



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Thomas J. Aspell, Jr., City Manager
DATE: April 30, 2026
SUBJECT: 2026 – 2027 City Council Priorities

Recommendation

Accept this report as to the current status of the City Council Priorities established on February 19, 2026.

Background

Members of the City Council met on February 19, 2026 to discuss and set priorities for the remainder of Calendar Year 2026, as well as for Calendar Year 2027.

Discussion

Listed below, are the accepted priorities, projects and ongoing initiatives; and their respective statuses as of June 30, 2026.

GOAL 1. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY & COMMUNICATIONS

The City will adopt a balanced budget that minimizes impact on the tax rate, while following a policy that maintains Concord's AA+ bond rating, complies with fiscal policy goals, and makes maximum use of federal and state funding.

Status:

- In January 2026, the City issued \$50,835,000 of General Obligation (GO) bonds. S&P Global Ratings affirmed the City's AA+ rating. For the time period of January 1, 2026 through March 31, 2026, no State or Federal funds have been appropriated by the City Council.
- The City continued to support the Mayor's Ad-hoc Impact Fee Committee. The Community Development Department completed comprehensive evaluation of impact fees and determined that, on average, impact fees account for approximately 0.56% of the total development cost or sales price of new development. The Department also completed preliminary analysis and determined that approximately \$16.6 million of the new Police Station (i.e., 34% of the cost of the project allocated to the Police Station, excluding the new Prosecutor's Office) and \$33.8 +/- million of the new middle school (21% of the total \$155.7 million net cost) are eligible to be supported by impact fees on future new development should the City Council desire to amend the Impact Fee Ordinance to implement such charges.

- The Fire Department signed several contracts to become in-network with New Hampshire insurance providers and has modified its fee structure to raise ambulance transport rates. The rates are now equivalent to 3.25 times the Medicare rates, as allowed by NH RSA 420-J:21. This will increase revenues received from private insurance companies. At the same time, patients will no longer be billed the difference between their original bill and the amount the insurance company pays, creating a better experience for the patient.

GOAL 2. ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Establish Concord as a welcoming destination for businesses and families with vibrant arts and events in downtown centers. Expand the tax base by responsibly investing in key infrastructure such as water, sewer and roads in targeted areas of the city. Protect neighborhoods from blight and deterioration that negatively impact area property values, encourage historic preservation, and encourage residents and business owners' efforts to maintain the physical environment through standards set in local ordinances.

Status:

- Supported the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC); assisted EDAC with review of the C-PACE Program; and met with the NH Business Finance Authority to learn more about the program in preparation for future discussions with the Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee and City Council.
- Continued support of the Mayor's visitation program; most recently facilitating a visit with the owners of The Barn at Bull Meadow.
- Worked extensively with 603-Bar-B-Q on a site selection process to find a new location for their restaurant in Concord. Staff provided technical assistance regarding land use regulations and development permitting processes for several potential sites. Efforts successfully led to 603 Bar-B-Q leasing the former Pit Road Lounge at 388 Loudon Road.
- Leased 4 +/- acres of land to Concord Trailways for the construction of a 230 +/- space temporary parking lot to provide additional parking supply for the Stickney Avenue bus station. Lease payment for Year 1 is \$12,000, with an annual escalator, plus property taxes. Projected property taxes will be approximately \$21,000 in Year 1, based on estimated assessed value of \$710,000. Property taxes will be captured by the NEOCTIF District. Per current practice, 66% of captured assessed value, and associated property taxes, will be released annually to the City's General Fund, the Concord School District, Merrimack County, and the State of New Hampshire.
- Construction continued at the Merchant's Way development. Specifically, the new Evvivia Trattoria restaurant opened in April 2026. Construction of the new Marshalls building is underway.
- Awarded a contract for the construction of the new pump station (CIP #275) to PRB Construction in October 2025, with construction scheduled to begin in May 2026. Final completion of the pump station is expected by the fall of 2026.

GOAL 3. INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT & ASSET MANAGEMENT

Protect, maintain and improve critical city infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, parks, trails, recreational facilities, and utilities to support economic growth and improve quality of life in the City. These goals support safety, mobility, economic activity and service reliability.

Status:

- Completed design, permitting and bidding for the new Police Station project (CIP #643), completed interior demolition, and initiated exterior demolition. Sitework is scheduled to commence on April 22, 2026. The project is scheduled for completion in fall 2027.
- Continued work on the City Hall Campus Master Plan, including multiple options for reuse of the existing Police Station.
- Completed acquisition of 5.6 +/- miles of the former Boston & Maine Northern Railroad from CSX for the Merrimack River Greenway Trail (CIP #543); and submitted reports and resolutions to City Council for acceptance and appropriation of \$1.24 million of Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant funds for design and construction of the trail between Sewalls Falls Road to the Contocook River.
- Completed bid documents for sewer main upgrades associated with the Heights Sewer Project (CIP #91). Bids are due in April 2026, and construction will likely commence in June.
- Completed design and bidding of sidewalk improvements on Green, Capitol, and School Streets (CIP #590). Improvements will be constructed once the new Legislative Parking Garage is substantially complete in late FY 2026/early FY 2027.
- Completed the State Street Parking Garage alternatives feasibility study and presented findings/recommendations to the Parking Committee for their consideration (CIP #432).
- Continued construction of the Abbottville Sewer Improvement Project (CIP #83).
- Completed design and permitting for the Pembroke Road/Industrial Park Drive water main replacement project (CIP #85) and put project out to bid.
- Completed design, permitting, and bidding for traffic signal replacement projects located at Center/North State Street and Washington/North Main/Ferry Streets; and initiated construction thereof. Also initiated design of traffic signal improvements at North State/Bouton Street and North State/Horseshoe Pond Lane/Penacook Street (CIP #283).
- Advanced design of the Loudon Road Bridge project to 60% completion in preparation of FY 2028 construction (CIP #588).
- Completed design and permitting for the School Street water main lining project. Project is currently out to bid.
- Completed design of Penacook Village sewer inflow and infiltration project (CIP #647). Construction options are under review.
- Completed design of North Main Street pedestrian improvements (crosswalks and bus stops).
- The City's paving contractor, GMI Asphalt, is working to complete paving on the eight remaining streets on the FY 2026 CIP Paving Program list. To date, the contractor has reclaimed and base-paved Hope Avenue, Kellom Street, Cote Street, Haig Street, and Nivelles Street. Drainage repairs are underway on Broad Avenue, and Liberty Utilities is relaying the gas main and services on Fellows Street. Once the drainage and gas work are complete, Broad Avenue, Fellows Street, and Wood Avenue will be reclaimed and paved.
- Maintenance building improvements at White Park (CIP #51) are nearing completion. Work has included equipment upgrades, lighting improvements, electrical updates, and other interior enhancements. The project is expected to be completed by the end of May 2026.

- Completed a full renovation of the basketball court and retaining wall at White Park. Improvements include a new court surface, fencing, and retaining wall reconstruction. Court repainting is scheduled for May or June 2026, weather dependent.
- Working with a vendor to review State permitting requirements for the White Park pond restoration project. This includes evaluating whether hydro-raking is a viable and permissible option.
- Fundraising efforts are ongoing for the required Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant match for Kiwanis Riverfront Park (CIP #60). In March 2026, the new skate park design was reviewed by the City's Architectural Design Review Committee, the Conservation Commission, and the Planning Board.
- An inspection of the Memorial Field football bleachers has been completed. A recommendation for removal was presented and approved by the City Council. The new Memorial Field Facility Master Plan was presented to both the City Council and the School Board in December 2025. The Parks & Recreation Department is currently awaiting final approval and direction on next steps.
- The Blossom Hill Cemetery building improvement project (CIP #587) is scheduled to begin in spring 2026. Planned upgrades include new windows, plumbing and electrical improvements, and installation of a new heating system for the employee building.

GOAL 4. HOUSING STABILITY & HUMAN SERVICES COORDINATION

Support housing availability across the continuum and improve coordinated responses to community vulnerability including the impact of housing issues on renters.

Status:

- During the period of 2020-2025, 774 housing units were constructed in Concord, of which 380 were income restricted "affordable" units. Presently, 2,008 units are in development (283 under construction, 599 have development permits and are awaiting construction, and 1,126 are in the permit process). Presently, staff projects that Concord will have 21,867 housing units by 2030, which represents an increase of 2,782 units from 2020 (a 14.6% increase). Using this information, staff estimates that the City's total population will be 50,374 (an increase of 6,398 from 2020). For comparison, from 2010 to 2020, 233 housing units were constructed in the city.
- In February 2026, temporary certificates of occupancy were issued for 80 apartment units located at 11 Stickney Avenue.
- The City applied for and secured \$130,000 of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to support Concord Coalition to End Homelessness' winter shelter and resource center.
- In January 2026, the City applied for \$500,000 of CDBG funds to support the development of four dwelling units in Bicentennial Square by Families in Transition. The grant was tentatively awarded on April 2, 2026 (final award subject to Governor & Council approval in late FY 2026/early FY 2027).
- On February 18, 2026, the City entered into a Purchase and Sales Agreement to sell the former Penacook Library located at 3 Merrimack Street, and an adjacent parcel, to a developer who will preserve and renovate the historic building into a duplex. The developer has a six-month due diligence and permitting period.

- During the first quarter of CY 2026, the Community Development Department prepared the following amendments to the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to housing. These were scheduled to be submitted to the City Council in April 2026 for public hearing in May.
 - 1) Revisions to multiple definitions in the Glossary to further clarify for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's), Duplexes and Attached Dwellings;
 - 2) Modifications to Section 28-5-2 (Duplex or Two-Family Dwelling) to repeal supplement lot area and frontage requirements for Duplexes;
 - 3) Modifications to Section 28-4-5 (Development of Attached and Multifamily Buildings) to provide greater flexibility for buffer standards and private yard requirements via Conditional Use Permits, as well as to eliminate a variety of design standards (such as maximum horizontal dimensions, interior setbacks from parking and other buildings at the subject property), repealed supplemental parking requirements for common facilities, among others;
 - 4) Modifications to Section 28-5-3 (Conversion of a Residential Building) to clarify lot area requirements and parking regulations, as well as repeal eligibility to only pre-1945 structures, expressly allows for conversion of detached accessory structures, relaxes limitations on the expansion of structures, and eliminates minimum 600/800 SF sizes for dwelling units established via conversions.
- The Fire Department is collaborating with the Committee for Concord's Plan to End Homelessness to assess data needs and improve information sharing among organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness. A current priority is establishing a referral pathway that enables the Fire Department to engage the Concord Police Department's social work team. Both agencies will work jointly to develop vetted Release of Information agreements to support this effort.
- The Fire Department has implemented the ability to report data surrounding emergency calls involving homelessness with scalability to support common reporting metrics, once defined, across participating organizations.

SUBCATEGORY 1. PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH & COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Maintain a safe, healthy and resilient community through proactive and adaptive public safety services.

Status:

- The Concord Police Department continues to work diligently to provide the highest level of public safety services to the community. The Department has adapted its approach to triaging public safety services, focusing on achieving the best outcomes. The Department responds to both emergency and non-emergency calls for service, utilizes its Police Social Work unit to assist individuals in crisis, and continues to promote community policing to foster positive relationships and equity between the police and the community.
- The Police Department is addressing staffing challenges and currently has vacancies in all areas, including the Police Chief position, a Planning and Evaluation Lieutenant position, and several frontline police officer positions. Despite these challenges, agency morale remains strong. Positive developments regarding the new police station at 4 Bouton Street have uplifted spirits and created a favorable atmosphere throughout the agency, aiding in employee retention, recruitment and resilience.

- The Police Department has identified the following yearly goals to best serve the community:
 - 1) Aim to fully staff all authorized sworn and civilian positions. Continue implementing strategies to enhance police officer recruitment efforts, utilizing social media and other innovative methods to attract prospective candidates to the Department. Additionally, focus on developing and providing expanded training opportunities for Department staff, particularly emphasizing the recommendations made by the L.E.A.C.T. Commission. This training should also include topics related to Officer Wellness, Crisis Intervention, and Stress Management (CISM).
 - 2) The Department will continue to collaborate with community stakeholders to develop strategies for assisting individuals in crisis due to mental health issues, addiction, and homelessness. Additionally, we will coordinate with Riverbend to maximize the effectiveness of the New Hampshire Rapid Response Team and Riverbend Emergency Services Office. The Department will also engage with other community outreach programs, such as The Doorway at Concord and the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness.
 - 3) Collaborate with City Administration in developing a plan for the construction of the new Police Headquarters.
 - 4) Enhance community engagement to strengthen the relationship between the Department and the public. Continue efforts to improve communication and information exchange through social media, as well as through direct interactions with community members, community groups, and businesses.
 - 5) Continue to implement strategies that enhance the Police Department's efforts in combatting crime, focusing specifically on serious public safety issues that disrupt communities. These issues include illicit drug dealing and usage, crimes against individuals and property, as well as hazardous motor vehicle operations.
 - 6) Coordinate departmental responses to these challenges and collaborate with community stakeholders, along with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.
- The Fire Department has engaged in planning with Rundlett Middle School to create a safety curriculum that will be taught by Fire Department members to all 6th grade health class students. This includes the use of fire extinguishers, general household fire safety and prevention, administration of epinephrine auto-injectors, CPR, and the treatment of choking victims. The first session is scheduled to be held on May 6, 2026. This collaboration was made possible through the recent addition of a third position in the Fire Prevention Office in February. Over the next several months, the Fire Department expects to slowly increase its capacity to complete needed fire inspections throughout the city, as well as increase responsiveness to public inquiries.
- The recently formed Fire Department Swift Water Rescue Team will hold its first team training and testing on May 12-14, 2026. Equipment for the team has been largely supported by grant funding.
- The modular traffic barrier system that was funded by a grant from the NH Department of Safety has been received and the Fire Department has completed its initial training. Once this is placed in service, it will support the safety of event-goers at designated downtown events.
- The Fire Chief has engaged the Public Safety Advisory Board to advocate for the inclusion of a dedicated public safety chapter in the upcoming Master Plan update. This will help ensure that public safety services expand commensurate with community growth and evolving demand.

SUBCATEGORY 2. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY & RENEWABLE ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Advance sustainability, resilience and responsible resource management to economic advantage.

Status:

- Successfully facilitated 5 MW Kearsarge solar array project at the Old Turnpike Road landfill. Construction was initiated and will be completed in early FY 2027.
- Awarded contracts and initiated replacement of 72 fully depreciated “bishop’s crook” ornamental light poles with new ornamental poles equipped with LED fixtures (CIP #628). Removal of existing lights was initiated in March 2026. Project will be completed in FY 2027.

SUBCATEGORY 3. HIGH PERFORMING ORGANIZATION

Support an environment of transparency, clear public communication, collaboration and teamwork. Enable the City to recruit, train and compete for talent and high-performing employees and ensure institutional knowledge is retained.

Status:

- The Human Resources Department worked with hiring departments to ensure the training of hiring managers be compliant within the legal landscape, as well as remaining competitive and proactive in securing viable candidates in the market. During the first quarter of CY 2026, 34 jobs were posted, of which 12 were seasonal positions to properly staff the Parks and Recreation programs, the Golf Course and our Civil Engineering paid interns. Of the 34 jobs, six were internal job postings.
- The Human Resources Department continues to develop succession planning within the organization with bench strength evidenced with our promotions in the first quarter. The following key positions were filled within the organization from internal promotions: City Solicitor, Management and Budget Analyst, Deputy General Services Director, Cemetery Administrator, Cemetery Crew Leader, Cemetery Maintenance Specialist, and Equipment Operator II.
- In Quarter 1, the Human Resources Department conducted Discrimination and Harassment Prevention training for 63 employees, two were trained by Primex online, 15 employees went through New Employee Orientation, and the Department conducted a timekeeper training session attended by 10 employees. In addition, six employees were CPR/AED/First Aid certified, five went through Flagger Certification, and 12 went through Vehicle Barrier Systems training. This synopsis does not capture classes that employees signed up for individually, nor does it capture Fire and Police training, as that is tracked in their respective departments. Lastly, the Class and Compensation study report implementation will be a key factor in recruiting and retaining a high performing team in Concord.
- The Parks & Recreation Department created and distributed its annual Spring Brochure in February. This publication highlights all programs for youth, adults, and senior citizens scheduled between March and early June, as well as three traditional full-day summer camps. In late March, the Department produced and distributed its annual Summer Camp brochure. This brochure outlines summer camp offerings and includes registration reminders for programs beginning in early May. Both brochures are distributed to all elementary schools in Concord and Penacook, made available online, shared on social media, and stocked at the City-Wide Community Center.

- The Parks & Recreation Department began scheduling athletic fields and parks for spring activities, including practices, games and special events. As of April 6, 2026, more than 1,300 facility use permits had been issued for spring field and park use.
- The Parks & Recreation Department has been actively expanding its community offerings while keeping accessibility and affordability at the forefront. During February vacation, the Department provided free programming such as a Magic Show, a Mr. Aaron concert, and an Animal Encounters presentation – giving families engaging options during school break. Also offered was free family and youth open gym times. The Senior Citizen Program has also grown, with the addition of three days of activities in Penacook at the Activities Room, along with the existing five days at the City-Wide Community Center. In addition, monthly senior lunches continue through a partnership with the Community Action Program. Seasonal programming has remained strong as well. From January through March 2026, the free SPARC drop-in program was available on weekend afternoons at the City-Wide Community Center. Building on that success, a collaboration with students from St. Paul's School introduced the Stand Up, Speak Out (SUSO) Program, held one Sunday each month from October through May at the Penacook Activities Room.
- The General Services Department continues to engage the public with transparent information and engaging communications. News releases issued to local media are posted on the General Services home page in a news release archive, and on the General Services Facebook page for direct public access. News alerts are highlighted on the website and sent to public subscribers of the Notify Me module via email or mobile alerts. The General Gazette newsletter is issued monthly to email subscribers and highlighted on the website to share information on public services and news. Facebook and Instagram are used extensively to improve public communication with regular updates and engaging content. The Department also uses SeeClickFix as a non-emergency reporting tool, allowing the community to directly contact assigned City personnel with public service concerns such as potholes, missed trash collection, and road requests. SeeClickFix is a public platform that provides transparency into the status of public requests and allows City departments to collaborate while engaging the public. Residents who download the MyConcordNH mobile app can use SeeClickFix directly from their phone, access quick links to City services, and receive push notifications on important information.
- The Parks & Recreation Department continues to broaden its reach with inclusive, low-cost (often free) opportunities that serve residents of all ages.
- In collaboration with the NH Natural and Cultural Resources Division of Forest & Lands, the Parks & Recreation Department sponsored a tree pruning workshop on March 18, 2026, for its full-time maintenance staff. Several employees from the Public Properties Division of the General Services Department also participated. On April 6, 2026, the Parks & Recreation Department coordinated additional training led by City Tree Supervisor Ryan Rambeau on operating a stump grinder recently provided by the General Services Department. Over the coming years, the Department plans to grind more than 75 aging tree stumps located throughout parks and cemeteries, as time allows. These stumps do not include the stumps at Memorial Field resulting from the recent tree cutting project.
- The Parks & Recreation Department partnered with Granite United Way to host an Earth Day event at Rollins Park on April 22, 2026. Volunteers assisted with cutting and mulching tree wells and weeding around the gazebos. The City also held its annual Arbor Day tree planting at Rollins Park on the same day. The Department collaborated with staff from the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire on a clean-up project at White Park on April 23, 2026.

- The Parks & Recreation Department worked with the Human Resources Department to advertise more than 80 seasonal positions essential for operating parks, cemeteries, outdoor aquatic facilities, and summer camps. Staff also participated in several hiring fairs at local high schools. Recruitment began in early April for two full-time cemetery laborer/truck driver positions that recently became vacant.