

A special meeting of the Keene City Council was held Thursday, May 30, 2019 for purposes of holding a public hearing relative to the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year Budget. The Honorable Mayor Kendall W. Lane called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Carl. B. Jacobs, Janis O. Manwaring, Thomas F. Powers, Terry M. Clark, Randy L. Filiault, Margaret M. Rice, Robert B. Sutherland, George S. Hansel, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Stephen L. Hooper, Philip M. Jones, David C. Richards and Mitchell H. Greenwald were present. Bartolmiej K. Sapeta and Gary P. Lamoureux were absent. Councilor Manwaring led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING – RELATING TO THE FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 OPERATING BUDGET

The Mayor opened the public hearing at 7:04 PM. The Notice of Hearing and Certificate of Publication read. The Mayor explained the process to-date relating to review of the proposed operating budget, including the special meetings held before the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee. He noted the FOP Committee has recommended modifications to the budget. Copies of their recommended changes are available as a handout for the public. He noted any further amendments suggested by Councilors would need to be submitted in writing to the City Clerk by 4:00 PM on Tuesday, June 4th. The City Council will be acting on the budget Resolutions at their next regular meeting on June 6, 2019. At this point, the Mayor recognized the City Manager for introductory comments.

Ms. Dragon began that tonight we present to the City Council and the public the operating budget for 2019-2020, including the first year of the fiscal 2020 to 2025 Capital Improvements Program. She went on to say there have been several public meetings before the Finance Committee to discuss the proposed budget. She continued that a recent editorial indicating that this public hearing was the only opportunity for public input was inaccurate. Ms. Dragon explained that a Citizens Budget Guide has been prepared to summarize and graphically present expenditures and revenues in the budget. The Guide also includes a chart to illustrate how much of the overall 2019 tax rate is used to support the school, city, and county budgets. The 2019 breakdown for every \$1,000 paid in property taxes is as follows: \$580 to fund schools, \$387 to fund municipal operations, and \$105 to fund County services. Mr. Dragon explained the City also has a Fiscal Policy which limits property tax increases to a rolling three-year average of the Boston CPI net any expenditures required by law. This year that calculation is equal to 2.37%. The staff worked diligently to bring forward the proposed budget presented in the printed budget book. The proposed budget includes a 1.55% increase in general property taxes to fund fiscal 2019-2020 operations, excluding debt. This falls below the 2.37% allowed under the Fiscal Policy. Overall, there is a projected 1.46% increase in the tax rate. Ms. Dragon continued that during the budget review the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee (FOP) made minor changes, and as the Mayor mentioned a summary of those amendments has been provided. The Council should also have before them a revised budget Resolution reflecting these changes. The net impact was \$2,815 increasing the bottom line. Ms. Dragon went on to highlight some of the notable changes in this year's budget including: the first full payment related to the Library Renovation Project in the amount of \$161,513 and property taxes of \$176,231. Pages 6 and 7 of the budget book highlights other notable changes including reorganization and shifting of positions and responsibilities. This budget includes the redirecting of Capital dollars to operations to support an in-house drain-cleaning program as well as other maintenance

programs. Water and sewer rates as described includes a proposed sewer increase of 6.84%, or \$54 per year, and water is at 7.92% or \$43.20 per year. These rates are reflective of a typical household using 108 cubic feet of water. She explained this year we will be conducting a comprehensive water and sewer rate study. Our current rate schedule was put in place over 15 years ago. The final budget reasonably supports the City services provided to the residents of Keene, accommodates the goals set by the Council, includes all current labor agreements and other contractual obligations, and supports the city's infrastructure program through continued funding of the Capital Improvement Plan.

Mayor Lane noted that this evening's hearing is meant to provide the opportunity for members of the public to speak about any item in the proposed budget. He continued he is going to review the budget section by section, but if a member of the public wishes to speak on any segment of the budget they may do so at any time during the hearing. He urged the public to let the Council and staff know what they like or dislike in the proposed budget and suggest where they would like to see modifications made. The Mayor went on to review the various sections of the budget.

The Mayor started by reviewing pages 28 and 29 where the projections of the new tax rate are detailed. It reflects an estimated property tax expense incurred from both the school district and the County. He noted the actual tax rate will not be set until the fall, and is set by the State of New Hampshire. It is not under our control, so we can only give estimates at this point, of what the impact will be of the budget on the tax rate. In addition, the state is currently considering their budget and there may be adjustments made as a result such as revenues that come to the community. These are unknowns at this time, but what is presented in the budget book is the City's best estimate as to the impact. Page 29 contains a summary of the requested budget and the City Manager's recommended budget, as well as what we are projecting to be the final approved budget. He continued that page 30 contains a summary of the overall impact of the budget.

At this point, the Mayor reviewed the Elected and Appointed Officials section of the budget, which includes the Mayor and City Council, as well as outside agency funding. He stated there are a number of entities that receive funding through the outside agency funding budget. He went on to name some of the agencies that receive funding. This section also includes the City Manager, City Attorney and City Clerk budgets. He noted the Finance Committee has recommended increasing the funding for Meals on Wheels by \$415, the Transportation by \$1,400 and the Samaritans by \$1,000. He asked if anyone wished to speak on this section of the budget.

Branwen Gregory, 831 Mountain Road, Jaffrey, NH stated she is the Chairman of the Board of Hundred Nights. She went on to thank the City for their past support and talk about some of the things they are doing. She noted their collaboration with other agencies, which is part of the United Way encouraging these groups to work together. They are currently collaborating with Southwestern Community Services, and the Monadnock Center for Violence Prevention. What they are trying to do moving forward is to institute some best practices that have to do with creating fewer barriers to access to services, using the housing first policy which has been adopted as a best practice in this area, as well as using trauma informed care in dealing with their clients. The goals of their collaborations are essentially to provide emergency shelter to all who

are experiencing homelessness or need shelter. She noted that obviously, their agencies have different missions but it makes sense for them to collaborate because there is some overlap. They are going to try to provide those services by coordinating the classes they can offer, such as classes on financial education, resume writing, and interviewing skills to help people improve their situations. Once they coordinate the classes, they will be available to anyone receiving services from the collaborating entities. This will allow them to reach more people, to conserve resources and avoid duplicating services. The last goal they are working on is to increase financial stability by helping people access federal, state and local housing resources, and each of us is involved with a piece of that. Ms. Gregory noted part of what they need to do is help streamline the application process. In the past, each agency had their own way of doing this, and they are going to try to have a single application process that allows people to get help with the application as well as with first and last month rent. They will also help people to get the identification they need and the documentation they need to get into housing. They will also assist with doing the paperwork to confirm if they have benefits and prove that they have employment through paystubs. Ms. Gregory stated she wanted to share this effort to collaborate and streamline services with the Council because of the importance of getting as much utility out of every dollar that is being given to them by the City and their other contributors. She ended with another thank you for the support the City provides to them.

Teresa Starkey, 31 Allen Court, identified herself as a member of the Hundred Nights Board of Directors. Ms. Starkey noted that the Shelter served 207 clients in 2018. Of those 207, 93 were residents of Cheshire County with 53 of those were from the City of Keene. The rest were from outlying towns in the Monadnock region. Last year they were able to secure approximately \$9,000 from those outside towns to help contribute to Hundred Night's operation. Ms. Starkey noted that as an educator her concern is that they do serve between 19 and 20 children each year. They do have people that come to the shelter as guests with no identification, and they assist them with securing identification. They also have some people who arrive from other states who are not residents of New Hampshire. They are helping veterans in the community, for the past two years, they have had 11 veterans receive help. She further noted that 144 out of the 207 they served last year had disabling conditions, and 192 out of 207 live below the poverty level.

Doug Iosue, 10 Scott Circle, Spofford, NH identified himself as a member of the Hundred Nights Board. Mr. Iosue noted he is also a social worker at the Jail. He explained that recently they heard a concern about Hundred Nights accepting registered sex offenders and was concerned that this might impact funding provided to the organization. He wanted to share some information that should be helpful. He stated while they cannot be sure the exact nature of the concerns that came up, he surmises that it might be that the policy to accept registered sex offenders poses a risk to the community. Maybe the thought is that these individuals could otherwise leave the City or the County if they were not being offered shelter locally. To provide some background, he noted that registered sex offenders are placed in tiers associated with the nature or level of their offences. Those with the highest risk at likely serving a prison sentence. If they have completed their sentence, they will be released through a parole approval process including approving their housing in advance of their release. Hundred Nights is not and could never be part of a prison release parole program for a registered sex offender. Second, a lower level registered sex offender would most certainly be on probation and somebody on probation out of Cheshire County would be required to report to probation, and also to the local police

department. If they were homeless in Cheshire County, but had family outside the County, they would likely opt to go stay with the family. However, a registered sex offender who is homeless and does not have the family option is very much stuck in Cheshire County. They cannot get approval from probation to go to any housing environment other than immediate family. They cannot leave the state or even the County to go to another shelter. He noted that also works in reverse, meaning someone on probation outside our area would never get approval to come to Hundred Nights to stay in Keene. The fact that registered sex offenders in Cheshire County cannot leave brings Mr. Iosue to his main point, which is that given this information they can easily make the argument that providing a place where registered sex offenders can have shelter to keep them safe and alive is something they are entitled to as human beings. Hundred Nights is keeping the community safer by allowing these individuals to be at their facility. It provides them with an identified place known to and approved by probation, to have shelter and remain in compliance with their registration requirements. There are rules in place at the Shelter, and awake overnight staff to help keep them and other guests safe. The alternative if they were not allowed at the Shelter is that they would essentially be "at large" in the community, possibly sleeping outside or in tents, or overnight in businesses that are open. Mr. Iosue stated he has worked with enough release plans to know they much prefer to have a place like Hundred Nights available as a place to house people that are on the sex offender registry. He ended that they wanted to share that information knowing there might be concerns.

Cathy Collinsworth, 174 Chapman Road, identified herself as the Executive Director of the Monadnock Humane Society. She spoke about the services they provide to the community, and noted they are a first time requestor of City support. She wanted to make the Council aware of the services they provide to municipalities across 44 towns, and noting the City uses about 50% of their services. She also wanted to talk about the human service programs they provide. They take in all strays and surrenders for the City of Keene, even animals like turtles and chickens. They provide housing for all of those animals. If a person needs to surrender an animal for multiple reasons, they are the holding facility for that as well. They are the holding facility for bite quarantines. She noted if a dog bites another person, by law the animal must be held for 10 days. They are the holding facility during protective custody cases. They also loan out humane traps to community members who are trying to manage feral cat colonies. Feral cat colonies are often breeding grounds for rabies. They have had rabid cats come in from the City of Keene, and this is a huge public health safety risk. They are also the holding facility for a fire or flood incident. They will hold the animals while their owners attempt to navigate that situation. Last year for the strays for the City of Keene, they took in 246 animals. For surrenders from Keene they took in 176 animals. In addition, they also have many human service programs that they offer such as low cost spaying and neutering as well as a pet food pantry for those navigating difficult financial situations. She noted some people will forego their own needs to care for their pet. They also have the family safety net program for people who are trying to flee domestic violence or are dealing with homelessness. They sadly had to have a person removed from their property recently, because Hundred Nights does not provide warm weather shelter and this person was camping on their property. They provide free boarding and medical care for people who are navigating drug addiction with the opioid crisis. New Hampshire has a huge opioid problem, and just today Ms. Collinsworth heard from the National Humane Society because they want to raise awareness across the entire United States about how Humane Societies are playing a role in helping people in these situations.

Councilor Chadbourne, referencing the animals the shelter took in from Keene, asked for clarification on how many have been taken in. Ms. Collinsworth confirmed that the Shelter took in 246 strays and 176 surrenders from the City of Keene.

As there were no further public comments relative to outside agencies, the Mayor went on to ask for comments regarding Community Funded Events. He listed the entities/events receiving such funding.

Pablo Fleischmann, Gilsum resident and owner of property at 37 Roxbury Street where he operates his business. Mr. Fleischmann explained he has been involved with the Keene Music Festival since its inception in 2001. He recently inherited the role of acting as Chair of the event. He expressed gratitude for the City's support of the festival. He noted the event is funded by an all-volunteer crew, as well as through some fundraising with the assistance of downtown merchants. This year they were hoping to incorporate a block party like the Good Fortune Block Party that was held last year. This would create a safe place within the festival to bring families downtown. Earlier this year in meetings with City staff, the staff came up with a number that looked like it was going to be between \$2,500 and \$3,000, and the Music Festival put in a request to the City Council for that amount to be added to their funding. After staff did some further research, it was found that the cost to incorporate the block party actually doubled to about \$6,000. Had he known that before, he likely would not have asked for that large amount. Their entire event budget is around \$6,000. He would of course support the City Council funding the \$6,000 cost if they were inclined to do so.

Elizabeth Sayre, 290 Main Street, indicated she was present on behalf of the Keene Kiwanis Club. She expressed their gratitude for the City funding received for the Tree Lighting Ceremony. She noted many people have asked them if it would be possible to leave the lights on the poles in the center median down Main Street in place year round. They will be asking the Council for permission to do so when they submit their event application.

Alan Stroshine, 27 Salisbury Road, identified himself as the Race Director for the Clarence DeMar Marathon and a proud member of the Keene Elm City Rotary Club. He extended their gratitude for the City funding provided to the Marathon and thanked the Council and Staff for their support. The event brings in people from across the country and across the World to our area, and he is proud to be a part of it. He continued the partnership they have with the City, and staff in particular, continues to grow stronger. Every year we get better at what we do and every year the event gets better, and the City benefits greatly by this particular weekend in September each year. He noted one of the benefits of this event. The Rotary Club just completed their annual "Follow Me" sneaker program, which provided every single second grader in the City of Keene with a brand new pair of New Balance sneakers. It is literally less about the sneakers, and more about encouraging them to move every day and be active and healthy. That is just one of the things the DeMar Marathon is able to support throughout the year. On behalf of the Elm City Rotary and the Marathon Committee, Mr. Stroshine thanked the City for the support, and encouraged all to be present on the quad at Keene State College on race day, Sunday September 29th.

Kevin Watterson, 10 Westview Avenue, present this evening representing the Keene Swampbats. He thanked the Mayor and Council on behalf of the community for the annual support for the Independence Eve fireworks. He noted they could not do it without the support of the Police and Fire Departments.

The Mayor noted there are some City agencies being funding in the Mayor and City Council section on page 51. They include the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, the Zoning Board, the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Heritage Commission, Historic District Commission, Partner City Committee, the Energy and Climate Committee, the Airport Marketing and Development Committee, Arts Alive, the Veterans Council, Chamber of Commerce membership, and the Human Rights Committee. He asked for comments on this segment of the budget.

Andrew Oram, 390 Main Street, stated he is the co-chair of Arts Alive, and wanted to thank the City for continuing to support their organization. The donation received from the City is important to them as they do not have a large budget, and it a great recognition of the work they are trying very hard to do to incorporate and make the arts an important part of our community life. The Mayor took a moment to say that the annual Art Walk begins on May 31st, and art will be displayed in the downtown for the next week in the windows of most downtown businesses. He encouraged people to take advantage of this event.

There were no further comments relative to the Mayor, Manager, Attorney or City Clerk's budgets.

The Mayor went on to review the Administrative Services Portfolio of the budget starting on page 71. This section includes the City Assessor, Finance, Human Resources, and the IT Department. No public comments on this section.

The Mayor reviewed the Community Services portfolio of the budget, which includes the Fire Department, the Assistant City Manager for Community Services, the Library, Parks, Recreation and Facilities, and the Police Department. No public comments on this section.

The Mayor reviewed the Municipal Services portfolio, which includes the Airport, the Community Development Department, Public Works and Emergency Management. He noted this portfolio is about 10% of the overall budget. He further noted that between the Police Department, Fire Department and Public Works, that is the lion's share of our budget. He asked if any member of the public would like to speak on these sections of the budget.

Jack Weststrate, 27 Gates Street indicated that the neighbors on the east side of Keene State College are in 100% support of the Community Development hiring a full time Housing Inspector. They feel it is very needed, particularly in their neighborhood.

Andrew Oram, 390 Main Street spoke for a second time. He wanted to second the comments from Mr. Weststrate, and noted he appreciates the addition of a full time Housing Inspector. They have seen a real deterioration of their neighborhood over the last year in terms of keeping

things inspected due to the difficulties filling the two part time positions. Going to a single, full time position seems very reasonable.

The Mayor then went over the city's various funds, starting with the Parking Fund, which is responsible for downtown maintenance and all parking lot maintenance. No public comments on this section.

Next, the Mayor reviewed the PC Replacement Fund, which is for replacement and maintenance of our computer systems. No public comments on this section.

The Mayor went on to review the Solid Waste Fund and the Sewer Fund. The Mayor reviewed the Water Fund as well. Finally, the Mayor reviewed the Equipment Fund and Fleet Services which handles and the purchase and maintenance of City vehicles. No public comments on these sections.

The Mayor asked for general comments or questions. There being none, the Mayor closed the public hearing for oral testimony at 7:45 PM. He noted the hearing will remain open for written public comments until Tuesday, June 4, 2019 at 4:00 PM. Written comments must be signed and submitted to the Office of the City Clerk by that date and time to be included in the record.

A true record, attest:

City Clerk

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:46 PM, there being no further business, the Mayor adjourned the meeting.

A true record, attest:

City Clerk