



FINANCE, ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
Council Chambers B, Keene City Hall
March 27, 2025
6:00 PM

A. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Engineering Agreement with Wright Pierce for Martel Court Bypass Sewer Force Main Final Design - City Engineer
2. Right of Way (ROW) Acquisitions for the George St Bridge Replacement Project - City Engineer
3. Right of Way (ROW) Acquisitions for the Transportation Heritage Trail Phase 1 Project - City Engineer
4. Discussion: Legislative Items of Concern - City Manager
5. Transfer of Personnel Funds to Address Library Budget Shortfall - Library Director
6. Fire Department Staffing - Fire Chief/City Manager
7. Related to the Appropriation of Unassigned Fund Balance for the FY 25 Fire Department Personnel Budget
Resolution R-2025-10

B. MORE TIME ITEMS

NON PUBLIC SESSION

ADJOURNMENT



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.1.

Meeting Date: March 27, 2025

To: Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee

From: Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer

Through: Elizabeth Ferland, City Manager

Subject: **Engineering Agreement with Wright Pierce for Martel Court Bypass Sewer Force Main Final Design - City Engineer**

Recommendation:

Move that the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommend that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute an engineering services agreement with Wright Pierce for the Final Design of the Martel Court Sewer Force Main Bypass Project (32JM012A), up to \$650,000.

Attachments:

None

Background:

The Martell Court Pump Station collects and conveys, on average, 3 million gallons per day (MGD) of sanitary sewer wastewater from the City of Keene and Town of Marlborough and pumps to the City's Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) by means of a 30-inch diameter, 2-mile-long, ductile iron force main pipe. In July 2023, the Martel Court Pump Station's effluent knife gate experienced a failure and was temporarily repaired by the City to keep the pump station and force main operational. In order for the City to perform the necessary repairs to this existing knife gate and the necessary repairs to Martel Court Pump Station, a permanent bypass force main is required to be designed, permitted and constructed to temporarily bypass the sanitary sewer flows to perform the necessary repair and rehabilitation of the station. Wright Pierce was previously hired to perform preliminary investigation, preliminary engineering and develop a Basis of Design Report (BoDR) for these necessary improvements, with an associated BoDR delivery date to the City of December 2024. The BoDR was reviewed and confirmed acceptable by the City and NHDES.

The City has allocated funding for the proposed design and improvements but has advertised and selected the consultant engineer in conformance with NHDES and federal funding requirements in the event that the project is selected for federal funding. In consideration of this, the City publicly advertised a request for qualifications from engineering consultants for the final design and development of contract documents (plans and specifications) for the final design of the City's Martel Court Bypass Sewer Force Main Project (32JM012A). One (1) qualification submission was received by the City from Wright Pierce for the project.

The anticipated Final Design Engineering costs for the Martel Court Bypass Sewer Force Main

Project (32JM012A) are \$650,000, which represents roughly 20% of the construction costs estimated in the BoDR for the project. Currently, roughly \$3,432,205.88 has been allocated and is unencumbered to hire Wright Pierce to perform the scope of engineering services for the project described herein. The remaining unused funds for the final design contract shall be utilized for the Construction Services phase of the contract(s).



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.2.

Meeting Date: March 27, 2025

To: Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee

From: Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer

Through: Elizabeth Ferland, City Manager

Subject: **Right of Way (ROW) Acquisitions for the George St Bridge Replacement Project - City Engineer**

Recommendation:

Move that the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommend that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute temporary and permanent easements with abutting property owners necessary for the construction and future maintenance of the George Street replacement bridge, up to the aggregate amount of \$40,000.

Attachments:

None

Background:

As part of the George Street Bridge Replacement Project, the necessary limits of construction and construction staging extend beyond the existing City-owned and maintained right-of-way (ROW) onto private property. In consideration of this, the City and their hired appraiser, in conformance with the NHDOT LPA and federal funding requirements, performed an appraisal and determination of fair compensation for the ROW acquisitions (temporary and permanent easements) that are necessary for the construction of the project. The City will negotiate and execute agreements for these ROW acquisitions that include temporary and permanent easements on the four properties immediately adjacent to the bridge and associated bridge replacement project. Based on supporting appraisal information, the just compensation for the execution of all these agreements is not anticipated to exceed \$40,000. Funds for the project are 80% federally funded through NHDOT with a 20% City-funded match and have been allocated through the George Street Bridge Replacement Project (75M020A).



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.3.

Meeting Date: March 27, 2025

To: Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee

From: Bryan Ruoff, City Engineer

Through: Elizabeth Ferland, City Manager

Subject: **Right of Way (ROW) Acquisitions for the Transportation Heritage Trail Phase 1 Project - City Engineer**

Recommendation:

Move that the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommend that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute permanent easements with abutting property owners necessary for the construction and future maintenance of the Transportation Heritage Trail (THT) Phase 1 Project, up to the amount of \$10,000.

Attachments:

None

Background:

As part of the Transportation Heritage Trail Project, the necessary limits of construction and drainage infrastructure replacement extend beyond the existing NHDOT right-of-way (ROW) onto private property for the replacement of existing nonfunctional drainage infrastructure. In consideration of this, the City, in conformance with the NHDOT LPA and federal funding requirements, performed an appraisal and determination of fair compensation for the ROW acquisitions (permanent easements) that are necessary for the construction of the project. The City will negotiate and execute agreements for these acquisitions, which will include permanent easements on three Marlboro Street properties. The easements are required in order to replace the existing drainage infrastructure on these parcels. Based on supporting appraisal information, the just compensation for the execution of all three easements is not anticipated to exceed \$10,000. Funds for the project are 80% federally funded through NHDOT with a 20% City-funded match and have been allocated through the Transportation Heritage Trail Project (65M0008A).



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

ITEM #A.5.

Meeting Date: March 27, 2025

To: Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee

From: Martine Fiske, Library Director

Through: Elizabeth Ferland, City Manager

Subject: **Transfer of Personnel Funds to Address Library Budget Shortfall - Library Director**

Recommendation:

Move that the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee recommend that the City Manager be authorized to allocate \$47,000 from the FY25 Public Works Winter Operations wage lines to the FY25 library part-time wage-related accounts.

Attachments:

None

Background:

Sufficient wage-related funds are available within the Public Works Winter Operations budget to cover a shortfall in the Library's part-time wage lines. While departments are required to manage their budgets to meet the bottom line, the City Manager is not authorized to transfer unspent wage appropriations between departments.

Therefore, City Council approval is being requested to authorize the reallocation of available wage funds from the Public Works budget to be used for Library wage expenses.

A review of the Library's Personnel budget conducted prior to the end of the first quarter of FY25 revealed a significant and unexpected shortfall in the part-time staff budget. Despite confirming the accuracy of payroll records and a detailed analysis of staff schedules, which showed reasonable adherence to approved hours, a significant shortfall persists.

To reduce this deficit, the Library implemented several cost-saving measures, including:

- Leaving a vacant 16-hour per-week position unfilled.
- Strategically reducing Part-Time staff hours wherever feasible.
- Reassigning duties to Full-Time and qualified Part-Time staff.
- Eliminating the use of Per Diem Hourly staff.
- Utilizing the City Manager's approved rollover of \$26,932 from the Library's unused FY24 Personnel budget.

Despite these efforts, the Library faces a remaining shortfall of approximately \$46,400 for the remainder of FY25.

Without a transfer of unused Personnel funds from another department, the Library will need to implement substantial staffing reductions, including the elimination of twelve Part-Time positions and a 27% reduction in another. This equates to a loss of approximately 159 staff-hours per week, representing a 40% reduction in overall Library staff hours. Consequently, a comparable reduction in Library service hours will be unavoidable, significantly impacting public access and service delivery.

We respectfully request your consideration of this matter and the approval of a transfer of unused Personnel funds to prevent these severe service disruptions.



CITY OF KEENE NEW HAMPSHIRE

Meeting Date: March 27, 2025
To: Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee
From: Elizabeth Ferland, City Manager
Through:
Subject: Fire Department Staffing - Fire Chief/City Manager

Recommendation:

Move that the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee support a resolution being brought forward to appropriate funds to hire four additional firefighters (one per shift) for approximately \$529,000 per year.

