

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 25, 2016

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald, Chair
Thomas F. Powers
Terry M. Clark
Jay V. Kahn

Staff Present:

Medard Kopczynski, City Manager
Brian Costa, Police Chief
Dan Langille, City Assessor
John Rogers, Acting Health Director

Members Not Present:

Carl B. Jacobs, Vice-Chair

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1) Request for Short-term, Free Parking - Monadnock Center for Violence Prevention

City Manager, Med Kopczynski stated it was his understanding that there is now an arrangement between the petitioner and National Grange Insurance so the request is moot.

Chair Greenwald read the following from the background notes: *Robin Christopherson, the Executive Director of Monadnock Center for Violence Prevention is requesting free parking for approximately 30 attendees who will be participating in a "train-the trainer" exercise for an initiative that seeks to reduce power-based personal violence. The training sessions will be held at the Greek Orthodox Church on September 13 - 16, 2016. As this communication is time sensitive, the communication is being directly referred to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee.*

Chair Greenwald stated this was a rather confusing request as the City cannot waive parking for events such as this. The City contacted National Grange Insurance who has agreed to provide these spaces. The County and Chair Greenwald also offered spaces in their respective lots.

Councilor Clark made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Powers:

On a vote of 3-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends reporting out this matter.

2) Acceptance of Vehicle Forfeiture - Police Department

Police Chief Brian Costa stated the item before the Committee is an award from the Attorney General's office of a forfeiture vehicle.

He explained that at the conclusion of an investigation into the sale and distribution of heroin in Keene, the Keene Police Department assisted the New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force in executing a search warrant on a vehicle in which the owner and operator had been arrested for the distribution of heroin. The investigation resulted in the seizure of a 2006 Lexus ES330 automobile which contained 6 bags of heroin, totaling approximately 1.5 kilograms (worth thousands of dollars) and \$6,779 in cash which was found with the drugs. The Keene Police Department was awarded the vehicle valued at approximately \$7,000.

Chair Greenwald asked what happens to this vehicle. Chief Costa stated he is in conversation with the Fleet Services Manager; the last vehicle which came to the department through forfeiture was supplemented in the detective pool of vehicles. Ironically it was the same model vehicle and this vehicle is ready to be rotated out but it might still have some service left in it.

Councilor Powers made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Clark:

On a vote of 3-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept a Vehicle Forfeiture awarded by the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office.

3) Acceptance of Drug Forfeiture - Police Department

Chief Costa stated the next time is also forfeiture but this is a cash award in the amount of \$2,181.47 awarded to the Keene Police Department from the United States Department of Justice.

Chief Costa stated this was a complicated investigation lasting years, which culminated with positive results of getting these items off the streets of Keene.

He explained in October 2013, the United States Attorney's Office, New Hampshire Attorney General's Drug Task Force and Homeland Security Investigations, working in conjunction with the Keene Police Department, New Hampshire State Police, Salem Police Department, and Massachusetts State Police began an investigating of heroin distribution in Keene and the surrounding areas. As a result of this investigation, 14 individuals were arrested for drug trafficking in the Lawrence, Massachusetts to the greater Keene, New Hampshire area. The Chief pointed out there were many agencies

and a lot of manpower involved in this investigation but the lead investigator was a Keene Police Detective who at that time was assigned to the Attorney General's Drug Task Force.

Because of these 14 arrests, authorities were able to dismantle a major heroin and cocaine distribution network which had been operating for a number of years out of Lawrence, Massachusetts, in addition to dismantling two greater Keene area-based drug distribution cells. In total, law enforcement seized over 5.5 kilograms of heroin, 14 ounces of cocaine, approximately 90 Oxycodone tablets, approximately \$11,000 in cash, and fourteen firearms.

Councilor Clark made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Powers:

On a vote of 3-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept forfeiture funds in the amount of \$2,181.47 that has been awarded to the Keene Police Department from the United States Department of Justice.

Councilor Kahn joined the session at 6:40 pm.

