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The inauguration of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, January 4, 2024. The City Clerk, Patty Little, called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and announced that Jay V. Kahn was elected as Mayor. Councilor Mitchell H. Greenwald administered the Oath of Office to Mayor Elect Kahn, and former Mayor George S. Hansel presented the gavel to Mayor Kahn, who thanked Mr. Hansel for his leadership and help during this transition. The City Clerk called roll for the Councilors-elect: Laura E. Tobin, Robert C. Williams, Edward J. Haas, Raleigh C. Ormerod, Kate M. Bosley, Bryan J. Lake, Michael J. Remy, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Randy L. Filiault, & Thomas F. Powers were present. Attorney Edward J. Burke administered the Oath of Office to the Councilors-elect, who were all presented with a pin of the City's seal. The City Clerk called the roll for all City Councilors: Kate M. Bosley, Laura E. Tobin, Michael J. Remy, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Edward J. Haas, Philip M. Jones, Andrew M. Madison, Raleigh C. Ormerod, Bryan J. Lake, Catherine I. Workman, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Thomas F. Powers, & Mitchell H. Greenwald were present. Kris E. Roberts was absent.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Rabbi Daniel Aronson delivered the Invocation. Former Kid Mayor for the Day, Shrihan Budakoti, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Mayor Kahn provided the following inaugural address:

A not so funny thing happened to me on the way to the Forum, COVID caught up with me. But after some quick footwork by our City staff we are finally holding our 2024 City Council Inauguration Ceremony. In my 35 years in Keene, there have been eight mayors but only three city managers. The continuity of City leadership over that time has been preserved by our City's professional staff. I want to thank them for their service, professionalism and dedication.

I also extend my appreciation for the services provided by the City's 350 employees, 100 of whom are part-time or seasonal. It's because of City staff that Keene residents benefit from quality services in the City. And as I begin to lay out some of the challenges and opportunities that we as a City Council will face over the next couple years, the first priority I recognize is retaining our City's Charter officers—City Manager, Attorney, Clerk, Treasurer—and supporting their staff from Public Works to Police and Fire, to Parks and Recreation, to Finance, the Library, and Human Services, so that we ensure the City has the talent needed to sustain city services. Having recently served state government, I know that governments at all levels, is facing staffing challenges currently and over the coming years.

And while recognizing staff, I want to thank the City Clerk, Patty Little, and the Clerk's staff for their efforts bringing us to this day. Administering an election process takes enormous coordination, as does preparing to seat a new City Council. And this is my opportunity to ask the public to support our well-run elections by volunteering to assist the Clerk's Office in

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administering the upcoming presidential primary election. As the first in the nation primary election state, we need to demonstrate that nobody does elections better than we do in NH.

Since retiring from Keene State College where I worked for 27 years as vice president and a year as interim president, I've served on the City Council and in the state Senate. Through these elected roles I've gained legislative and public policy skills and personal relationships that will help me as an incoming mayor. However, in the run-up to this day, I recognize what my mayoral predecessors no doubt did as well, there is only one mayor.

Having served three terms in the NH Senate, inevitably, people ask me what are my perceived differences. I reply that most notably, there are no political caucuses, no partisan divides, nor geographic differences.

All of us serving on the City Council live in the same community. We are a more heterogeneous group, made up of self-employed and mid-career professionals, business owners, retirees, local high school and local college graduates, local community volunteers. We live, play and work in the same community and that is what makes local government distinct and most impactful on people's lives.

And I believe we as a City Council are united in a mission to make our community, Keene, more successful in the future than we've been in our past. Working together—Councilors, staff, and citizens—we can meet that obligation.

This past week, we learned of the passing of one of our past mayors. Jim Masiello was a big man with a big personality and no doubt he served Keene well. I didn't know Jim well enough to tell stories about him, but I did know one of his predecessors, Bob Mallat, very well. Bob was mayor of Keene from 1962 to 1966, during which time Keene was designated an all-American city.

Bob served Keene State College long enough and well enough that he rose to be a vice president for resource administration prior to my arrival. I was recruited to Keene State College as a candidate for Vice President for Finance and Planning in 1988. Bob was on the search committee through which I was recommended. Inevitably our roles would overlap and when Bob retired his functions passed over to me. But for six years we served the College together. Bob's favorite term when he faced a problem, was bull and jam. When Bob played football at Keene High, he was the blocking bull in bull and jam. Bob was a big personality like Jim Masiello and he could be a bull.

In my first six months on the job, when Bob would introduce me at events, he'd say meet Jay Karn, our VP for Finance and Planning. It would annoy me that he'd always mispronounce my name. Around the holiday season, I finally got to meet Bob's family. At the President's residence Bob introduced Cheryl and me to his wife, Normer. And I finally understood something about Bob's Boston east coast accent, because I always call Normer, by the way her name was spelled, Norma.

I've learned a lot about New England and New Hampshire over my 35 years in Keene. Granite Staters are resilient, independent, persistent, frugal and witty. I cover at least four of those five. We are equally a region with people born here and those who moved here to enjoy a lifestyle that in spite of progress made over time remains unique, represented by a love of history, innovation and the great outdoors. Thank you, Dan White, whose Monadnock film recently reminded us of our region's past and what we cherish about living in the Monadnock region.

Something that comes from being responsible for planning is you appreciate futurists. Over the next two years, Keene will undertake a Community Master Plan process that will guide City development into the 2030s. In that process the City Council will engage with the Master Plan Committee, which is a function of the Keene Planning Board, supported by City Community Development staff and a specialized team of consultants. Community focus conversations and updates to the Planning Lands and Licenses Committee will occur during the 18-month project.

A master planning process doesn't mean everything gets placed on hold. The City will continue finalizing plans for its downtown renovation project and other projects in the pipeline. Learning from the past year, and led by the Council's Municipal Services Committee, citizen focus groups will be consulted at many opportunities. We'll begin at the MSFI January meeting with a schedule and progress update to which the community is invited.

We are a community that needs well planned growth if we are to sustain our quality of life. If that's in doubt for you, consider that Keene faces more unfilled job openings than ever and an aging workforce with fewer younger aged people to fill those jobs.

The National Conference for State Legislators recently published that for the 2nd year in row the biggest issue in 2024 for state legislatures is workforce. Advances in workforce development take years to evolve. So, we have no time to wait.

Keeping talent in our community is a key strategy to planned population growth. That begins with education leaders building work-based learning into their curricula and employers creating incentives for students to explore work in their needed fields. The NH School Administrator Association set a goal that by 2025 all New Hampshire high school students would graduate with a workforce ready credential. It's not only high school students that need internships and work-based learning opportunities, its college graduates as well. Many studies show that pre-graduation internships are pathways that lead people living locally to fill local employment needs.

For example, we can relate to the need for a more responsive mental healthcare system. The state's approach includes more beds at the state hospital and also more responsive and better community-based services. We have input to the state hospital through our elected state officials. But the Keene community has responsibility for assuring our community-based services are up to the task.

For five years while I served in the state Senate, I worked with Gary Barnes who was the executive director of MAPS Counseling Services and Phil Wysik of Monadnock Family Services to lower barriers to expanding the mental health workforce in Keene. One of those barriers was getting the State's Medicaid insurance companies to reimburse for clinical counseling interns who counsel Medicaid recipients. Because of Medicaid reimbursements being so low, those clients tell Gina Pasquale, today's MAPS director, that they make 10 or more calls to get an appointment which is often weeks out from their point of need. Today MAPS has three unpaid interns under supervision of licensed counselors and six paid resident students, who are providing mental health services to the region's most underserved population. One of the past residents has been hired by MAPS as a full-time counselor. That's 10 new clinicians in our community. There is fruit on the tree, but the tree has a way to go before it's fully matured.

There are other examples of building our workforce from within.

- *Call up Cheshire Medical Center and you'll hear their call waiting script advertising the internships they're offering prospective employees;*
- *The Keene Manufacturing Consortium led by Mayor Hansel recently wrote our Keene school district pleading the case for manufacturing internships being built into Cheshire Career Center's curriculum; and*
- *One of the high impact learning practices used by liberal arts campuses like Keene State College is internships. In our conversation about sustaining the College-City Commission, President Treadwell and I agreed that it's important for the Commission to work on building more internships with and around the City.*
- *And I want to work on the idea of establishing a City Youth Council that promotes civic service and civic engagement in our youth before they graduate high school.*

We can envision pathways to growing our own future workforce and engaged citizens. At the same time, attracting talent from beyond our region, in-migration, is a more competitive effort and in some fields in-migration is necessary to fill our workforce needs.

In-migration has been a significant component of New Hampshire's growth over the past decade. University of New Hampshire demographer, Ken Johnson, published this past October, that a majority of New Hampshire's residents were not born in the state, but moved here from another state or country. That contrasts with the statistics for the nation overall, as well as the figures for the other New England states.

This in-migration population is more diverse than NH-born residents, adding another dimension to our growth objective, diversity. In-migration residents need to find ways of bonding in our community with people similar to them. This means nurturing organizations that support diverse populations, be they ethnic, religious, age or gender-based organizations. And then we need to make certain we're building bridges across organizations so populations and support groups aren't siloed but are welcomed. This role is played by the City's Human Rights Committee and

the Monadnock Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging organization, groups that are important to a planned growth objective.

A welcoming environment means we've planned well for hosting an in-migrating person or family. Beyond offering competitive wages, we need to put some muscle behind the adopted City Council goal of finding creative ways to make quality housing as affordable and available as possible. The Council goal calls for 230 new housing units. Compare that to the Washington Park Apartments. That added 135 new units when opened in 2019, and that single project increased the City's tax base by \$13M, making it the 7th highest assessed property in Keene.

Not every housing project needs to be in a 4-story building in the center of the City. The City Council's recent actions have improved housing opportunities in rural areas and for accessory dwelling units in more densely populated residential neighborhoods. There are vacant properties throughout the City with nearby City supplied water and sewer that can accommodate multi-unit housing. There are also single-family homes, like on the east side of Keene, originally built for larger families, which can be converted to apartments. The City can take an active role in accelerating many types of additional housing opportunities.

There are many potential partners for workforce housing, including area employers who may want to provide housing to their workforce. And we can form regional partnerships with surrounding communities, like Swanzey, where there exists more developable land near to Keene employers. In other words, there's a lot the city can and needs to do to make room for additional people to live, work and enjoy the entertainment and recreational opportunities that Keene offers.

While the issues of planned growth, workforce development and housing are on the agenda for all NH cities, NH cities also share issues of housing instability and homelessness. We know these issues have co-determinants like substance use disorders, alcohol addiction and violence related trauma. We face holes in the delivery of services such as supportive services connected to recovery housing. It takes funding to fill those holes and build connected networks. I was reading a story about Houston's connected support network. Funding is the common factor to success. We will need to partner with other NH cities and state government to make sure we fill the gaps that otherwise people fall through and fail in their recovery efforts. I began working on those links this past weekend reaching out to newly elected mayors, so we can team-up in our funding request initiatives.

One thing that can set Keene apart is the pride we take in the accomplishments of our people and organizations. There's a collective responsibility to sharing our pride in the accomplishments of our people and organizations. With the Council's support, at every city council meeting for the remainder of 2024, that would be our next 23 meetings, I'm asking all people living and working in Keene to share with the Mayor and City Clerk, names of students, employees, volunteers, retirees and organizations that we should recognize for their accomplishments. These are stories that we can amplify across NH and simultaneously promote our community.

I am so grateful to the citizens of Keene for giving me the honor of representing our city as its mayor. The Mayor's role is defined as the ceremonial head of the City. I assure you that at every ceremony, every council meeting and every day that I spend on city business—in City Hall, in Concord, and in visits across our state—I will articulate our vision and our accomplishments, our needs and our creativity. Keene is a vital city for western NH and our state. Our future is full of expectations to which we need to rise to meet.

I often turn to quotes that link education and inspiration. On speaking about the importance of education, Malcolm X said, "tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today." May we be blessed along our journey with success, good health, love, peace, understanding and compassion in this new year and new City Council term. Thank you, Mayor Jay Kahn.

RESOLUTION R-2024-01: RELATING TO THE CITY COUNCIL'S RULES OF ORDER

Mayor Kahn mentioned that he would be seeking the Council's input on possible amendments to the City Council's Rules of Order at an upcoming workshop on the Rules of Order.

A motion by Councilor Bosley to adopt Resolution R-2024-01 was duly seconded by Councilor Jones. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 14 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Roberts was absent.

NEW STANDING COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Mayor Kahn announced the new City Council Standing Committee assignments:

- Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee:
 - Thomas F. Powers, Chair
 - Michael J. Remy, Vice Chair
 - Bettina A. Chadbourne
 - Bryan J. Lake
 - Kris E. Roberts
- Municipal Services, Facilities, & Infrastructure Committee:
 - Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
 - Randy L. Filiault, Vice Chair
 - Andrew M. Madison
 - Catherine I. Workman
 - Laura E. Tobin
- Planning, Licenses, & Development Committee:
 - Kate M. Bosley, Chair
 - Philip M. Jones, Vice Chair
 - Raleigh C. Ormerod
 - Robert C. Williams
 - Edward J. Haas

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BENEDICTION

Reverend Elsa Worth delivered the benediction.

ADJOURNMENT

The Inauguration adjourned at 6:50 PM.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk