

City of Keene
New Hampshire

FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 27, 2022

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Thomas F. Powers, Chair
Michael J. Remy, Vice Chair (via Zoom)
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Bryan J. Lake
Andrew M. Madison

Members Not Present:

All Present

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Meri Howe, Finance Director
Lt. Shane Maxfield, Keene Police Department
Natalie Darcy, Human Services Manager
Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and
Facilities Director
Harry McKelvey, Transportation and Storm
Water Operations Manager

Chair Powers called the meeting to order at 6 PM. The Chair indicated there was a request from a Committee member, Councilor Remy to participate remotely; however, the 24 hour notice was not provided as required under the Rules of Order. Hence, it would be necessary for the Committee to suspend Rules under Section 24 of the Rules of Order to allow Councilor Remy to participate remotely. On a roll call vote, 4 Councilors were present and voting in favor. Councilor Remy identified his location, the reason for his absence and whether there was someone in the room with him.

1) Spectrum Service Update

Councilor Randy Filiault addressed the Committee first and stated about six weeks ago this item was brought before the Committee. Spectrum issues have not completely cleared up yet and felt those present today will probably confirm that. However, since his communication work on behalf of Spectrum has gone very well and he has been able to receive a fast turnaround in response to any communication he has sent to Spectrum. He stated Spectrum is before the Committee to update what they have done since the last time they were before the Committee.

Michael Liccione, Area Vice-President for Charter Communications Field Operations and Engineering for Southern New England, addressed the Committee. Mr. Liccione stated six weeks ago, there were a couple of areas of opportunity that they felt were larger than others, and some of that was around video tiling, pixilation within customers' homes, and channel issues with providers like NESN, FETV (Channel 47). He indicated since their original meeting an action plan was formulated starting with additional resources on the engineering side; two additional engineers have been allocated in addition to the two who are already working in

Keene and they have been working overnight in the maintenance window from midnight on, and addressing things like tiling and pixilation, and going through some of the areas where complaints were received. Mr. Liccione went on to say, part of their action plan was to also set up recordings. DVR boxes were set up in the Keene office and in employees homes that live in Keene to duplicate some of the issues customers have had. He indicated in some cases they have been successful in tracking down some of those issues.

Mr. Liccione explained the NESN issue was an actual channel issue from the provider. Spectrum worked with Comcast as they were having the same type of issue over the broadcast. He indicated they visited people who reported those issues on a regular basis and they have said those issues have improved tremendously. He stated Spectrum is not going to give up on staying with their partnership with NESN; and even though it is a channel problem it is still Spectrum's responsibility to escalate that back to get fixed. In addition to that, Spectrum has been working with their Hub site. They have worked on getting additional cooling units because they do understand there was a failure based on air conditioning – this issue has been rectified. Mr. Liccione stated they are also looking at a long-term solution of further enhancements to hub sites to make sure that it becomes better for consumers.

Mr. Liccione stated in visiting homes they did find equipment issues that were solely on Spectrum and that equipment have been replaced or repaired. Some customers had issues in their home that were related to their own equipment. All customers they met have the direct contact number to Spectrum and they do not need to call into customer service; they have a direct line to a leader in the Keene area who has been helpful in addressing their issues. He went on to say Spectrum has done some overall network upgrades and will be continuing that effort. The power supply program which was addressed at the last meeting is scheduled to be in by early 2023, which will allow for even closer monitoring of small pocket outages which they believe will help address things before larger scale issues come up. This concluded Mr. Liccione's comments.

Chair Powers stated "On Demand" and half of the Channels from 1 to 99 do not work. Mr. Liccione stated he will look into this issue as well.

The Chair asked for public comment.

Rebecca Landry, Assistant City Manager, Communications and Marketing Director addressed the Committee and stated she helps and provides support for the franchise agreement. She stated she is in contact with Spectrum representatives on a regular basis. One of the things she is seeing is audio issues with City meeting broadcasts and she hoped this is an item that could be added to the list. She noted this is an item that has been an issue for the last couple of years and she was hopeful that some sort of resolution with Spectrum could be found. Ms. Landry asked Spectrum to define what they mean by hub site upgrades and to define what they mean by long term. Ms. Landry added there are also people who don't call in and she hoped Spectrum could provide a QA and QC for the future.

Mr. Liccione stated in reference to the City Council building issue with audio; there is a supervisor and an enterprise manager who are going to assist with this process.

With reference to hub sites, Mr. Liccione stated he had referred to the air conditioning changes, but due to the confidential nature he won't be able to discuss long term plans as of yet, but as things start to change, those will be shared with the Council. In terms of people not calling in, addressing some of these issues should hopefully address some of those concerns. He added they are also working on addressing faster customer service for those who call in, which has been reduced to one minute of hold time and they are working on improving that as well.

Ms. Landry referred to the local phone contact Mr. Liccione had mentioned and asked if that could be shared with the public. Mr. Liccione stated if individuals wanted to talk to him after the meeting he will be willing to share that number, but did not wish to broadcast that information as one individual might not be able to cover the entire market.

Chair Powers encouraged people who are having issues to call Spectrum so issues can be addressed. Mr. Liccione assured the Committee he will be back next month and will be back until these issues are resolved.

Ms. Janet Lincoln referred to the individual who was before the Committee last representing three housing units; Park Place, Parkwood and Colonial Village who had indicated there is a physical barrier that cannot be crossed which is causing issues at these housing units and questioned if this was Spectrum's policy or the housing unit's policy. Mr. Liccione stated with some housing units they run their service up to a certain point and Spectrum might not have access to the control room. Mr. Liccione stated he will reach out to the individual who brought this issue up last month.

Ms. Maxine Phelps who lives at the Century Apartments was the next speaker. Ms. Phelps referred to an unpleasant interaction she had had with a Spectrum employee at the Keene office. Mr. Liccione stated he will work with Ms. Phelps and added he will follow up with this employee as well.

Councilor Madison made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Remy.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends accepting the Spectrum Service Update as informational.

2) Highway Safety Agency Grant - Police Captain

Lt. Shane Maxfield Special Services Commander Keene Police Department stated each year the NH Highway Safety Agency provides grants to communities throughout New Hampshire. The purpose of these grants is to reduce the severity and frequency of motor vehicle accidents. They do this by providing funding for supplementary patrolling specifically for highway safety issues. The time period for this grant runs from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023 in the amount of \$14,516.40.

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept the grant from the New Hampshire Highway Safety Agency to fund the Highway Safety Grant- Keene.

3) LWCF Grant Round 33 Notice of Intent - Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director Andy Bohannon addressed the Committee next and stated this request is for the Manager to issue a letter of intent to the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grant Round 33. The City received \$400,000 in grant round 31 for the construction of the Patricia T Russell Park. The City is able to provide in its budget an additional match. The reason for applying for this grant is due to overages in material cost after the project was bid and to be able to complete the bocce court that was left out of the project due to reduction in cost.

In addition to the \$400,000 the City is requesting another \$225,000 for the Skate Park project. The application is due December 2.

Councilor Lake made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Madison.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to execute the submission of the application for Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Round 33 for the Russell Park Renovation Project and the Skate Park Project.

The City Manager commended Mr. Bohannon for his effort in procuring these grant funds which reduces the impact on taxpayers.

4) Acceptance of Donations - Holiday Sponsorship Program - Human Services Manager

Human Services Manager, Natalie Darcy, addressed the Committee and stated it is time for the Human Services Department to think about the holiday sponsorship program. She indicated annually the Human Services Department contacts sponsors who provide gifts and holiday items for families and older adults. The sponsored families and older adults are clients who have received assistance from Human Services during the past year. Families who have children with special needs and persons who have been struggling to make ends meet are considered for sponsorship. The goal of the program is to provide holiday gifts, gift cards, and food for those in need, who will then use their own resources to maintain housing, utilities and essentials of daily living. She added the Human Services Department appreciates the support of the Council for this annual project that provides happy holidays for those they serve. Families are so appreciative and humbled by the generosity of the community. Ms. Darcy stated they serve about 280 individuals each year.

Councilor Chadbourne extended her appreciation for this program. The Manager agreed this is a great project and commended the Human Services Department for continuing this project.

Councilor Madison made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept donations associated with the City's 2022 Holiday Sponsorship Program.

5) Authorization to accept Invest NH Housing Opportunity Planning Grant for Regulatory Development - Senior Planner

Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, stated this item is to request that the Manager accept and expend grant funds in the amount of \$91,150 for the purpose of hiring a consultant to develop regulations with the goal of increasing the supply of housing in the community. This grant was received from the Invest NH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program, funded by the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs as part of the \$100 million Invest NH Initiative with ARPA State Fiscal Recovery Funds. She reminded the Committee that the City recently received funds to cover the cost of a local housing needs analysis and this allows the City to take the next step in that process.

The purpose of this grant is to develop new regulations and/or revise existing regulations that will help expand and improve housing stock by increasing the available supply of housing by reducing regulatory barriers and offering innovative programs for housing development throughout the City. Ms. Brunner stated the specific regulations have not been identified yet and will be identified once the regional housing analysis is completed. The local housing analysis which started this week should be complete by April. The potential regulations could include tax incentive programs, a transfer of development rights program, and/or revisions to the zoning code. In addition, this project aims to build community understanding of and support for housing of all types, in particular those that are identified in the gap analyses from the pending Regional Housing Needs Assessment and the City's local housing needs assessment. This grant funding also comes with funding to support the attendance of two community members at the UNH Cooperative Extension's Housing Academy. The Housing Academy teaches community engagement techniques and tools in a hybrid format with webinars, online materials, in-person gatherings, and place-based training.

In closing, Ms. Brunner stated a consultant has not yet been selected, but one will be selected with City Council approval after the completion of the local housing needs assessment and in accordance with the City's normal competitive bid process.

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept and to expend grant funds in the amount of \$91,150 from the Invest NH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program for the purpose of hiring a consultant to develop regulations with the goal of increasing the supply of housing in the community.

6) Amended Keene Community Power Plan - Senior Planner

Ms. Brunner addressed the Committee again and stated this item is in reference to the City of Keene Power Plan. Ms. Brunner stated she is requesting the Committee to approve the amended Power Plan.

Ms. Brunner stated she would first like to provide overview of the power plan. This is a group power purchasing program which pulls electric usage from all entities in Keene and provides competitively priced electricity options. For Keene residents, it will provide a City vetted option to Eversource's default service and other third party suppliers. With community power the City can make strategic decisions as to when to solicit bids, lock in fixed prices, and increase renewable energy beyond the Statewide minimum. With community power, Eversource will continue to manage billing and maintain the wire and poles.

Ms. Brunner stated in May 2021 the Council voted to approve the community power plan. This plan was a product of a month's work of public sessions, multiple public hearings all led by the ad-hoc Community Power Committee. Following the Plan's adoption, the City had to wait for the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to approve rules for the community power program. In March 2022, the PUC asked for the plan to be amended to add information on data security, which has been completed through a data security plan. The plan refers to how customer data will be protected. In April 2022, the data security plan was submitted to PUC for their feedback, which received positive feedback.

In July 2022, the PUC voted to approved community power rules and based on that the City's consultant recommended further improvements to the plan to clarify that the City will not be a load serving entity; and that Keene will use consolidated billing (one bill from Eversource and on the bill next to supplier it will indicate Keene instead of Eversource); that Keene will provide notice of commencement and termination date pursuant to community power rules; that customers will be provided with program launch and the notice will differ for automatic enrollment eligibility if a customer qualifies. Staff also made edits regarding access documents, outreach and education plan.

PUC has approved Keene's plan with all these changes in place. The next step would be for Council to adopt the Plan. Once that is completed, the City will start seeking bids for energy suppliers. The consultants feel the likely launch date will be April 2023.

Councilor Madison stated he is happy to see this item being moved forward and commended staff for their work.

Chair Powers asked who would be running this program. Ms. Brunner stated it would be the consultant team; Standard Power.

Councilor Lake made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Madison.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the approval of the Keene Community Power Plan, as amended on July 31, 2022.

7) EnviroTrac Environmental Services Water Monitoring at Closed Municipal Landfill - Change Order #2 - Assistant Public Works Director

Asst. Public Works Director/Solid Waste Manager, Duncan Watson addressed the Committee next. Mr. Watson stated he was before the Committee regarding a change order for water monitoring with consultant Envirotrac Environmental Services. When the City's landfill closed in 1999 they were required to perform monitoring for 30 years. Pfas has become an issue recently, hence the scope of the testing has been expanded. The City has not had any issues except for one test where the point of entry has been identified and the issue has been addressed. This proposal is in anticipation of testing required by NHDES.

Chair Powers asked for the timeframe for this contract. Mr. Watson stated it would be for this fiscal year.

Councilor Madison made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Chadbourne.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute Change Order #2 with Envirotrac Environmental Services for expanded landfill monitoring for an amount not to exceed \$29,200 for a revised contract total of \$68,152.

8) Imprinted Crosswalks Downtown - Change Order - Transportation and Storm Water Operations Manager

Transportation and Storm Water Operations Manager Harry McKelvey addressed the Committee with reference to a change order with BDM for the repair the downtown imprinted crosswalks. He explained there was a supply chain issue and once the products were received there was further deterioration with the crosswalk. This change order addresses the difference with the scope of work. Chair Powers clarified the additional funds are in the department budget. Mr. McKelvey answered in the affirmative.

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a change order with BDM for the repair the downtown imprinted crosswalks in the amount of \$9,957 for a revised contract amount of \$56,779.

9) Relating to FY23 Fiscal Policies Resolution R-2022-33

Finance Director Merri Howe addressed the Committee and stated Resolution R-2022-33 relates to the FY23 fiscal policies. Each year fiscal policies are reviewed and updated for fiscal management and decision making practices. This document set the boundaries for the CIP and the operating budget.

Ms. Howe stated there are only two modifications this year. The modifications are on page 5

“C. ii Sewer Capital Project Fund: *shall be used to account for capital projects funded by the Sewer Fund,*

iii. Water Capital Project Fund *shall be used to account for capital projects funded by the water fund.*”

Ms. Howe went on to say the migration to the new financial software provided finance an opportunity to better align some of the City’s fund accounting practices with fiscal best practice. New for 2023 and in this fiscal policy is the creation of these two new funds. The City has utilized Capital Projects Fund for General Fund, Parking Fund, Solid Waste Fund, PC Replacement Fund and Fleet Fund; however, in the past incorporated sewer and water capital projects within the water and sewer funds, what is being done now is separating those funds – projects in one fund and operations in another fund. Any funding operating funds used to fund the capital projects will appear and be incorporated in the operating budget, and when necessary a transfer to the capital projects fund for water and sewer will occur. This will be a practice that that will make all of the funds uniform and how capital projects are handled.

Councilor Chadbourne made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Lake.

On a 5-0 roll call vote, the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommends adoption of Resolution R-2022-33 relating to FY23 Fiscal Policies

There being no further business, Chair Powers adjourned the meeting at 7:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker