

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, December 21, 2023. The Honorable Mayor George S. Hansel called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Bryan J. Lake, Michael J. Remy, Michael Giacomo, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Philip M. Jones, Andrew M. Madison, Kris E. Roberts, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Catherine I. Workman, Kate M. Bosley, Mitchell H. Greenwald, and Thomas F. Powers were present. Raleigh C. Ormerod was absent. Ward Four Council seat vacant. Councilor Lake led the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### MINUTES OF THE PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt the December 7, 2023, meeting minutes as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### CONFIRMATION – PLANNING BOARD

Mayor Hansel nominated Kenneth Kost to change from an alternate member to a regular member of the Planning Board, with a term to expire December 31, 2025. A motion by Councilor Powers to approve the nomination was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### RESIGNATION – KEENE HOUSING AUTHORITY

A communication was received from Robert Elliot, resigning from the Keene Housing Authority after nearly 3 years of service. A motion by Councilor Powers to accept the resignation with regret and appreciation of Mr. Elliot's service was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### NOMINATION – KEENE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Mayor Hansel nominated Cody Morrison to serve on the Keene Housing Authority, with a term to expire December 31, 2025. The nomination was tabled until the next regular meeting.

#### COMMUNICATION – REQUEST TO USE CITY PROPERTY – ICE AND SNOW FESTIVAL – FEBRUARY 3, 2024

A communication was received from Mark Rebillard, Keene Downtown Group Chair, submitting their annual request to conduct the 2024 Ice and Snow Festival on City property on February 3, 2024. Mayor Hansel referred the communication to the Planning, Licenses, & Development Committee.

**PLD REPORT – RELATING TO AMENDMENTS TO THE PERMITTED USES IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE, DOWNTOWN GROWTH, AND COMMERCE DISTRICTS – ORDINANCE O-2023-16-A; AND RELATING TO AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY OF KEENE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, DEFINITION OF CHARITABLE GAMING FACILITY – ORDINANCE O-2023-17-A**

A Planning, Licenses, & Development Committee report read, unanimously recommending that the City Council substitute the amended Ordinance O-2023-16-A for consideration at the continued public hearing scheduled for January 18, 2024. A second Planning, Licenses, & Development Committee report read, unanimously recommending that Ordinance O-2023-17-A be placed on more time.

A motion by Councilor Bosley to carry out the intent of the Committee reports was duly seconded by Councilor Giacomo. The motion carried unanimously with 12 Councilors present and voting in favor and 1 abstention. Councilor Greenwald abstained. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**PLD REPORT – EXECUTE LEASE FOR AIRPORT HANGAR**

A Planning, Licenses, & Development Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to execute a lease agreement with Hexagon Hangar LLC. for land and associated hangar structure at the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport. A motion by Councilor Bosley to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Giacomo. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**PLD REPORT – POWERPOINT – AIRPORT BRAND STRATEGY AND MARKETING PLAN**

A Planning, Licenses, & Development Committee report read, recommending the acceptance of the Airport Brand Strategy and Marketing Plan Presentation as informational. Mayor Hansel filed the report as informational.

**FOP REPORT – CONTRACT AWARD – GEAR EXTRACTOR AND DRYING EQUIPMENT**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to execute a contract with Daniels Equipment Co. Inc. for the purchase of a gear extractor and drying system. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**FOP REPORT – ACCEPTANCE OF THE LIEUTENANT JOSEPH DIBERNARDO MEMORIAL GRANT**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to accept and expend the Lieutenant Joseph DiBernardo Memorial Foundation Grant for the purpose of outfitting department members with emergency rope escape systems. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**FOP REPORT – LEASE RENEWAL AGREEMENT 12 GILBO AVE - SUITE C**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a lease renewal with United States Senator Jeanne Shaheen for the office space located at 12 Gilbo Avenue - Suite C. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**FOP REPORT – CONSULTANT SELECTION FOR MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional services contract with Future IQ for master plan consulting services for an amount not to exceed \$160,000.00. In the event that negotiations with the preferred vendor are not successful, the City Manager is authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional services contract with FHI Studio for an amount not to exceed \$160,000.00. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**FOP REPORT – ALLEGATION OF FRAUD OR MISCONDUCT IN CONNECTION WITH THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION PURSUANT TO SECTION 5 OF THE KEENE CITY CHARTER**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending accepting this item as informational. Mayor Hansel filed the report as informational.

**ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS**

A memorandum read from the Finance Director/Treasurer, Merri Howe, recommending acceptance of the donation in the amount of \$750.00 from Monadnock Interfaith Project and that

the City Manager be authorized to use the funds as specified by the donor for the Human Rights Committee's Martin Luther King Jr. Day event on January 15, 2024. A motion by Councilor Powers to accept the donation from the Monadnock Interfaith Project and Human Rights Committee was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### MEMORANDUM – PURCHASE OF MAP/LOT #536/031- OFF OF HOWARD STREET

A motion by Councilor Powers to suspend Section 26 of the Rules of Order to allow action on this item was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

A memorandum read from the City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon, recommending that she be authorized to execute all documents necessary for the purchase of Map/Lot #536/031. A motion by Councilor Powers to authorize the City Manager to execute all documents necessary for the purchase of Map/Lot #536/031 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy.

The City Manager spoke about this potential purchase of a small, 0.21-acre parcel off Howard Street that abuts several other parcels owned by the City. There was an interest in acquiring this parcel to combine with a City-owned tax deeded parcel for potential future housing development. The City Manager credited Councilor Lake for looking at parcels within the City to see if there are opportunities for potential development. The City Manager spoke with this property owner because the property had been vacant for a period of time and had no direct access off of Howard Street. The owner was willing to sell the parcel to the City for a purchase price of \$5,000.

The motion carried unanimously. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR – RESIGNATION

A memorandum read, recommending accepting the Emergency Management Director, Kürt Blomquist's, resignation as the City's Emergency Management Director effective December 30, 2023. Further, as per the City of Keene Code of Ordinances Sections 30–56 and 59, the City Manager will perform the Emergency Management Director's functions until a new Director is recommended and appointed.

A motion by Councilor Powers to accept Mr. Blomquist's resignation with regret and appreciation of his more than 30 years of service was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**ORDINANCE FOR SECOND READING – RELATING TO CLASS ALLOCATION AND SALARY SCHEDULES – ORDINANCE O-2023-19**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending the adoption of Ordinance O-2023-19. The report was filed into the record. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Ordinance O-2023-19 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**ORDINANCE FOR SECOND READING – RELATING TO LIFE SAFETY PERMIT AND INSPECTION FEES – ORDINANCE O-2023-20**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending the adoption of Ordinance O-2023-20. The report was filed into the record. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Ordinance O-2023-20 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING THE CLASSIFICATION AND TOTAL COMPENSATION PROJECT – RESOLUTION R-2023-40**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read on a vote of 4-1, recommending adoption of Resolution O-2023-40. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2023-40 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy.

Councilor Remy mentioned that he voted against this at the FOP meeting. He said that since that meeting, he now understood that this was not for all City positions, and therefore was less expensive than he first understood. The Councilor noted he would be supporting the Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

**RELATING TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF UNANTICIPATED HIGHWAY REVENUE – RESOLUTION R-2023-41**

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2023-41. The report was filed into the record. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2023-41 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

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RELATING TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE PROJECT – RESOLUTION R-2023-42

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2023-42. The report was filed into the record. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2023-42 was duly seconded by Councilor Remy.

Councilor Jones stated that he read all of the proposals and sat in on the interviews. He said there were great companies which provided great proposals. He said they all considered the City's budget and if cuts were made, he did not think the City would be getting the services it needs; he worried it would hinder community engagement. If approved, he hoped the Council and City would ensure the job is done correctly and that the City gets everything it needs in a usable plan.

Councilor Lake recalled that he voiced some concerns at the FOP meeting due to the projected costs of the project. He thought his concerns were echoed at the Planning Board meeting on December 18, because projects are getting more and more expensive. He thought the City would need to make some hard decisions about funding projects. While he supported updating the Master Plan, Councilor Lake did not support this additional funding for a consultant, so he would vote in opposition.

The motion to adopt Resolution R-2023-42 carried with 11 Councilors present and voting in favor and 2 voting in opposition. Councilors Lake and Giacomo voted in the minority. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

CONSULTANT SELECTION FOR MASTER PLAN UPDATE

A Finance, Organization, & Personnel Committee report read, recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional services contract with Future IQ for master plan consulting services for an amount not to exceed \$160,000.00. In the event that negotiations with the preferred vendor are not successful, the City Manager is authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute a professional services contract with FHI Studio for an amount not to exceed \$160,000.00. A motion by Councilor Powers to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Remy.

Councilor Lake stated that since the Council approved the extra funding for this process, he wanted to thank the selection committee for all their work. He supported selecting this consultant. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

IN APPRECIATION OF KÜRT D. BLOMQUIST UPON HIS RETIREMENT – RESOLUTION R-2023-43

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A memorandum read from the HR Director/Assistant City Manager, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2023-43. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2023-43 was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### IN APPRECIATION OF JOHN MILLEDGE UPON HIS RETIREMENT – RESOLUTION R-2023-44

A memorandum read from the HR Director/Assistant City Manager, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2023-44. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2023-44 was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### IN APPRECIATION OF DIANE M. THEALL UPON HER RETIREMENT – RESOLUTION R-2023-45

A memorandum read from the HR Director/Assistant City Manager, recommending the adoption of Resolution R-2023-45. A motion by Councilor Powers to adopt Resolution R-2023-45 was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously with 13 Councilors present and voting in favor. Councilor Ormerod was absent. Ward 4 Council seat vacant.

#### FAREWELL REMARKS – COUNCILOR GIACOMO

Mayor Hansel and the Council honored Councilor Giacomo for his last meeting on the Council. Mayor Hansel noted that Councilor Giacomo always brought good humor, an engineering mind, and a sensibility to Council business, which Mayor Hansel and fellow Councilors always appreciated. Councilor Giacomo continuously prioritized his constituents. He also brought passion to very important conversations about technological changes. The City was better for Councilor Giacomo's service. The Council applauded the Councilor. Councilor Giacomo thanked his fellow Councilors for everything he learned from them. He said it was a great experience. He also thanked Mayor Hansel for progress during his tenure, particularly during Covid.

#### FAREWELL REMARKS – MAYOR HANSEL

Mayor Hansel addressed the Council and public at this, his last meeting as Mayor. He said his heart was filled with both gratitude and nostalgia, noting that the past two terms serving as Mayor had been an incredible journey full of trials and challenges. Yet, above all, there had been a lot of shared progress that he was proud of. He thanked the City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon, the City Attorney, Tom Mullins, and the City Clerk, Patty Little for their support. He said the City has an incredibly talented, high-integrity team. He thought future Councils would have to compete with the very high bar set by this Council; he would miss working with this Council immensely. His appreciation extended to the entire staff of the City of Keene; the citizens of this

City are profoundly lucky to have so many dedicated people working for them throughout this incredible organization. During his four years as Mayor, and his four years as a City Councilor, he witnessed a lot of little things that happen in the City that go nearly unnoticed but make an incredible difference. Mayor Hansel expressed his gratitude for City Staff.

Mayor Hansel also honored the Chairs of the City Council Standing Committees. While being Mayor is a lonely job, he said they made it less lonely. The Chairs contributed their knowledge, enthusiasm, and experience. He noted that Councilor Powers' job as FOP Chair was a hard one, with a lot of behind-the-scenes effort, but his career prepared Councilor Powers for it. Mayor Hansel thanked Councilor Powers for his support. The Mayor also honored the PLD Chair, Councilor Bosley, for taking on the position as a newer Councilor. He knew the hours of time that Councilor Bosley invested in the assignment, which led the PLD Committee and City to some incredible progress. When thinking about the Land Development Code update and other very tough issues during Mayor Hansel's tenure, he said Councilor Bosley never complained and approached the position with confidence. He thanked Councilor Bosley. Next, the Mayor recalled his interesting relationship with Councilor Greenwald, sometimes as competitors and other times as allies. Through all of that, the Mayor said he always considered Councilor Greenwald as a friend. Councilor Greenwald had contributed a wealth of experience and good humor to his role. He thanked the Councilor for stepping-in when needed.

Mayor Hansel expressed this deepest appreciation for the trust the community and City Council had placed in him, allowing him the honor of serving this wonderful City. He said it was a privilege beyond measure and he cherished every moment working alongside his colleagues to make Keene a better place, which is the simplest thing everyone could agree upon. When reflecting on his time with this Council, Mayor Hansel could not help but feel immense pride at what they had accomplished; their collective efforts were evident.

The Mayor mentioned some things the Council had achieved during his tenure:

- Reduced the City's property tax rate by more than 15% and decreased the City's debt by 25%. He said those were not just statistics, but tangible proof of his and this Council's commitment to financial responsibility and sustainability. He said such reductions were rare for any Mayoral term, and the past four years had been an outlier. This was the only Mayoral term to reach double digits in those two categories since 1970. Beyond those figures, he said there was a deeper story of unity, resilience, and creativity. Our City is not just defined by finances. Rather, it is the spirit of our people and their scrappiness, and the community comes together to uplift one another, especially during really uncertain times, like the Covid pandemic.
- During Covid, everyone had to adapt to a new reality and unprecedented levels of responsibility for city governments. Many in the community faced insurmountable losses that should not be forgotten. During 2020, there were times Mayor Hansel was unsure whether he would be the Mayor to preside over Keene losing its downtown, or losing jobs and businesses that would be unrecoverable. Fortunately, Keene had a very different outcome. There was a net increase in new businesses during Covid, and new traditions



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were borne, like the Taste of Keene Food Festival and more. These traditions that arose during a crisis will sustain the vitality of Keene's downtown for many years. The City was hardened by adversity but arose stronger, which Mayor Hansel was proud of.

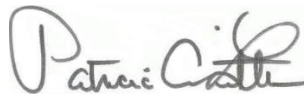
Having served eight years as an elected official in Keene, Mayor Hansel said he learned many different lessons. The experience corrected many misconceptions he previously had about City government, and he said it was incumbent for all Councilors to push back against those misconceptions and misinformation. These years fueled Mayor Hansel's incredible pride in his home, which he called a gift. He reflected upon the people of Keene having so much pride in their community that they give back in philanthropy and volunteerism, which is a community tradition that goes back many years. For example, a Main Street like Keene's does not happen overnight; rather, it takes efficient local government. As a small City that only comprises 1.5%–1.6% of NH's population, Keene performs greatly in economic productivity, sustainability, activism, and creativity; this does not happen by accident.

Mayor Hansel concluded noting that this is a community where eight like-minded City Councilors can make just about anything happen—change the environment, bring new ideas to life, and have an impact. He believed that more now than before his time with the City's government. He hoped his fellow Councilors would never lose sight of that. He urged them to speak for quieter voices and encourage everyone in the community to participate and share their ideas. He said it is the City government's job to build on that identity and add to it if possible. As he stepped down as Mayor, he carried with him the unwavering belief that Keene's best days are yet to come. He thanked everyone who stood by him, supported him, and challenged him to do better. He thanked everyone for their trust, dedication, and unwavering enthusiasm for Keene. From the bottom of his heart, Mayor Hansel thanked everyone for the honor. He was grateful for this chapter of his life, and he looked forward to continuing to contribute to the bright future ahead for this beloved City. The Council applauded Mayor Hansel.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Hansel adjourned the meeting at 8:01 PM.

A true record, attest:



City Clerk