4) Disposition of City Owned Property

City Assessor, Dan Langille stated he was here to talk about 21 Allen Court, 270 Beaver Street, and 9 Martin Street. These properties were taken by tax deed for non-payment of 2012 unpaid property taxes in March 2016. The process has been through City Council and the proper protocol has been followed. These are now city-owned properties.

21 Allen Court is a single family home and sits on .46 acres. The lot is considered to be a double lot with the potential to be subdivided. The building is a 1927 Craftsman style 3 bedroom home. The structure appears to be solid although the maintenance has not been kept up with over the past few years.

270 Beaver Street is a vacant building, 560 square feet in size situated on one acre at the end of Beaver Street. This is a hilly, sloping lot. This building is below average construction and maintenance has not been kept up with.

9 Martin Street is a two family building located on .11 acres. There is a two bedroom unit on the second level and a studio or a one-bedroom unit on the first floor. Maintenance on the building has been neglected over the years as well.

Taxes and interest owed on the properties as of Friday, August 19 are as follows: For 21 Allen Court the amount is \$18,649; for 270 Beaver Street the amount is \$22,687; and for 9 Martin Street the amount is \$26,783.

Mr. Langille stated city staff has inspected these properties and it is staff's recommendation to put these properties back on the tax role. The sale would follow a sealed bid process and the proceeds would go to reimburse the city for interest, taxes, legal fees and other fees. Anything beyond that would need to be returned to the property owners.

Mr. Langille noted a lot of effort goes into trying to save these properties; many departments work for many months with property owners and the city is never looking to take ownership. There was one individual who needed to be relocated – there were many city staff who worked to make sure this individual was treated with care and respect and they believe she is now in a much better place. The Parks and Recreation Department as well as Public Works have done a lot of work on these properties and Mr. Langille circulated before and after pictures of these properties.

Chair Greenwald asked whether these properties would be advertised in The Keene Sentinel. Mr. Langille stated he would be working with the Purchasing Department and there will be a date by which these bids are to be received. As far as the language for the advertisement, staff will work with the Attorney's office on this. The Chairman asked whether there is a mortgage holder. Mr. Langille stated the Revenue Collector is required to send out notice 90 days after the property is taken and so far no-one has come forward to claim the property. The Chair asked if once the bids are received, Council involvement ceases. Mr. Langille stated the Council gives the City Manager authority to make that final decision.

Councilor Kahn made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Powers:

On a vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to dispose of three properties acquired through a tax deed on March 23, 2016, including, if necessary, structural demolition, and sale by advertised sealed bids. The properties being: 21 Allen Court, 270 Beaver Street, and 9 Martin Street.

5) Placement of a Lien on 344 West Street for Recovery of Abatement Costs – Health Department

Acting Health Director John Rogers stated staff is before the Committee to ask for permission to place a lien on 344 West Street for cost recovery incurred by the City for corrective action taken to abate a public health nuisance.

Mr. Rogers stated the housing inspectors have been dealing with this property since last September with reference to trash issues. It is a two-family home and the inspectors have been to the house on numerous occasions with some success earlier in the process. However, starting early June 2016 the city started issuing verbal and written warnings and then issuing fines which had no effect to clean up the property.

Under RSA 147:7-b, staff was able to order the property cleaned up and warn the property owner if no action was taken within a certain time period the city would take action. Since no action was taken, Public Works accompanied by the Police Department and Health and Code removed nearly two tons of trash. Mr. Rogers showed the Committee pictures of the trash that was removed. The total cost to the City was \$3,238.97 which includes equipment time, personnel time and dumping fees at the recycling center. He noted this lien will be treated as a property tax.

Chair Greenwald asked whether the house is otherwise habitable. Mr. Rogers stated staff did not enter to house for an inspection. He added they did talk to the property owner, they still have running water, and the water has not been shut off.

Councilor Powers asked whether the taxes were up to date on this property. Staff wasn't sure. Councilor Powers went on to say Police and Fire have frequented this property on many occasions and it has become a nuisance and whatever can be done to remedy this situation would be helpful. Mr. Rogers stated the property is currently on the market.

Chair Greenwald stated he is surprised Code Enforcement did not conduct an inspection of the entire property. Mr. Rogers stated there was nothing that raised a red flag for the city to enter the property. The City Manager noted there are laws the City has to follow before they can enter someone's property. He went on to say the city is beginning to see many more of these types of hoarding problems which involves a lot of time for many departments in the city; and these are labor intensive issues.

Councilor Clark made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Powers:

On a vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the City Council approve the placement of a lien on property located at 344 West Street Keene, New Hampshire for cost recovery incurred by the City for corrective action taken to abate a public health nuisance.

6) Relating to the Partner City Committee

- **Memorandum - City Attorney**
- **Ordinance O-2016-16**

Mr. Kopczynski stated when the Council rebuilt the Fiscal Policies it was requested the Partner City section of the fiscal policies be placed in the City Code. The City Attorney has drafted language to be able to do so.

Councilor Kahn noted the organization of the Fiscal Policies makes it much clearer the relationship for guidelines for the budget and the two motions before the Committee today would reinforce other parts of city code in a way that is meaningful. The city is now down to two pages of budget guidelines which are easier to digest both for the Council and for the public.

Councilor Powers made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Clark:

On 4-0 vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2016-16.

7) **Relating to Environmental Preferred Purchasing and Collaboration Memorandum - City Attorney**

- **Ordinance O-2016-17**

Chair Greenwald explained this item is similar to item 6 and is a change from a fiscal policy becoming an ordinance. This is regarding the Environmental Preferred Purchasing and Collaboration. The Chair clarified there are no changes. The Manager agreed.

Councilor Kahn made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Powers:

On a vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2016-17.

8) **Relating to Approving a CDBG Application for Mamasezz Communication - CDBG Administrator**

- **Resolution R-2016-30**

Linda Mangones of Keene Housing Authority addressed the Committee, and began by introducing Lisa Lorimer who is associated with the business and Jack Dugan from Monadnock Economic Development Corporation. Ms. Mangones stated this is a \$300,000 application for a community development block grant which they hope to submit very soon. Ms. Mangones stated this application had a public hearing last week and has had very favorable comments.

Jack Dugan from Monadnock Economic Development Corporation stated how this program works is if \$300,000 is applied in block grants the company is required to contribute at least dollar for dollar in matching funds. In this instance the company will contribute more than \$300,000 in equity into the project, which is not often seen. The company also has to agree to create at least 15 new full-time jobs in the area. Those positions in this instance will be full-time jobs paying a livable wage. Mr. Dugan stated this is a start-company but a company that comes with an impressive background. Mr. Dugan stated the company will be leasing the facility formerly used by First Course on the Railroad land.

Chair Greenwald asked whether this is a loan or a grant. Mr. Dugan explained it originates as a grant and after administrative costs and grant writing costs the \$275,000 which is left is loaned to the company. As it is paid back it goes into the revolving fund to invest with other growing companies.

Ms. Lisa Lorimer stated she owned the Vermont Bread Company in Brattleboro, Vermont. She sold that company a few years ago, went back to school earned her Master's Degree in Business and is excited about starting this venture. The food they would be preparing would be plant based food, shipped directly to a home in a cooler and when the cooler is returned, it is sanitized and recycled. These vegan meals will be shipped from Maine to Virginia. They plan to buy as much organic food locally as possible.

Chair Greenwald asked for the cost of these meals. Ms. Lorimer stated the plan is to charge \$6 to \$8 for each entrée.

Councilor Kahn asked how many meals are shipped at a time to a household. Ms. Lorimer stated their minimum order will be \$79 (10 – 12 items per cooler). She added they also have a great kids' line. The Councilor asked how important the internet is to their business. Ms. Lorimer stated the internet is the life blood of their business; everything they do is web based. She went on to say they plan on doing a number of events in the community to introduce their business. Councilor Kahn asked whether they have formed any partnerships with the Food Co-op. Ms. Lorimer stated they have purchased many things from the Co-op but have not yet fully formed that relationship but will be doing so soon.

Councilor Clark made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Powers.

On a vote of 4-0, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the adoption of Resolution R-2016-30.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker