

MINUTES

City of Concord Finance Committee Meeting
May 22, 2025 @ 5:30 PM
City Council Chambers

Present: Mayor Byron Champlin, City Councilors Nathan Fennessy, Fred Keach, Judith Kurtz, Brent Todd, Michele Horne, Stacey Brown, Jennifer Kretovic, Karen McNamara, Amanda Grady Sexton, Paula McLaughlin, Jim Schlosser, Ali Sekou, and Jeff Foote.

Excused: Councilor Kris Schultz.

The Mayor opened the meeting at 5:30 PM.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the May 19, 2025 draft meeting minutes. The minutes were approved with a unanimous voice vote.

With no other business to take care of, Manager Aspell began his review of the budget. He noted that tonight's FY 2026 proposed budget review would cover Community Development, Library, Parks and Recreation, Human Services, and CIP/TIF.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Revenues, budget to budget, are down \$40,000 or 2%. Construction permits are up \$26,000; application fees are down \$5,000; and review fees are down \$55,000.

Expenses, budget to budget, are down \$112,000 or 2%. This decrease is due to wage and benefit decreases of \$137,000 due to staffing changes; Professional Services increase of \$10,000 for annual maintenance fees; and \$15,000 for Energov and GIS software/hardware maintenance.

LIBRARY: Revenues, budget to budget, are up \$6,000 or 2%, due to a decrease in overdue book fines of \$1,000, and a transfer-in from the Dane Trust is up \$7,000 to offset a portion of the increase in library books and materials for visual arts.

Expenses, budget to budget, are up \$95,000, or 4%, mainly due to an increase in wages and benefits, \$79,000; an increase in Professional Development, \$2,000; an increase in software maintenance, \$4,000; and an increase for library books and materials, \$11,000.

PARKS & RECREATION: Budget to budget, revenues overall are up \$60,000 or 5%. This is mainly due to increases in camps, \$6,000; aquatics, \$13,000; program fees, \$17,000; rentals, \$13,000; and cemetery trusts, \$4,000.

Expenses, budget to budget, are up \$198,000 or 5%. This is due to wage and benefit increases, \$153,000; installation of flag poles at cemeteries, \$9,000; chimney climber repairs at Rollins and Kimball Park playgrounds, \$12,000; and staff and supplies for the continuation of the SPARC Program, \$33,000.

Requested, but not funded, is a PCR for the clean-up of Healy Park, a one-time cost of \$250,000, followed by a recurring cost every other year of \$20,000. Clean-up of the camps would be \$90,000; cutting of undergrowth would be \$90,000, trail signs would be \$25,000; and \$20,000 every other year to keep the brush down.

If City Council agrees with doing the clean-up of Healy Park, Manager Aspell recommended that the Community Improvement Reserve, which has a balance of \$1.25 million, be used to offset the cost so that there is no impact on the tax rate. Manager Aspell reminded the committee that the majority of this fund, roughly \$1.14 million, was recently received from a State grant the City successfully applied for.

Manager Aspell indicated that he would task City staff with the daily removal of people that violate the rules of not camping on City property.

Councilor Brown asked about the status of lifeguards for summer 2025. Parks & Recreation Director David Gill indicated that they are still looking for 10 lifeguards. He noted that the Department has some additional interviews scheduled. He also noted that there are lifeguard certification classes coming up in mid to late June. Once a candidate passes the class, the Parks & Recreation Department will reimburse them.

There was considerable discussion about the clean-up of Healy Park. Councilor Schlosser indicated that he had visited the area and it is a terrible mess, which results in our residents not being able to enjoy the park. There was concern noted by several City Councilors about where the people would be moved to, and how best to develop transitional housing for them. City Manager Aspell indicated that we do not have places to send them to, but they would have ample notice.

Councilor Foote stated that the area under the Manchester Street bridge also needs clean-up. He noted that the homeless camps in that area are having a negative effect on the surrounding businesses. He requested a dollar figure for cleaning up that area as well.

HUMAN SERVICES: Revenues, budget to budget, are flat.

Expenses, budget to budget, are up \$48,000 or 5%. The main drivers for this increase are wage and benefit increases, \$20,000; and increased costs for rent, \$25,000, due to increased needs.

Human Services Director Karen Emis-Williams provide an overview of NH RSA 165, which is the law by which the City is mandated to provide human services, to include assistance with rent, food, prescriptions, utilities, personal hygiene items, and burials, to those who qualify. She noted that the two biggest needs are rental assistance and burials. Manager Aspell indicated that the State used to cover burial costs at one time; however, it was downshifted to the municipalities.

Ms. Emis-Williams indicated that from May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025, the Human Services Department has spent \$110,000 on hotels. Councilor Grady Sexton stated that hotels don't help people in the long run, and suggested that those funds could be better used to assist people.

Councilor Grady Sexton also asked about the frail and elderly population. Ms. Emis-Williams indicated that from May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2025, the Human Services Department saw 18 elderly/frail people.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked how many referrals were made to the social service agencies that the City funds, and how many of those referrals were met. Ms. Emis-Williams indicated that the

Human Services Department saw 73 homeless individuals, which equates to 258 interviews. She noted that of those 73 referrals, 10 were met by the agencies the City funds; 63 were not.

Councilor Fennessy asked how many unduplicated individuals are seen by the Department. Ms. Emis-Williams indicated she would get this information and provide it to City Council prior to the next Finance Committee meeting.

Councilor Schlosser suggested that the City work with community partners to provide respite health care to the frail/ill/elderly population, noting that some of that care could possibly be covered by insurance. Manager Aspell stated that health care should be handled by a larger entity than the City – perhaps at the State level.

Mayor Champlin asked if cuts to Medicaid would affect the Human Services Department. Ms. Emis-Williams noted that the biggest impact would be on prescription costs.

Mayor Champlin stated that keeping people in their homes should be a priority. Ms. Emis-Williams indicated that many of the Department's clients are at risk of eviction and that the City doesn't have the funds to pay back rent. The Department tries to work with landlords and our community partners to keep people from being evicted.

The Mayor and City Council thanked Ms. Emis-Williams for her hard work in serving the community's neediest population.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCE (TIF) DISTRICTS:

Tim Thompson, Assistant Community Development Director, provided an overview of the Tax Increment Finance Districts. At the committee's request, he provided an explanation of TIF Districts and their purpose.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

Assistant Community Development Director Tim Thompson provided an overview of the projects recommended for funding in the FY 2026 Capital Improvement Program. Projects that spurred discussion are as follows:

CIP #590, Downtown Civic District Sidewalk Replacement: There was a brief discussion about the sidewalks surrounding the construction site for the new legislative parking garage, and whether or not the State is paying for those sidewalks. Deputy City Manager – Development Matt Walsh indicated that the State is paying for the sidewalks immediately surrounding their project. The City is paying for the sidewalks across the streets from the project. Mr. Walsh also noted that the City is compensated by the State for the lost parking revenue during construction; and that the State has paid the City for permits for parking encumbrances.

Councilor Foote asked if there will be a reduction in bagged parking meters once the legislative parking garage is open. Mr. Walsh indicated that the Parking Committee will be looking at this and communicating with the State on the matter.

CIP #107, Golf Course Clubhouse & Maintenance Buildings: There was extensive discussion about this project. Councilor Brown noted that it is one of the two largest projects being proposed, and the largest project to be bonded. She suggested pulling the project from the CIP in order to have additional public meetings and visioning sessions. Manager Aspell stated that he feels there has been plenty of time for public input on this project, in addition to the two public meetings/visioning charettes that were held. He feels that this project needs to get done, and the longer we wait, the more expensive it will be. He feels that this latest, scaled back proposal, will meet what the golf course needs, with minimal impact to the tax rate.

Manager Aspell explained that he plans to use the Golf Fund to help offset costs, as well as funds from the Recreation Reserve. He noted that this project will have no impact on the tax rate in FY 2026 or FY 2027; and that in FY 2028, the impact would be \$3 per year on a property valued at \$400,000. However, he also indicated that he plans to increase rates, and that it is very possible that those increases could cover the bond costs in FY 2028, resulting in zero impact to the FY 2028 tax rate.

Councilor Brown asked if the Recreation Reserve could be used for any recreation project, to which the answer is yes.

Councilor Brown noted that, back in 2001, the golf course was losing money; and that she feels it is difficult to raise rates. She is uncomfortable with it being a General Fund project and that it will be adding more to debt service. Manager Aspell reminded the committee that, at one time, the Airport was losing \$150,000 per year. It was covered by the General Fund because the City Council recognized that the Airport is an asset to the community, even though not many people use the Airport.

CIP #283, Traffic Signals & Traffic Operations Improvements: Discussion ensued about the North State Street/Penacook Street intersection, and whether it would make sense to hold off on this in order to collect more impact fees, as the intersection is under-utilized and the Santander Bank and former Irving gas station properties are yet to be developed. Deputy City Manager Walsh indicated that we don't charge impact fees for community development. Manager Aspell indicated that the project needs to be done now due to the condition of the traffic signal equipment.

Mayor Champlin opened up a public hearing on the Community Development, Library, Parks and Recreation, Human Services, TIF District, and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budgets.

Ted Rice, President of the NH Skate Park Association, spoke in favor of the Skate Park project. He noted the \$500,000 federal grant that has been approved, with the condition of a match. He noted that the Skate Park Association has raised \$16,000 to date. He requested that the City fund 1/3 of the project using the Recreation Reserve Fund. He also noted that he had submitted a petition in favor of the Skate Park that has 983 signatures.

Linda Mattlage, Concord resident, spoke in favor of the new clubhouse at Beaver Meadow Golf Course.

Charlie Russell, Concord resident, expressed that the City needs more public input on the clubhouse, and that it shouldn't be rushed. He suggested using reserve funds and closing out the NEOCTIF to stabilize the tax rate.

Kate Fox Ransmeier, Concord resident, spoke in favor of the Library expansion.

Mark Hovin, Concord resident, spoke in favor of the Skate Park and suggested the City use Recreation Reserve funds to pay for a portion of the project.

Roy Schweiker, Concord resident, shared his dissatisfaction with the ZBA process, the Planning Board process, and the process for approving development projects. He spoke in opposition to the Library expansion and said there is a lack of programming for seniors at the Library. He suggested closing out the TIF Districts. He spoke in opposition to the Golf Course clubhouse and said he feels it should be paid for by the Golf Fund/golf user fees.

Sam Evans Brown, Concord resident and member of Ski the Beav', spoke in favor of snowmaking at Beaver Meadow Golf Course. He also noted that skiers will benefit from a new clubhouse and is in support of the City Manager's revised proposal for the clubhouse.

Patrick Tompkins, Concord resident, spoke in favor of the new clubhouse, as he feels the golf course benefits the city.

Erin Waters, Concord High School Nordic Ski Coach, spoke in favor of snowmaking at Beaver Meadow Golf Course.

Bill Whitmore, Concord resident and former Athletic Director at Concord High School, spoke in favor of the Skate Park. He feels the kids deserve it. He spoke about Memorial Field and that it is long overdue for improvements. He supports funding for turf fields and the track.

Scott Betourney, St. Paul's School Nordic Ski Coach, spoke in favor of snowmaking at Beaver Meadow Golf Course.

Josh Crayton, Concord resident, spoke in favor of the Skate Park.

Roger Jobin, Concord resident, spoke in favor of the new clubhouse at Beaver Meadow.

Jennifer Fletcher, Concord resident, spoke in favor of the new clubhouse at Beaver Meadow.

Tim McMullin, Concord resident, spoke in support of the new clubhouse at Beaver Meadow and doesn't feel the City should wait any longer.

Aiselin Caleb, Concord resident, spoke in opposition to the new clubhouse at Beaver Meadow. She feels more money should be put towards helping the homeless.

As there was no further public testimony, the Mayor closed the public hearing.

With no other discussion, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with a unanimous voice vote and the meeting was adjourned at 10:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Stevens, Executive Assistant