Mr. Henkel with a Proclamation, declaring October 2026 as Manufacturing Month in the City of Keene and encouraged all residents, businesses, educators, and community partners to recognize the vital contributions of manufacturing, and to support the continued advancement of New Hampshire's Advanced manufacturing industries through innovation, collaboration, and investment in our workforce. The Mayor thanked Mr. Henkel for what he contributes to our community and the state.

Mr. Henkel thanked the Mayor and said he was delighted to accept this on behalf of our area manufacturers. He said the Mayor mentioned precision optics, but they have multiple clusters of valuable manufacturers. In their case, they are a 50-employee company at 39 years; it is second generation. Next year would also be Mr. Henkel's 20th year as being the President of EIM. He said some in the audience would know his father, Paul Henkel, who is very involved with the Keene Library. One thing Mr. Henkel noted was that the long-term vision of community leaders in this area has really helped create an environment where manufacturers can thrive. He said he had the privilege of serving on the Master Plan Steering Committee and there were a couple of key pillars: of the six pillars, there are thriving economy and adaptable workforce, and he said both of those really support maintaining the strength of our manufacturing sector. He thanked everybody again and said the group really appreciated it.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION - HCS - CERTIFICATION OF FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

Mayor Kahn recognized Katie Hart, Director of Operations at Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS). Mayor Kahn read into the record and presented Ms. Hart with a community recognition, hereby recognizing and celebrating the opening or rededication of the Family Resource Center at HCS, and commending the organization for their long-standing commitment to support these families throughout Keene and the Monadnock Region.

Ms. Hart thanked the Mayor for this recognition on behalf of HCS and the Healthy Starts Family Resource Center; she was honored to accept this Proclamation recognizing their designation of Family Resource Center of Quality. This designation reflects a rigorous review process that recognizes their commitment to providing high-quality family centered services to people in our community. For them, she said this designation is not just a certificate on the wall, it is a promise: a promise that every family who walks through their doors will be welcomed, supported. And connected to the resources they need to thrive. Whether families are seeking parenting, support, home visiting services, kinship resources, diapers, clothing, community connections, are simply a place where they feel like they belong: she said we are here for them. This year alone, HCS has supported more than 150 families, over 240 individuals across Cheshire County, including many families right here in Keene. As Mayor Kahn had alluded to, she said this recognition belongs to their dedicated staff, volunteers, community partners, and most importantly, the families who trust them every day. Together, they are strengthening families. They are building connections and creating healthier, stronger communities for everybody.

PROCLAMATION - FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Mayor Kahn recognized Fire Chief, Greg Seymour. Mayor Kahn read into the record and presented Chief Seymour with a Proclamation, declaring October 4 through 10, 2026 as Fire Prevention Week in the City of Keene and encouraged all residents to learn about the safe charging practices and to take simple steps to reduce the risk of lithium-ion battery fires. Remember: plug in, power up, and stay safe.

Chief Seymour thanked everyone. He said the Fire Department truly appreciates the support of the Council, our City leaders, and the community most of all. The Fire Department is very proud to be here for you.

PUBLIC HEARING - ORDINANCE O-2026-13 - RELATING TO ZONING MAP
AMENDMENT - 0 HOWARD STREET - MEDIUM DENSITY TO CONSERVATION

Mayor Kahn opened the Public Hearing at 7:23 PM and the City Clerk read the notice of hearing. Mayor Kahn requested introductory comments from Senior Planner, Mari Brunner.

Ms. Brunner noted that this Ordinance was introduced to the Council in July 2026 and the public workshop was held on September 14, 2026. The petitioner for this Ordinance is Mr. Steven Ringland, although with the Ordinance application, there was a list of other neighbors that had signed as well. Ms. Brunner noted that the proposal is to change the zoning designation of this one parcel from Medium Density to Conservation. These were previously several different parcels that were created as a part of a rather old subdivision. So, it predated the Planning Board Subdivision process and those lots were never developed. The City came into ownership through a tax deed process sometime in the past and was the owner, decided to merge them, and put out a Request for Proposals for the property. As part of that, there was a wetland delineation done on the property and a lot of preparatory work went into that. So, during the public workshop, staff presented this information to the Joint Committee of the Planning Board and Planning, Licenses and Development Committee and heard from nine members of the public: eight opposed and one in favor during deliberation. The main points of discussion were around our need for housing and concerns about the potential of this rezone to be considered spot zoning. At the end of the workshop, the Planning Board voted to find the proposal to be inconsistent with the Master Plan, and then the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee voted to refer this to the Council for a Public Hearing.

Mayor Kahn welcomed comments from the applicant, Steven Ringland. Mr. Ringland said that if you look at the map, this parcel is right in the middle of many homes, right in the backyard, which is probably the worst place to put it. So, he said he did not even know this was happening. When he filed the notice that the land had been consolidated on the City's website, the GIS map, he came down to file a petition because he figured somebody would try to build on it. He gave his petition to the Community Development Department and the Community Development Director looked at it and said the City is putting buildings there. Mr. Ringland said no one he talked to on the street of the 20 doors he knocked on had any idea what was going there or that anything was happening, they just heard rumors. Mr. Ringland heard Ms. Brunner say that the Ordinance would be inconsistent with the Master Plan but he said he read the Master Plan and it actually contradicts itself in some places, but it does talk about buildings that should align with the character of the neighborhood and the character of the neighborhood is that this wooded lot has been there for 90 plus years. He explained that his family moved from West Keene to Howard St. in 1971. His father grew up in the neighborhood, and he reiterated that it has been a wooded lot for 90 years, which he said is a long time: almost four generations. And the houses: he looked again from High Street up to Spruce Street and the most recent home built in that section is from 1926, which is 100 years, so he said it is an established neighborhood and it is a green space, it is not just a vacant lot. There are trees there and they provide some privacy from

light pollution or noise pollution in people's backyards. He noted this site is almost in his backyard, just a few houses down. Mr. Ringland said it is a wildlife habitat there; he guessed it was technically not wetlands but said it is wet and there are amphibians there and every year you hear the spring peepers. So, there is probably water there, citing the potential for vernal pools. He called it a carbon sink outside the ocean, noting the trees are the largest carbon sink after the ocean. So, in conservation, he said it would be nice to keep the trees, and he said the City is cutting trees down all over the place (e.g., Elm Street up past the Hospital). He said we really should be planting trees and at least preserving what we have, which is what Conservation would do, he believed. He talked about light pollution, which he called a big deal for him because he is in the Amateur Astronomer's Association and he said it is pretty dark out there with this wooded lot and he would kind of like to keep it that way. He said it would be great if it could stay like it is for generations more. He noted it kind of seems to defeat the purpose of an established neighborhood if you can just use the Cottage Court District and go into an established neighborhood. In that case he said there is no such thing as an established neighborhood, because every neighborhood is vulnerable now.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller requested clarification for the record, because a statement was made that the City is putting buildings on this property. City Manager Elizabeth Ferland said that in December 2023, the City Council authorized the purchase of one of those properties and authorized the combination, so putting them all together to be a developable lot. The City then went through the process, through the Community Development Department, to combine the lots. After that, the City then went through the process to delineate the wetlands so that it could be developed. Then later, in early 2026, there was a Request for Proposals (RFP) to develop the parcel; we have a purchase and sales agreement with the developer to develop this parcel. The City Manager stated that the City is not actually developing it. It was a combination of tax deeded property and one parcel that was purchased by the City to accommodate a Cottage Court development project on that site.

Mayor Kahn opened the floor to public comments.

Kyle Mason (of 96 Howard Street, formerly of 135 Howard Street from 1966 to 1982) said his question was that he realized [you] wanted to sell this piece of property or have a developer do it, but he asked why the City did not do this years ago on Spruce Street: that would be his biggest question. Why could we not make that ballpark? Those are trees growing now. He asked: why did we make that a green area or tree area; we tried to make it grass. He said they looked at him the night he was there and explained that it is wetlands, and he realizes you can build houses on wetlands, but you get the neighbors that are surrounding that little piece by the old auction barn: they do not want it. Not just because it is going to be a wetland and it is going to be tough to build, but there is more room over on Spruce St. to build a house than there is over there on Howard St. Then, you get the congested area of a driveway, and you get the other house across from 135 Howard St. He asked: where are you going to park? He stated that there are a lot of things which are not good vs. things which are good. He questioned why not to have the houses on Spruce St. and how many houses there could be there. He said that piece of property was already cleared once and it did not work as he remembered, which was for grass, never mind a house. He said it is wetlands; he is unsure how you determine wetlands, but he has lived there since 1966, and he knows it is wet there.

Andrew Madison (of 178 Elm Street) has lived in that same neighborhood for the last 12 years. When he first moved to Keene he lived on High Street, then for a few years on Carroll Street, and now he owns a house on Elm Street. First, he said the lot on Spruce Street is a park. He took his dog and walked it just a few hours prior; he said there is a nice trail in a section of it. He wanted to discourage the City Council from adopting this Ordinance because it is the textbook definition of spot zoning. He said once you do that, it kind of opens Pandora's box in allowing others to spot zone. He said that allowing one disconnected lot to become Conservation may be fine and harmless, but now there would be a legal precedent to make one disconnected spot Industrial or one disconnected spot Commercial. Mr. Madison said he understood the petitioner's point of view and in many regards, agreed with it, but said once we open that Pandora's box, there's nothing stopping him from buying the house next to the petitioner's house and saying, "you know what, I want to reach on this as industrial. I'm putting in some sort of obnoxious factory that's going make noise until 2:00 AM." He said others would be encouraged to do so. He wanted to discourage the Council from opening that Pandora's box there. He said there is merit to what the petitioner says but Mr. Madison said there are other ways to go about seeking the conservation of the land other than a zoning change.

Bill Bradford Hutchinson (of Keene) thought about this long and hard. He was an environmental studies major at Keene State College. So, he said you might think that he was going to be all gung-ho to zone this Conservation. He remembered about 10 or 15 years ago in the dead of winter when there were several feet of snow on the ground. He was riding past this property and looked and saw a snowshoe hare in that little patch of woods: they are not common in the City of Keene at all. Like people had said, Mr. Hutchinson said he could see both sides of this; we do need housing, but in that neighborhood? He questioned a Cottage Court development or even a single-family home or a new house built on that piece of property today: it is going to totally change the character of the neighborhood and the quality of the neighborhood. So, he questioned what the purchase and sale agreement would be to build. He could see something built there that would fit in just fine in the neighborhood. He could see something built there that would have a very negative impact on the rest of the neighborhood. He agreed that it is a wetland but asked if it had been taken care of. He asked if it looked like an abandoned lot that is there waiting for something to happen or could it be a pocket park? He thought what is going to be built there should be taken into consideration. If there were going to be a Public Hearing about rezoning it, Mr. Hutchinson thought that speculated about what the proposed developer, if there were a purchase and sale agreement, would be wanting to put there: a duplex, triplex, a mini apartment. He could see something built there that would fit well with the rest of the neighborhood and would be a welcome addition, and he could see something built there that would be a nightmare for the neighbors and it would be a boondoggle. He could see something built there that would be sort of in between. He brought up the wetlands issue and wondered whether that was getting glossed over. He asked who the developer was. Mr. Hutchinson said there were a lot of questions that needed to be answered before the process of whether it is going to be zoned or rezoned. He said this brings up the problem with zoning and the issue with spot zoning: doing this here and this there. He asked: do we stick with the process, or do we do what is right? He wanted to ensure the Council would look at this as thoroughly and carefully as it needs to be without anyone trying to push the Council toward voting one way or the other. He thought this could be contentious: somebody would be unhappy no matter what the Council decides, and somebody is

going to be happy no matter what they decide. He thought this may need a little more time, such as being deferred to the next meeting. Mr. Hutchinson suggested that maybe there needed to be more questions asked and answered and maybe this needs to be thought out a little bit more. Maybe the public needs to be a little more involved. These were some of the things that he would present to the Council, and each Councilor would have to vote one way or the other. He was not trying to sway it; he just wanted the best vote for everybody. He asked: what is best for the property? What is best for the neighborhood? What is best for the future? What is the best decision? That is a difficult thing, but the Council would have to make the best decision and he wished them luck.

Mayor Kahn pointed out that this was not a site development hearing and that kind of process would happen through the planning Board and is something that would happen in the future. This was a petition to rezone a parcel.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Kahn closed the Public Hearing at 7:43 PM except that written comments would be accepted up until 1:00 PM on Tuesday, October 6, 2026. This would be before the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee at their regular meeting on October 9, 2026. No additional public comments would be accepted at that meeting.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk

NOMINATION - HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Mayor Kahn nominated Mackenzie Perkins to serve as an Alternate Member of the Human Rights Committee, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. Mayor Kahn tabled the nomination until the next regular meeting.

COMMUNICATION - COUNCILOR FILIAULT - REQUEST TO REVIEW PLANNED TRAFFIC LANE CONFIGURATION AROUND CENTRAL SQUARE

A communication was received from Councilor Randy Filiault, requesting to review the planned single travel lane around the northern section of the Common in Central Square and consider retaining two travel lanes. He mentions concerns regarding traffic patterns and congestion during peak travel hours and states that the proposed change could be made without additional construction or cost. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee meeting on October 23, 2026.

COMMUNICATION - KENNETH KOST - IN OPPOSITION TO SOLAR PAVILION CONCEPTUAL DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

A communication was received from Kenneth Kost, opposing the current solar pavilion conceptual design recommendations, stating that the design will reduce the potential for use as housing and commercial buildings and will not achieve the vision for this site as defined in the land development code and master plan. Mayor Kahn filed the communication as informational.

COMMUNICATION - MARTIN WYMAN - REQUEST FOR ENFORCEMENT OF CITY ORDINANCE REGARDING BARKING DOGS

A communication was received from Martin Wyman, requesting the City enforce the City Ordinance relating to nuisance dogs (Chapter 10, Section 10-35(b)(1)) as it relates to what he describes as ongoing excessive dog barking coming from an adjacent property in his neighborhood. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to the City Manager for follow up with the letter writer.

COMMUNICATION - KIWANIS CLUB OF KEENE - REQUEST TO USE CITY PROPERTY - TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

A communication was received from Elizabeth Sayre of the Kiwanis Club of Keene, requesting their annual license to conduct the Tree Lighting Ceremony on Central Square on Friday, November 27, 2026. Mayor Kahn referred the communication to Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

MSFI REPORT - DUNCAN HILCHEY AND AMY CHRISTIAN - REQUEST FOR A TRAFFIC STUDY AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL STREET

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending referring the request for a traffic study and safety assessment of School St. to staff for a report back. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT - MICHAEL GUITARD/GUITARD HOMES LLC - PETITION FOR CITY OWNERSHIP OF WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE - COTTAGE COURT COMMUNITY ON COURT STREET

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the water and sewer infrastructure proposed to be constructed as part of the proposed Cottage Court Development on Court St. (Parcel No. 228-016), including valves, hydrants, manholes and other appurtenances, but excluding individual dwelling unit service connections, be accepted as Public Infrastructure. Approval and final acceptance shall be subject to the conditions and requirements listed in Article 23.2.2, 23.2.3 and 23.2.4 of the Land Development Code. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT - SHAWN VOISINE/ELMSIDE LLC - REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF CITY PUBLIC UTILITIES STANDARDS FOR WATER METERING INFRASTRUCTURE - ELMSIDE COTTAGE COURT

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending denying the Petitioner's request to waive City of Keene Public Works standards for the referenced project. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT - KENNETH KOST - REQUEST FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING STUDY OF THE GILBO AVENUE SITE PRIOR TO SOLAR PAVILION DEVELOPMENT

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the request for a Comprehensive Planning Study of the Gilbo Avenue Site Prior to Solar Pavilion Development as informational. Mayor Kahn accepted the report as informational.

MSFI REPORT - GILBO AVE SOLAR PAVILION CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

The first Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, on a vote of 3–1, recommending Location Option 2 be selected as the preferred alternative, and that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to complete the design for the Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion Project. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Workman.

Chair Greenwald stated that his minority position is that he is concerned about that location in total, feeling that location is developable for housing and retail of greater magnitude, and that the whole pavilion should be located elsewhere. He said there are several other locations he feels are more appropriate, though he said it would not be a hill to die on. Councilor Greenwald thinks the project is very worthwhile, and he voted no just because he would like a different location, but the Committee felt to go for Location Two behind Margaritas.

Councilor Jones said he did not agree with both parts of this, but especially Gilbo Avenue, stating that is like an entryway to downtown and there is so much potential there. He does not think that is a good use of that space. There is potential for building there: we have talked about needing housing. He asked: would it not be great if we could have more housing or mixed-use closer to downtown? He said he would speak to the aesthetics later, but he just thinks it is in the wrong place. He noted we do not even know if something is going to go up next to it that is going to shade it and keep it from getting sun right now. He recalled the City at one time had a Gilbo Ave. Overlay, which showed a beautiful streetscape going down Gilbo Ave. and that went away when we developed our new plan. He thinks we should go back to looking at something like the Gilbo Ave. Overlay and give it a purpose: look at the street as a whole and not just one little section. So, Councilor Jones was opposed to the location.

The City Manager, Elizabeth Ferland, offered some history. She noted that this project is a federally funded grant project at \$2.19 million. It is 80% Federally funded and the City funds the 20% match; it is in the CIP. This originally came from Arts Alive: a process where they looked at Gilbo Ave. and discussed potential uses. One of the ideas that came up was to have a pavilion to locate the Farmers Market as a more permanent location from that which moved to the

Downtown Project. She recalled that originally, the Downtown Project included Gilbo Ave., but as we went through many stages of the Downtown Project, funding for Gilbo was removed and this project moved along on its own, because we were awarded the grant funds. So, the location that was identified both by the Arts Alive group that did the public forum and came up with the plans for Gilbo Ave., but also it is the location that was used as the grant application and the reason that location was chosen. If you recall, Northern Borders is an Economic Development Grant focused on economic development and the timber portion of Northern Borders is focused on timber structure, which is what this pavilion is. The City Manager said Location One, which faces Gilbo Ave., was chosen because it would activate that space: it would be a connector to the rail trail system, it would be the covered pavilion for the Farmers Market. Right now, Gilbo Ave. is just a very wide piece of pavement. So, the thought was to really begin to activate it, to have more events and things, but she said we did not want to add additional costs to the Downtown Project. So, the City sought the grant. Now, the debate has been, is it in the parking lot or do we leave it in that original location? The original location that faces the street does have the issue of shade from the trees, which does reduce the amount of solar power we are able to generate, but this was never a solar power project (it was a part of it). This was discussed with the Energy and Climate Committee to offset the energy for the Downtown Project and so it has evolved to both the pavilion and the solar project.

The City Manager said that Option One, which faces Gilbo Ave. has a longer payback period if you are looking strictly at the payback period. This evening, Councilors were presented with a list of answers to questions from the MSFI Committee meeting, which the Public Works Director provided. They looked at straight payback period for the City's portion of the project, and they also looked at if the City put more solar panels on the structure and what that would do in terms of electricity production as well as the payback period. She shared those details briefly with the public. A couple of things to be thoughtful of are so far the City has awarded just over \$300,000 in contracts, so this has been going on for a few years now and the City has paid just over \$157,000, which has not yet been recouped through this federal grant because we have not yet gotten to that point of submitting. The next step would be to start submitting for reimbursement for those funds. The grant requires that we have all our submissions in and the project to be done by September 30, 2028. She said there was a little more time but each time we go back to evaluate another spot, we are incurring additional dollars. The City had now looked at five locations on Gilbo Ave. and really, the focus has been on these two: the original Option One and the Option Two in the parking lot. The other question that came out this week from Council was asking about development and could that parking lot be still developed in the future and if Option One was chosen, how would that impact development in terms of shade? So, the Community Development Department looked at that and provided an answer: basically, their answer is yes, development can still occur. The height of the building may be impacted. Their answer was that it would probably limit Location One to five stories behind it and for Location Two to three or four stories behind it, and it would be more limited because the solar structure would be in the parking lot. So yes, there is still potential for development.

The City Manager said the other thing is we have talked about when Arts Alive did their work and the public outreach that the City talked about moving forward with its own planning charrette for Gilbo Ave. and it really has not been the right time to do that. The City is now working with PlanNH to bring their team to the City for a design charette that would cost

approximately \$6,500. However, Option One would really not be impacting that. Option One, which includes a narrower parcel that would cover parking, has the bike path on the other side of it, so it is limited to that parking space or taking more space from the roadway itself. The parking lot is something that Ken Kost has talked about the possibilities of, and others have looked at the possibilities of developing that lot. That is a possibility for the future.

The City Manager said this really comes down to what is the priority of the City Council. So, the Council had said that it wanted to activate space on Gilbo Ave. because mainly all the City's events are on Central Square and the City is looking to use the space on Gilbo Ave. and create something that brings that attention and breaks that sea of pavement. She said this would do that. The other thing that it does at a low cost, even at the higher payback period, is getting the majority of this pavilion funded by grant funding. The City's portion is either entirely offset during the life of the project or mostly offset. The payback period was outlined on the paper that the Public Works Director provided. So, the City Manager wanted to give all the background on how we got here in terms of making the decision, the timeline, and the money that has been spent today on the project that has not yet been reimbursed.

Councilor Workman said the City Manager answered a couple of her questions, the main one being the timeline for completion or start of the project, because she thought that would sway a lot of the Council's discussion/decision making. Her other big remaining question was about the life of the structure itself in the solar panels. She saw the payback time, but she was thinking for options for the actual design itself. The City Manager believed the City was using a 20-year life cycle for the project. She said that was what Public Works had looked at. For Option One, you will see on your chart, that the payback period for the City's portion goes beyond the 20-year life cycle. Without the additional panels, it is just under 26 years. With the additional panels, it is just over 22 years. The payback period is much faster in Option Two because it does not have the shading that's impacting the production of the solar. So, the City Manager said: do you want to preserve the parking lot for future development or do you want to maximize the solar part of this project to have a quicker payback period for the project itself for the City's match.

Councilor Filiault first said kudos to the MSFI Committee; he enjoyed sitting in the audience for this and said the Committee put a lot of time into this one. He said both options would provide enough solar power to fund and pay for all the lighting downtown: that was the original discussion the Council had way back when we were talking about this part of the downtown project, that the viability of it was whether it would pay itself back. Councilor Filiault said he would go with either way the Council wants to go because either one will provide enough power to provide all the lighting downtown, and that was the main selling point of this right from the beginning. He said it is a self-funding project. He wanted to point out one thing, which was if there is a potential developer coming down the road (an unknown), no matter where the City builds this, it is a pavilion; it is not a brick-and-mortar building. It is a pavilion with some solar panels on it and in the Councilor's opinion, it could be easily disassembled and reassembled somewhere else. He said it isn't rocket science. He did not think this was an issue where one site was going to be a win-win or a lose-lose. He thought wherever they put it would be fine. Councilor Filiault reiterated that they would be getting enough solar power on it to provide enough lighting downtown and if a project comes downtown, it can always be moved around.

Mayor Kahn pointed out that with the grant dollars, if you just look at the payback period with the City dollars as the cost, these payback periods wind up being miniscule to the taxpayer, recognizing that payback periods are usually calculated on total costs. The City Manager said the payback periods that are on the memo from the Public Works Director are calculated based on the city's share of the project. Mayor Kahn said just on the \$400,000 and the City Manager said yes.

Councilor Haas thanked the City Manager for reminding the Council of what the original intent of this was on the Downtown Project: to invigorate the Gilbo Avenue area. He said its location on that side of the rail trail draws more interest in the rail trail and more activity there. He noted that the solar panels, which he is all in favor of, were an add-on and are a great use of that space, just as the church has done. He said everybody was nervous about how they would change that but said to look and it is fine. Now, he said this would be creating a little solar area here to brag on what we have in Keene, stating that it is all worthwhile. It would be great if we had a developer chomping at the bit to put up buildings here and grow this area, or even if the City had a plan for that; he said the City would get to a plan for that. he said the City could not wait for a plan and still get this done under the September 2028 deadline. He reinforced what Councilor Filiault said that this pavilion is not concrete; it is not welded steel. This is a Timber for Transit Grant, and this is mass timber bolted together so it would not be difficult to take down (there would be footings to deal with). He said it could all be reused and be put up in another location. Councilor Haas said the original intent is still good. He noted that this might even make that area more attractive to development: that it builds on the downtown and draws attention to the rail trail and works out that part of Gilbo Ave. So, he said he would love to see the City have a master plan that were out to bid or with developers but said the City was not there yet. Other than that, he said let's keep this thing and keep it going in Location One.

Councilor Tobin really appreciated all the people who had expressed concern about the location and said one of the things it did was challenge her to think differently and go back through the process of how the Council got here. She was reminded of one of the first meetings that she attended on the planning of the Downtown Infrastructure Project in 2017/2018 (the pre-pandemic timeline made her think of planning in a certain way). At that first meeting, which was a brainstorming session, one of the questions that was asked was, "how do you define downtown?" "Where are the boundaries of downtown?" She thought that how we look at Gilbo Ave. now, it would be easy to think that this was just kind of plopped there and that there was no plan, but said that is just how much this area downtown can evolve over the course of ten-ish years. Councilor Tobin said that while she could appreciate the concerns, she does think that if we never complete a plan and we are always reassessing and revisiting, we kind of end up getting stuck, and she thinks that sometimes when we second guess ourselves then we do kind of stall. She said that having a plan and looking at that once this is built for the whole Gilbo Ave. landscape is going to be helpful. She knew there was concern expressed about the shade, which was something that she thought about just in general. She mentioned solar panels if someone builds a building and said she thinks maybe that is something that the Council should look at some eventually and how to protect solar panels and their energy as a source. Councilor Tobin went back and forth between Options One and Two and said she would honestly be comfortable with either.

Mayor Kahn wanted Councilor Haas to understand that the Committee's current recommendation was for Option Two. Councilor Haas said he understood and would let the discussion roll a little bit more and then offer an amendment.

Councilor Ellis thought this was a great project and thought it was wonderful that we have grant funds to help activate downtown. She agreed with Councilors Haas and Greenwald that it makes sense to stick with Location One: it meets the metrics better than any of the other locations, it is the site that was originally identified as being the spot to activate downtown. Councilor Ellis thought that as Councilor Tobin said, we do not want to get stuck stalling. She said if they decide to go with Location Two instead, there would be more permitting and that creates more delays and costs. She said that going back to the original Location One would allow for proceeding more quickly and more efficiently without additional costs.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller did not really have a lot to say when this started but was thinking back on her time in Keene. One of her first memories of coming to Keene back in 2009 as a freshman was walking from Carl Hall down that little corridor and up through the fields there next to Gilbo Ave. late at night to the Port Authority Café. She was thinking about how similar that whole corridor had been the entire time she has lived in Keene: that is essentially just a wide street and a parking lot. She said that it would be nice to see things evolve as Keene grows and changes and for some things to look a little fresher in that area. Other than restaurants and businesses changing and some nice new murals on that on that strip, nothing has really changed in the 18 years here. She said it had been open and nothing, and if we want to start seeing more things come to that space, she thinks we need to move a chess piece here and there and this would hopefully be the first part of that.

Councilor Greenwald appreciated this discussion. He did not come into this to try to steer the discussion or advocate or try to push the Committee in any direction, so he was happy listening to this. An idea came to his mind: what we are building in essence is a giant carport and it is going to be open on one side. He knew this was the second part of the design, but pretty likely it was just going to be a flat roof and said if there is going to be a performance, it is going to be angled south, so the open end is going to be on the north end, so the performance is going that way, which he said made too much sense. In thinking of Option Two behind Margaritas, somehow, he was thinking that the roof would open/end going south but said that is not the case: the panels are going to be angled to the sun, open end north. He stated that all this is leading toward if it is behind Margaritas and the performance is there, it is kind of projecting into the trees and as the crowd gets larger, it is all over the bike path. He said in Option One, open end is to the street, and if it is a really good concert or whatnot, they put up the cement blocks and traffic barriers (i.e., safety things), so the performance can grow, and there would be a performance center, which maybe could spill into the whole of Gilbo Ave. Councilor Greenwald stood on not liking any of this, but if he had to pick one, he was leaning toward Option One.

Councilor Chalice appreciated all the conversation, but said public safety is the issue that bothers her the most. She was in support of option two because we are going to open onto the area. Number One, she said we are going to be generating more electricity. She has solar panels and said you do not put solar panels in an area where trees are going to shade. The logic just does not make sense. More importantly, she said the public safety is that Location Two would open onto

the path area and Location One would open on to Gilbo Ave. So, for very formal occasions, we will go through the whole very extensive rigmarole of putting all the concrete barriers and closing off Gilbo Ave., but for the rest of the time for the smaller events, we would be actually putting the public immediately alongside a travel lane. That made no sense to Councilor Chalice. She did not see putting people for the Farmers' Market and all those things along a travel lane; that just made no sense in her mind. So, Councilor Chalice supported Option Two for the solar generation and for keeping people that we are attracting to this area out of a travel lane and out of incurring additional costs for concrete for closing off Gilbo Ave. She reiterated that it made no sense to her.

A motion by Councilor Haas was duly seconded by Councilor Ellis to amend the Committee report by changing to Option One for the location.

Councilor Lake appreciated the lively discussion and said there was certainly a lot to consider. He said that when he was thinking about the two different options, he thought there were pros and cons to both from a functional standpoint. He heard the comments about public safety, about where the people would be during performances and thought it is again a little bit of plus or minus both ways. The piece that was speaking to him a little bit more was the financial piece. He said if we go with Option Two, where they are not shaded by the trees, the simple payback if we put the whole thing with solar panels is 8.5 years shorter at \$30,000 per year in today's dollars; he said that is quite a bit. He said we essentially have a free project here plus some and it was really hard for him to argue against that, but he did understand that there is a little bit of additional cost with that. He knew there was talk about permitting, so he asked the City Manager to clarify the two different costs: for option two, it was a little bit more and he asked if that was a little bit of extra cost there (1) accounted for in the payback period and (2) is that accounting for all of the additional permitting and everything that we had that we would have to go through. The City Manager said yes.

Councilor Jones said nobody was wrong here and everybody was right in what they were saying: it is just that they had different opinions. Whether it is Option One or Option Two, Councilor Jones said it is still a chicken or the egg thing: the egg is the structure, and the chicken is Gilbo Avenue. He thought the Council should do the chicken before the egg. He knew some people wanted to lay the egg and let it grow into chickens. He suggested the chicken first.

Councilor Tobin said that if she remembered correctly, Option Two was going to require moving the EV chargers and she asked the associated cost. The City Manager said she did not know whether the Public Works Director had a sense, but the City Manager said there is an additional cost of moving the EV charging stations. The City Manager noted there was a concern with truck traffic entering the parking lot because of the location. So, they did talk at MSFI a little bit about that issue as well.

Councilor Haas said he respected the question about safety as raised by Councilor Chalice for traffic on Gilbo Ave. To Councilor Haas it works toward one of our other goals, which for some is traffic calming and would include appropriate lane markings and identifying signage or other things that could help slow the traffic through there and make that a little safer. Second, Councilor Haas said he respected the economics of this situation. He called it a no brainer that

Option Two would be better long-term cost wise but. Following on with Councilor Jones, Councilor Haas said he thought the chicken was important here and he was presuming that Councilor Jones meant, “build the damn thing in the place we said we were going to do it” as the chicken and then the egg will come later. Councilor Haas said his point was that the Council should progress, as Councilor Workman pointed out, that the City had this plan for a while to revitalize Gilbo Ave. and make it more connected with the downtown and grow our activities out.

Councilor Ellis said her understanding was that the Airport solar project was going to be creating so much solar power that the City cannot even use it all, and the City is going to have to sell it off. So, she did not think the City was shorting itself: we are still going to have plenty of solar power and it is still going to be an essentially free project; she said just a little bit slower if we go with Option One. All that said, Councilor Ellis said she would support it either way, saying she thinks it is a great project. Still, she thought the Council should stick with Option One.

Mayor Kahn said we got into this because of trying to animate or give some life to Gilbo Ave. He said he heard that comment and thought it was supported by the fact that the primary purpose was to give life to Gilbo Ave., however the power generation is used. He said how much is generated is a second question. The City Manager said she just wanted to provide an answer to the question about moving the EV chargers, noting that it would cost about \$10,000 and it is included in the cost of Option Two for two chargers.

Councilor Favolise observed that matters he anticipates will be straightforward and require little discussion often end up generating the most debate, and this was one such instance. He said this project seemed so simple when the City first got the grant, and we were going to build the thing, and we were going to have it up and everybody would be happy. Councilor Favolise still thinks everybody will be happy. He thinks some people might be happier than others. He had thought a lot about the location. He voted for Option Two at Committee based on the information that he had at the time. Councilor Favolise said he had some thoughtful communications with constituents. He had some thoughtful communications with business owners in the community. City staff have been very helpful in answering the questions on a short timeline here. He thought that he would be more inclined to change his vote from Committee and support this amendment in front of the Council if he felt like the choice was between no development in this commercial lot area vs. unlimited development in this commercial lot area, but that is not the choice as he understood it tonight. He said the development might look different and what exactly is possible might look different, but he really feels confident that development in that lot is not closed off entirely. He also wanted to say that he had thought about the Airport generation question in the same way that Councilor Ellis had. He did not know that having one project that pencils out well should be an incentive for us to not try to make other projects pencil out well. To Councilor Lake's point “I don't know that having one project that pencils out really well should be an incentive for us to not try to make other projects pencil out really well.” Councilor Favolise thought that the 8.5 year difference here is something he could not vote against here tonight. He said he just could not do that. Councilor Favolise appreciated the conversation. He noted that stop signs and solar panels probably take up 50%–60% of the Council's time and he would not have it any other way with the 14 folks around him.

Councilor Chadbourne said she was curious, noting the thing about Option Two is the elimination of existing parking. With parking being such a big issue downtown, she asked how many spaces it would eliminate and what would be the revenue lost by the spaces over the years. the City Manager did not have the number readily but believed it was one to three and the reason for that is because they have to be located inside the lot, whereas at the other location they are doing it over the parking lot spaces.

Mayor Kahn repeated the amendment: to go with Option One, which is to the north side of Gilbo Ave. and the north side of the bike path.

Councilor Lake stated that on the idea of losing parking spaces, because he also does not necessarily want to lose parking either, he looked through the recent parking report on the Downtown Project. If he was not mistaken, this is one of the least utilized parking areas downtown: it essentially never hits maximum capacity, except maybe during shows at The Colonial Theatre. He stated that the City is using overflow parking in other lots anyways to accommodate all those people. Councilor Lake did not think that this would negatively impact the general parking downtown, even if we were to lose a couple of spots because again, most of the time this is one of our less utilized parking locations.

Councilor Jones asked for clarity about the City Manager's explanation: the one that just goes over is Option One and the one that takes one to three spaces is Option Two. The City Manager said yes.

On a vote of seven Councilors voting in favor and eight Councilors voting in opposition, the motion to amend the Committee report by changing to Option One for the location failed. Councilors Filiault, Tobin, Jones, Haas, Ellis, Powers, and Greenwald voted in the minority.

Councilor Jones wanted to remind the Council that in the return on investment, they did look at a lot of factors for 22 years. He said what they did not look at is the potential loss of ratables if adjacent buildings are limited to five stories or less. He said 22 years of two or three stories is a lot of potential ratables to lose. So, he said there is kind of exchange there.

Councilor Filiault called it a great conversation tonight (i.e., stop signs and pavilions). He was on the short end of this vote but thought the Council should show complete support and the full Council should vote for this option to unanimously show that they are all in this together.

Councilor Workman respected the conversation tonight and the way that the first vote went. She particularly appreciated Councilor Tobin's point and agreed. Councilor Workman does not typically like to put things on More Time and kick the can down the road, but with such a close vote, like the last vote and so much discussion (she said she knew the Council had a lot of its questions answered). She said this was not very time sensitive.

A motion by Councilor Workman was duly seconded by Councilor Greenwald to send this item back to the MSFI Committee for additional public comment and discussion.

Councilor Haas said that given the closeness of the vote, it shows that maybe we are a little uncertain on this as to what is the best place for it to go. He thought it was a great idea to take another look at it.

Councilor Favolise thought it was difficult to imagine what the Council would discuss one month from now that we did not discuss tonight. He also said that sometimes a close vote means that your side won by a vote. Sometimes it means you lost by a vote. He does not think it often means that the Council is uncertain about the decision.

Councilor Tobin reiterated that she could have voted either way on that because she felt comfortable with either location. She also wanted to highlight that this was before the MSFI Committee back in July 2026, before the Council was on break and requested More Time specifically to get more public input. She said there had been a few events since then. She thought this had been a great discussion and she honestly appreciated it. Councilor Tobin thought a close vote honestly could also mean that a lot of us might support either option. So, she thought she would be comfortable voting tonight.

Councilor Roberts said he was not going to support sending the report back to Committee because he said finally the people could see how the City Council is supposed to work: they had a detailed discussion and anybody who wanted to speak could a couple of times. So, he said now if they send it back to Committee, whoever changes their vote, the people will know who got their hand twisted. He said everybody voted with their conscience right now. He said what would change in another month is a little arm twisting and politics being played. Councilor Roberts said the Council did what it was supposed to do tonight: gave the people what they elected us to do, to discuss it. He said the Council is not supposed to get a 15-0 on every vote.

Ellis noted one of the first things she said was delays adding more costs. She thought the vote was the vote, and the Council should move forward tonight.

On a vote with three Councilors voting in favor and 12 Councilors voting in opposition, the motion to send this item back to the MSFI Committee for additional public comment and discussion failed. Councilors Workman, Jones, and Haas voted in the minority.

Councilor Roberts stated that he would not vote to support the Committee report. He said the reason he was not going to support it is because we do need housing in Keene and we want is as close to downtown as possible. He goes to Manchester and other cities and sees them building four to six story buildings full of apartments with parking garages attached; some are self-contained and even have their own stores. He said the only place Keene could do that downtown would be in that Gilbo Ave. area. He said the City does not get free money from the government, sometimes the government gives the City money and forces us to spend it how they want (like someone giving a donation to a college to put their name on it). Right now, he thought the most important part, for the future if we are going to grow, we must have small apartments. He said we have had people come up here and look at workforce housing. He remarked that no one can afford the current cost of a home. If we want people to come to and stay in Keene Councilor Roberts said we have to have affordable housing and the only way to do that is to do

so like Europe and Asia and build up, and limit the spaces, and have contained parking right there. Councilor Roberts said he could not support giving that potential for the future.

Councilor Williams agreed with Councilor Roberts that it is a very important place for housing and he very much wants to see housing go there. He said if it were a question of a builder doing four stories if the pavilion were there and six stories without it, he said the City would move the pavilion. Councilor Williams thought it was important to build something there because he remembered about six years ago there were many plans to do an arts corridor in that area and he did not love the idea mainly because it did not include housing. So, he voted against the arts corridor at that time. He said maybe that was the right choice, maybe it was not. Regardless, Councilor Williams said the place had not changed since, the City can not just allow it to stay that way. He noted that if there were a developer on the horizon ready to build on this spot, he would jump at it, but there are several spots in that area, which are similar. At this point he did not see holding up this project on the hope that housing will come; he very much hopes it will come and when it does let's embrace it. For now, he said let's build this pavilion.

The motion to carry out the intent of the first MSFI Committee recommendation carried with 12 Councilors voting in favor and three voting in opposition. Councilors Jones, Roberts, and Greenwald voted in the minority.

A second Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, on a vote of 3–1 recommending Concept Option 1 with the flat, monoslope roof be selected as the preferred alternative for the Gilbo Avenue Solar Pavilion. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the second Committee recommendation was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried with 12 Councilors voting in favor and three voting in opposition. Councilors Jones, Roberts, and Greenwald voted in the minority.

Mayor Kahn called a recess from 8:48 PM to 8:53 PM.

MSFI REPORT - PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the Partner City Committee's presentation as informational. Mayor Kahn filed the report as informational.

The Mayor noted that written reports submitted by City Boards and Commissions were provided to Councilors on their desks. They will also be added to the Board pages on the City website for public review.

MSFI REPORT - CONTINUED DISCUSSION: ERIK MURPHY - PETITION - SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AT THE SOUTH LINCOLN STREET AND ROXBURY STREET INTERSECTION

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and obtain sight distance easements, and that City staff reassess intersection conditions in six months to

confirm improved conditions. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT - ROADWAY SAFETY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the Roadway Safety Action Plan Update as informational. Mayor Kahn accepted the report as informational.

MSFI REPORT - DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATE

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the Downtown Infrastructure Project Update as informational. Mayor Kahn accepted the report as informational.

Councilor Greenwald provided an update. At the last MSFI meeting, a downtown update was on the agenda, and there was a huge change that came as a shock to the Committee. The construction company, Casella, as a part of their contract, can change the order of the construction. He said originally, it was planned to start with Central Square and to work their way south. Councilor Greenwald said Casella came up with a better plan, and he agreed that it is a better plan. The crew will be working at Central Square, and another crew will be starting down by Water Street heading north, so Councilor Greenwald called them two armies coming together and said he looked forward to the driving of the golden pipe. He said it made an awful lot of sense, but he thought it was very important to communicate with the merchants, particularly on the south end, that what they thought was three years out would be October 22, 2026, when some of the trees would be coming down near Bagel Works and they would be doing the prep work. The intention is to try to get the underground work done during this construction season coming north. Nothing would be disturbed on the sidewalks, so they are not taking any of the lateral connections or streetscape. He urged the Council to read through the report carefully because it has a lot of information within it about the accelerated work schedule, with a goal of finishing early. Councilor Greenwald said it was important for this to be communicated to the public, and the media would get a copy of this so it could be communicated. He said the Downtown Ombudsman would have a lot of work to do during the next week.

MONADNOCK VIEW CEMETERY EXPANSION PROJECT FUNDING ALLOCATION

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the Monadnock View Cemetery Expansion Project Funding Allocation Update as informational. Mayor Kahn accepted the report as informational.

2027 HIGHWAY SAFETY AGENCY GRANT

A Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept and expend the grant

from the New Hampshire Highway Safety Agency to fund Highway Safety Grant- Keene. A motion by Councilor Powers was duly seconded by Councilor Lake.

Councilor Tobin commented that a lot of what was discussed would have been great to hear as a part of the Roadway Safety Update because a lot of these things are addressed in there, specifically the populations that that they are talking about.

The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE KEENE COMMUNITY POWER PROGRAM — ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE; *AND* PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE KEENE COMMUNITY POWER PLAN

The first Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the report from Energy and Climate Committee, in support of proposed amendments to the Keene Community Power program, be accepted as informational. Mayor Kahn accepted the report as informational.

A second Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee report was read, unanimously recommending adoption of the amendments to the Keene Community Power Plan. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Lake

City Manager Elizabeth Ferland noted that Councilor Favolise talked very passionately about this at their Committee meeting. The City Manager said the good news is that the City's rates through the Community Power Program, in all the categories, are still lower than they ever were. She noted how automatically enrolling people on the Electrical Assistance Program and the lower Basic option is great, but we also need to get the word out so that people know that it is really easy to make this change. If you had a third-party provider that was providing your electricity and that contract ended, you would be put back on the default Eversource rate and if you do not take the initiative and go back and select Community Power, you are missing out because all of Keene's categories are lower than the Eversource electric rates. So, the City would be pushing out some additional information to make sure people realize that.

The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

First, the City Manager reported on the Airport solar project. The City received significant approval for the Airport solar project this week. The FAA has formally approved the use of approximately 24 acres of Airport property for the solar facility, finding that the project will not materially interfere with current or foreseeable aviation uses and will provide a net benefit to the Airport; the City knew that would be the case, but you have to go through a somewhat long process with the FAA in order for that approval and did recently receive it. There were some administrative steps that we would still need to take. We do need to update the Airport Layout Plan that will be filed and that needs to be done before we start construction. Over the winter we

will also need to finalize a market rate lease agreement between the City and the Airport; the City Manager had talked about how the Airport is funded differently and said it is important that we go through the process and create this lease. City Manager Ferland said we also need to execute our net metering agreements, which she had mentioned. She said the City had some conversations with Cheshire County, and they had tentatively agreed to participate in our net metering program, and the town of Swanzey is also interested as well. Over the winter, she said we need to execute a rec agreement that is for our renewable energy credits and an O&M agreement for the project to maintain the solar project after it has been built. Those are some of the things we have yet to accomplish, but the City Manager said we are close to starting construction. The target date was October 12, 2026 and the project will go through the winter; they want to do the work through the winter because it will be less disruptive to the habitat. We hope to be live next spring or in the summer at the very latest.

Next, the City Manager was pleased to share the City of Keene received notice that we were awarded the Federal Safer Grant. The award provides just over \$1.6 million in federal funding over three years to support the hiring of up to eight additional firefighters. This is a significant opportunity for the City and comes at a time when we have been having lots of conversations about staffing, overtime, and minimum staffing requirements. The City will be responsible for a match during this grant period and then eventually at the end of the grant for the full amount for the firefighters. There will also be additional first year costs associated with hiring, training, equipment, and outfitting them. So, before bringing this forward to the Council for action, staff will review the final grant terms and develop a financial analysis, so the Council understands both the immediate and the long-term financial commitment that the City is making when we accept this award. Additionally, the Fire Staffing Committee was scheduled to meet on Wednesday, October 7, 2026 to review the award and develop a recommendation regarding implementation and deployment of the additional personnel. Following that work, staff would bring the grant acceptance through the necessary steps for the City Council. The grant provides federal funding toward the cost of the firefighters. The City Manager said the City will also need to ask for additional appropriations from Council for our match for the grant. So, she said there was a plan for the 2026–2027 season, which is to partner with Hundred Nights again to operate a warming center at the United Church of Christ (UCC) from December 7, 2026 through April 15, 2027. That will provide 129 nights of shelter, compared to the only 71 nights that we were able to provide last year. She said St. James Church has also been participating in these conversations and will provide shelter during periods when the UCC location is unavailable, so this will provide a good, coordinated approach. The group has also (the Mayor is participating in these meetings) been looking at other alternatives should there be need for overflow or should there be an issue with either location. The City Manager called it a good group conversation and effort to make sure we have a good plan for the winter. The City has again budgeted \$50,000 to support this effort.

Lastly, the City Manager noted that the Transportation Heritage Trail was just about completed. So, the project that the City had been working on was coming to completion at the end of this month. There would soon be a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate that work.

Mayor Kahn recognized that the warming shelter is staffed by a couple of full-time staff that the Hundred Nights shelter takes responsibility for hiring, but there are many volunteer opportunities

and many people in our community who do step up. He said the Hundred Hights folks and the UCC Church folks have been looking for volunteers; the shelter will open at 9:00 PM in the evenings and closes in the mornings. He asked everyone to please consider it, pass it on, and have people get in touch with Hundred Nights Shelter.

REPORT – CITY OFFICERS AND DEPARTMENTS - RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY
REVITALIZATION ZONE (RPRZ) APPLICATION 128-130 SCHOOL STREET -
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A memorandum was read from Community Development Director Paul Andrus, recommending that the Mayor set a public hearing regarding the Residential Property Revitalization Zone (RPRZ) application submitted by Evan Ray, owner of the property located at 128-130 School Street. Mayor Kahn set a Public Hearing to be held October 15, 2026 at 7:05 PM and referred the application to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee meeting of October 22, 2026.

Mayor Kahn reminded the Council that there would also be a second Public Hearing on October 15, 2026 at 7:00 PM on Ordinance O-2026-09: Land Development Code Amendments related to Short Term Rental Uses.

REPORT – CITY OFFICERS AND DEPARTMENTS - LET IT SHINE - 2026 PUMPKIN
FESTIVAL LICENSE AMENDMENT - CITY MANAGER

A memorandum was read from City Manager Elizabeth Ferland, recommending that the City Council suspend its rules and approve an amendment to the license previously granted to Let It Shine, Inc. for the Keene Pumpkin Festival on October 17, 2026, to authorize City staff, in coordination with the event sponsor, to make adjustments to the approved event footprint, road closures, and areas of use based upon the status and conditions of active downtown construction, including allowing event activities within or adjacent to construction areas when conditions safely permit, provided such adjustments are consistent with public safety and the general scope of the approved event, and further, that Let It Shine, Inc. shall not be responsible for City service costs associated with the 2026 Keene Pumpkin Festival that exceed the amount of Community Event Funding awarded to the event.

A motion by Councilor Filiault to suspend Sections 26 and 33 of the Rules of Order to act on this time sensitive matter was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

Mayor Kahn recognized the City Manager for comments. The City Manager, Elizabeth Ferland, talked about this and got a consensus from the Council about it at their prior meeting. She recapped that the original Pumpkin Festival license had already been approved before tonight, and so tonight's action is a limited amendment to allow the use of Central square and provide flexibility as downtown construction conditions change. During a recent discussion about the Downtown Infrastructure Project and the recent Music Festival, Councilors, downtown businesses, and the Mayor all expressed an interest in keeping community active in the downtown and using Central Square when conditions allow. So, the City spoke with Let It Shine about expanding some of the festival activity into Central Square and the organizers, some of

whom were present, were willing to do so and accommodate that request. Then, there was a Protocol meeting last Thursday to review the expanded footprint. Central Square has been used for events in the past and staff did not identify any additional safety concerns that would prevent its use under the current conditions. There are no power pedestals in Central Square, so activities there would be limited to displays or vendors that do not require City power. Tonight's amendment also provides flexibility for City staff, in coordination with the event's sponsor, to adjust the approved event footprint, road closures, and the area's use based on the status and conditions of active downtown construction. This is the language that we are intending to put in future Community Event licenses to make sure that we have that flexibility moving forward. It would allow us to make these changes because oftentimes these licenses are approved months in advance and the conditions may change and would allow some additional flexibility. The financial provision in tonight's motion is specific to the Pumpkin Festival. Let It Shine agreed to expand the festival into Central Square at the City's request, and the intent is to ensure the organization is not financially disadvantaged by accommodating that request. The provision is not intended to become standard language in future Community Event licenses. This is really just a one-time thing and what that language says in the motion is that they will not be responsible for costs above the allocated \$10,000 in Community Funding for the Festival. She reminded the Council that Community Event Funding is to offset the cost of City services, when we bring in Police and Fire and we put up blocks for the road, all of that is part of that Community Event Funding. In this case, if the Council approved the motion before them, Let It Shine would not be responsible for anything beyond the \$10,000 that had been allocated for their community event. With the Festival coming up on October 17, 2026, it was necessary to suspend the Rules. The City Manager said she felt comfortable with this. The Protocol group came together quickly; it was a large group of many departments, who worked with the event sponsor and spent a lot of time looking at how to accommodate this request. The City Manager thought they were in a good position to move this forward.