Attachments:

None

Background:

In January 2022, then-Chief Howard submitted a memorandum at the request of the City Manager outlining ongoing staffing challenges within the Keene Fire Department and recommending both short- and long-term solutions. One key recommendation was to maintain the increased minimum daily staffing level of 10, which had been temporarily implemented in December 2021, through the end of that fiscal year.

At that time, Chief Howard also formally requested funding for four additional firefighter positions (one per shift), at a cost of just under \$500,000.

To further assess the department's long-term needs, a staffing committee was convened in February 2022. The committee evaluated operational demands and issued several recommendations, including the hiring of the four additional firefighters. However, that recommendation was put on hold pending the outcome of a federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) application. In April 2023, the department was informed that the grant had not been awarded.

The request to hire four firefighters was subsequently brought to City Council and approved, enabling the department to operate with **11 personnel per shift, ensuring a minimum of 10 on duty** to accommodate vacancies due to leave time.

In October 2024, the City Manager reconvened the staffing committee to re-evaluate operational demands. In December 2024, Councilors Remy and Powers were added to the group. On January 23, 2025, the Fire Department presented a comprehensive update to the Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee, including data on staffing impacts and the potential benefits of additional personnel.

On February 6, 2025, the City Council authorized the submission of a 2024 FEMA SAFER Grant, which—if awarded—would fully fund **four firefighters per shift (16 total positions)** for a three-year period. In the fourth year, the full cost of these positions would transition to the City. This would bring the total number of firefighters per shift to 15 and allow for an increase to a minimum of 12 (needed to operate the 3rd ambulance).

While the City is actively pursuing this grant, the department is also requesting interim support—as reflected in a separate item on tonight’s agenda—to maintain 12 firefighters per shift through the end of FY25, allowing for the regular deployment of a third ambulance. This adjustment is expected to reduce call volume per firefighter and enhance both operational capacity and personnel well-being.

In addition, I am requesting that the Council again support the hiring of four additional firefighters, at an estimated cost of \$529,000. This would increase the authorized **staffing level to 12 per shift** and support a minimum staffing level of 11. While this request doesn't support increasing the minimum to 12 per shift at all times it would help to reduce the overtime currently being expended and provide more immediate relief as we await the safer grant. Initial funding is proposed to come from the City’s General Fund balance, with ongoing costs incorporated into the annual operating budget. It is recommended that this appropriation be excluded from the FY26 budgetary fiscal policy calculation in Section I(k).

Staff intend to submit a resolution for first reading at the next City Council meeting to formally appropriate the necessary funds. The Fire Department currently has at least four firefighter candidates in the pipeline, which would allow for expedited hiring if the request is approved. This would help reduce overtime costs in the upcoming fiscal year while the City awaits notification on the SAFER Grant award.

If the grant is awarded, and the council approves the addition of four firefighters immediately, further discussion will take place at City Council to determine whether to add three of the four firefighters per shift requested, or to move forward with the full complement of four.

This request aligns with prior recommendations, operational reviews, and the City’s ongoing commitment to ensuring timely and reliable emergency response services for the Keene community.



CITY OF KEENE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Twenty-Five

A RESOLUTION Relating to the Appropriation of Funds from the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Keene, as follows:

WHEREAS: Resolution 2024-32 Relating to Fiscal Policies states all departments are authorized to vary actual departmental spending from line-item estimates provided the total department budget is not exceeded within each fund; provided however, that any item specifically eliminated by the City Council during the budget approval process cannot be purchased from another line item without City Council approval; and

WHEREAS: Any unexpended funds in a personnel line related to a vacancy cannot be expended without approval from the City Manager and the City Council unless funds are being expended to fill a vacancy, recruiting, or to employ temporary help including professional and contract services;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council that the use of General Fund Unassigned Fund balance in the amount of four hundred ninety thousand (\$490,000.00) be used to fund an appropriation to provide for supplemental fire shift staffing (up to 2) providing resources that would allow a third ambulance to be staffed and respond for the balance of the fiscal year and for over expenditures in the Fire Department personnel budget.

Personnel wage and overtime expenses	\$400,679.91
Personnel benefit load (NHRS/FICA/WC)	<u>\$ 89,320.09</u>
	\$490,000.00

Jay V. Kahn, Mayor