Mayor Kahn recognized that, aside from the financial piece in the motion, this is not just a one-off for the Pumpkin Festival. This language related to the area of use would become a part of future license agreements where Central Square or any of the downtown area could possibly be amended from the original protocol document or to the original approval. It grants the City Manager the opportunity to amend those based on conditions within the active construction area. Mayor Kahn called it a good, timely conversation and thanked the City Manager for taking it up with staff and coming forward with a recommendation.

Councilor Filiault thanked the City Manager, City staff, and those from Let It Shine, noting that this was not an easy task, but it happened rapidly based on some of the concerns from downtown merchants about a previous event. Councilor Filiault said kudos to everybody for jumping on board and coming together amicably and quickly, stating that it was appreciated.

A motion by Councilor Filiault was duly seconded by Councilor Jones to amend the license previously granted to Let It Shine, Inc. for the Keene Pumpkin Festival on October 17, 2026, to authorize City staff, in coordination with the event sponsor, to make adjustments to the approved event footprint, road closures, and areas of use based upon the status and conditions of active downtown construction, including allowing event activities within or adjacent to construction areas when conditions safely permit, provided such adjustments are consistent with public safety

and the general scope of the approved event, and further, that Let It Shine, Inc. shall not be responsible for City service costs associated with the 2026 Keene Pumpkin Festival that exceed the amount of Community Event Funding awarded to the event.

Mayor Kahn reiterated what the City Manager already said that the last statement about the cost would be a one-off that would not be applied to other events. The Mayor said it is disruptive to this event to have this agreement as close to the Festival as it is happening, so the City recognizes there are some additional adjustments the organizers are needing to make and this is an exceptional provision.

The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

REPORT – CITY OFFICERS AND DEPARTMENTS - FISCAL YEAR 2025 ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT AWARD ACCEPTANCE - FIRE CHIEF

A memorandum was read from Fire Chief Gregory Seymour, recommending that the City Council suspend its Rules due to the time-sensitive nature of the federal grant award and authorize the City Manager to do all things necessary to accept and expend the Fiscal Year 2025 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) award in the amount of \$198,181.81; approve the required City match of \$19,819.19; and approve the reallocation of \$10,590.35 in remaining funds from the FY27 Ventilator Replacement CIP project, account 00000300-534080, to be used toward the required grant match, with the remaining \$9,227.84 of the match to be funded from the Fire Department operating budget, account 40200000-523110, for a total approved project budget of \$218,000.00. The grant funds and required City match will be used for the purchase of powered ambulance cots, powered cot loading systems, and powered stair chairs for the Keene Fire Department's frontline ambulances.

A motion by Councilor Powers to suspend Section 26 of the Rules of Order to act on this time sensitive federal grant award was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne for a second. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

Mayor Kahn recognized comments from Fire Chief Seymour, who explained that he was here tonight looking for authorizations to do all things necessary to accept the fiscal year 2025 Assistance to Firefighters Grant award in the amount of \$198,181.81. This grant will support the purchase of powered ambulance cots, powered loading systems, and powered steer chairs for the Department's frontline ambulances. The equipment will improve the Department's ability to safely move and transport patients, reduce manual lifting demands placed on firefighters and paramedics, and provide greater standardization across the frontline EMS fleet. As a condition of the grant, the City is responsible for a local match of \$19,819.19. Resulting in a total project value of \$218,000.00. He said they were also requesting authorization to reappropriate \$10,590.35 in remaining funds from the FY2027 ventilator replacement CIP project toward the required match. The remaining \$9,227.84 would be funded through the Department's Operating Budget. No additional appropriations will be requested. The request to suspend the Rules is based only on the time sensitive nature of the federal award and requirement for the City to complete the acceptance in a 30-day time limit. Chief Seymour said that with the Council's approval, the City will be able to leverage approximately \$998,000 in federal funding toward the

\$218,000 investment and completely outfit all of our frontline ambulances, making them all the same.

Councilor Powers noted that this was time sensitive because the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee would not be meeting this week. More relative to it is that this is 2025 money, and Councilor Powers said all the sudden we are spending it, which is happening to every community. He said unless you all put together to get these things in a bottom drawer, you do not get another opportunity to do this. He called it another good reason why this kind of government works.

A motion by Councilor Powers was duly seconded by Councilor Chadbourne to authorize the City Manager to do all things necessary to accept and expend the Fiscal Year 2025 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) award in the amount of \$198,181.81; approve the required City match of \$19,819.19; and approve the reallocation of \$10,590.35 in remaining funds from the FY27 Ventilator Replacement CIP project, account 00000300-534080, to be used toward the required grant match, with the remaining \$9,227.84 of the match to be funded from the Fire Department operating budget, account 40200000-523110, for a total approved project budget of \$218,000.00. The grant funds and required City match will be used for the purchase of powered ambulance cots, powered cot loading systems, and powered stair chairs for the Keene Fire Department's frontline ambulances.

Councilor Lake asked the Chief if this would be entirely new equipment or replacing something existing. He also asked the Chief if he had a general understanding of the life cycle of this equipment or how long the equipment should last for. Chief Seymour replied that the powered cots and power load systems are two that are new to the City; the primary ambulances are still working off manual systems, which was identified years ago as an area for injury and safety. So, he said they would try to include this in their new ambulance purchases moving forward but that is a very slow process. He said they were fortunate that this was one of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) priorities, so the City was able to complete it now, about six years earlier than otherwise. Chief Seymour reported that the current life cycle on these is anywhere from seven to 10 years, which he called pretty good, and he noted that a trade-in is offered when they are replaced. This will bring all of the ambulances up to the same standard.

Councilor Jones wanted to say that the Chief and Fire Department had been doing very good with grants lately and thanked them for all they do. Councilor Jones looked forward to this new equipment and hoped he would never get to see it.

The motion carried unanimously with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING - RELATING TO THE INSTALLATION OF TWO STOP SIGNS ON ROXBURY STREET - ORDINANCE O-2026-15

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending the City Council vote against Ordinance O-2026-15. Mayor Kahn filed the Committee Report. Ordinance O-2026-15, Relating to the Installation of Two Stop Signs on Roxbury Street, was read into the record for a second time. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to

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adopt Ordinance O-2026-15 was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. On a roll call vote with zero Councilors voting in favor and 15 Councilors voting in opposition, Ordinance O-2026-15 was unanimously defeated.

RELATING TO THE ALTERATION OF THOMPSON ROAD - RESOLUTION R-2026-37

Councilor Greenwald reminded Councilors that they could not vote if they did not attend the site visit.

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending adopting Resolution R-2026-37. Mayor Kahn filed the Committee Report. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt Resolution R-2026-37 was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried with 11 Councilors voting in favor and five abstaining. Councilors Jones, Roberts, Chadbourne, Ruttle-Miller and Powers abstained.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to go into non-public session to discuss land matters pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d), legal matters pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(L), and litigation matters pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(e) was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

The session began at 9:37 PM. The regular session reconvened at 9:52 PM.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald was duly seconded by Councilor Powers to seal the minutes of the non-public session as divulgence of the information would render the proposed actions ineffective. 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 9:53 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk