



City of Concord

City Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Monday, November 24, 2025

7:00 PM

City Council Chambers
37 Green Street
Concord, NH 03301

1. Mayor Champlin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Roll Call.

Present: 14 - Councilor Stacey Brown, Mayor Byron Champlin, Councilor Nathan Fennessy, Councilor Jeff Foote, Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton, Councilor Michele Horne, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Councilor Judith Kurtz, Councilor Paula McLaughlin, Councilor Karen McNamara, Councilor Jim Schlosser, Councilor Kris Schultz, Councilor Ali Sekou, and Councilor Brent Todd

Late: 1 - Councilor Fred Keach

4. Agenda overview by the Mayor.

Reports

5. Presentation on the Memorial Field Master Plan from the Parks and Recreation Director. (Presentation given at the November 10, 2025 City Council Meeting.) (Action on this item tabled at the November 24, 2025 City Council Meeting.)

Action: City Manager Aspell invited David Gill, Parks & Recreation Director to present.

David Gill, Parks & Recreation Director, along with Chris Huntress of Huntress Sports and Eric Gerard of VHB, presented an update on the Memorial Field project. Mr. Gill noted that the two-year planning effort, initiated by a joint City Council and School Board subcommittee in June 2025, has focused on addressing site drainage, confirming field and track placement, improving the track's ability to host meets, increasing parking, and determining whether the project can be built in phases due to overall cost.

Mr. Gill explained over the course of seven meetings, the Subcommittee refined the Memorial Field master plan by expanding on-site parking by approximately 180

spaces and improving site circulation. The plan relocates the track and new athletic field to the southwest corner near Trinity Christian School, shifts the multi-sport stadium to the western side of the complex, and repositions the softball fields to the current track area while reconstructing the baseball field with proper orientation. Based on input from high school and middle school students, the plan includes a field house with four team rooms, public restrooms, and concessions, as well as a new maintenance building and an additional concessions and restroom facility near the main complex. The Subcommittee also recommended evaluating the potential future purchase of adjacent state-owned land to the west (the cornfields) to provide long-term additional parking.

Chris Huntress of Huntress Sports, the landscape architecture firm specializing in athletic and recreation facilities, noted that his team has worked with the project group for the past two years. He explained that the layout presented reflects the Subcommittee's recommended plan and briefly acknowledged that questions remain regarding project cost and field orientation, similar to those raised at the most recent School Committee meeting.

Eric Gerard, civil engineer with VHB, reviewed the proposed construction phasing plan. He explained that Phase One would begin with the new track and adjacent fields, working in a clockwise direction to include the two lower fields and the grass field between them, which also provides necessary construction staging and grade adjustments for drainage improvements. This phase also includes new parking to ensure adequate access when the first field opens. Phase Two would address the reoriented baseball field, the field house and concessions buildings, and, if needed, later resurfacing of the tennis and basketball courts.

Mr. Gill presented updated cost estimates for Concept D, noting that final design and permitting would be the next step should the City Council and School Board choose to proceed. He reported that this phase is estimated at \$1.2 million and would take approximately 12 months once funded. He also reviewed the recommended phasing plan, divided into Phases 1A and 1B to provide flexibility based on budget needs. The total projected construction cost for the project is just under \$32 million.

Mr. Huntress explained that his firm prepared the construction cost estimate using actual bid data from more than 26 years of public and private projects, allowing them to develop reliable unit pricing for the master plan. He noted that, although some details remain unknown at the master-planning stage-such as final grading and

earthwork-the team has made informed assumptions about cut and fill needs and drainage requirements. Mr. Huntress stated that the overall estimate is appropriate for the project's scale and scope and includes sufficient contingencies to avoid the need for additional funding later.

Councilor Brown asked whether the Subcommittee began its work with an established budget or if the approach was to identify all needed and requested project components first and then determine the overall cost.

Mr. Gill explained that the master plan was developed through community input rather than a predetermined budget, with two public meetings and separate sessions with middle and high school students to identify operational needs and desired features. He also outlined the next steps, noting that the School Board's City and Community Relations Committee reviewed the same presentation on November 17 and recommended that the School Board accept Master Plan D as presented and that the School District fund its portion of the master planning and permitting phase.

Councilor Fennessy asked about the cost estimates for Phases 2, 2A, 2B, and 2C, inquiring whether these figures were based on projected timelines, anticipated years into the future, or another method of estimation.

Mr. Huntress explained that the Phase Two cost estimates were developed primarily from a constructability perspective. The sequence begins with relocating the track to the southwest corner of the park, which affects adjacent areas such as the multi-purpose fields and allows necessary drainage work in the lower portion of the site. All cost projections assume a 12-month time frame and have not been escalated beyond that. Phase Two costs follow the initial work, focusing on the remaining improvements, including the multi-purpose and softball fields, based on what makes the most sense for construction sequencing.

Mr. Gill noted that the presentation, along with all Concord TV videos, previous presentations, the history of Memorial Field, and related deeds, is available on the City of Concord website.

Councilor Kretovic noted questions regarding the utilization of the existing fields, many of which are underused due to current conditions. She requested that future reports include an addendum addressing field usage and functionality.

Councilor Brown noted that architecture student Drew McGee, a master's degree recipient and former player at Memorial Field, had completed a project on the site and asked if they had an opportunity to review his work.

Mr. Gill indicated that he did not recall receiving any emails from Drew McGee regarding his work, aside from an email received from Councilor Brown about a year ago.

Councilor Brown asked whether Mr. Gill would be interested in incorporating some of McGee's ideas.

Mr. Gill responded that, as this is a final project, there are no additional funds in the budget to make adjustments, though it might be interesting to review his work.

Councilor Brown asked whether any of the \$168.77 million approved by the School Board on October 23 for the middle school project includes funding for Memorial Field, or if the Memorial Field project would be in addition to that amount.

Mr. Gill clarified that the Memorial Field project is separate from the middle school project and would require additional funding, as it is unrelated to the school district.

Mayor Champlin asked how dependent the elements of Phase One are on each other, specifically whether all components must be completed at once or if it would be possible to complete the track, field, bleachers, drainage, lights, and parking in Phase One and address other improvements in a future phase.

Mr. Huntress explained that while the project has been divided into two phases, the scope could be broken down further if desired. The two-phase approach, including A, B, and C sub-phases, was developed to meet public preference for a shorter time frame. He emphasized that the project is currently at the master plan level and that once design work begins, including grading, drainage, and utilities, it will be easier to determine how the phases could be further subdivided.

Mayor Champlin stated that it was his understanding that the entire school board has not seen the presentation.

Mr. Gill noted the School Board will be seeing the presentation at their December

3rd meeting.

Mayor Champlin indicated that he would prefer to table the report until the Concord School Board has had the opportunity to review the presentation. He entertained a motion.

Councilor Grady Sexton moved to table the report. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Fennessy.

Councilor Todd asked for clarification regarding Phase One, specifically whether elements such as lights and parking could be separated from the track, field, bleachers, and drainage, effectively creating additional sub-phases within Phase One.

Mr. Huntress indicated that Phase One could be further subdivided, noting that once the track is moved, most elements can proceed independently. However, he cautioned that the baseball field would be impacted and would need to be taken offline under Concept D's configuration.

City Manager Aspell asked Mr. Gill whether, after obtaining agreement from the School Board on a preferred concept and returning to the City Council for approval, there would be an opportunity to apply for grants or other funding to help support the project.

Mr. Gill explained that the December City Council meeting would likely be the latest opportunity to finalize a decision. He noted that earlier in the year, the City Council authorized him to apply for a \$500,000 Land and Water Conservation Grant. The initial review has been completed, and a full grant application is due January 3rd.

City Manager Aspell asked whether, if the Land and Water Conservation Grant application is successful, the funds could be applied toward the design or construction phases of the project.

Mr. Gill indicated that the grant funds would be applied toward construction. He also noted that the FY26 Budget includes an approved project with \$750,000 of City funds to be matched by \$750,000 of other funding; noting however, the funds have not yet been appropriated. The original estimate for design and permitting was \$1.5 million, which has since decreased slightly.

Councilor Schlosser asked what specific action is being requested of the City Council, noting that even if the matter returns on December 8th, it is unclear what decision or approval would be sought at that time.

City Manager Aspell explained that if the City Council and the Concord School District agree on a concept, both entities would need to hold public hearings and appropriate their respective funds. He noted that neither the School District nor the City has appropriated any dollars to date. Once the School District appropriates its agreed-upon share, the City Council would hold a public hearing and appropriate the matching funds, allowing the project to proceed to the design phase.

Councilor Keach asked at what point the Concord School District would be formally committed to contributing its share of the project costs, noting that their support has been verbal so far. He emphasized the importance of ensuring the School District's commitment before the City appropriates funds.

City Manager Aspell explained that, since the property is owned by the City, it would make sense for the City to issue any bonds, both to obtain a better interest rate and to manage the process. He recommended having a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the School District in which the District commits to paying its share of the costs over the bond term so that only the City issues the bond while the School District reimburses its portion through agreed-upon payments.

Councilor Schultz suggested adding to the discussion the possibility of selling the City's portion of Memorial Field to the School District, especially given that the City is split between two separate school districts.

City Manager Aspell explained that the City has previously explored this option and has even offered to transfer ownership of its portion of Memorial Field to the School District.

Councilor Schultz asked Mayor Champlin whether the possibility of transferring the City's portion of Memorial Field to the School District could be included as part of the discussion for this proposal.

Mayor Champlin indicated that the City Council could discuss any topics when the matter returns in December but noted that the City is the full owner of Memorial

Field.

Councilor Foote asked whether, when the project returns in December, the parking could be presented as its own phase to clarify its portion of the \$8.2 million cost. He also inquired about the existing baseball field lights and bleachers, asking if those bleachers are as compromised as the football stadium bleachers.

Mr. Huntress agreed that the parking could be presented as its own phase.

Councilor Foote noted that he had heard the baseball field footings have heaved and asked for clarification on whether the baseball field would need to be taken offline if the multi-purpose field is constructed.

Mr. Huntress explained that, under the current concept, the footprint of the track and multi-purpose field would overlap a portion of the baseball field's right field, necessitating its temporary closure.

Councilor Foote asked whether it would be possible to temporarily shorten the baseball field to allow continued use, creating a "Fenway-type" setup for a few years until the full project is completed.

Mr. Huntress indicated that the team could provide precise measurements showing how much the left or right field would need to be shortened for temporary use.

Councilor Kretovic asked for a repeat of the explanation regarding the deficiencies of the existing bleachers.

Mr. Huntress explained that the footings of the baseball bleachers have heaved, creating structural instability in the grandstand and potentially affecting handicapped accessibility and ADA compliance.

The motion to table passed unanimously.

New Business

Unfinished Business

6. Resolution appropriating the sum of \$45,500,000 in the Police Headquarters Project (CIP #643) for the construction of the new police department building and authorizing the issuance of General Fund General Obligation Bonds and Notes in the sum of \$45,500,000 for this purpose; together with a report from the Director of Special Projects & Strategic Initiatives. (Public testimony submitted). (Action on this item tabled at the November 10, 2025 City Council meeting.)

Action: Mayor Champlin entertained a motion to remove Item #6 from the table.

Councilor Kretovic moved to removed Item #6 from the table. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Todd. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Champlin clarified for the public that at the November 10th City Council meeting, agendas are divided into two parts: A Public Hearing, where testimony is received on agenda items, and a Public Hearing Action phase, where the Council discusses and votes on those items. He noted that this item was tabled after a motion to approve was made and seconded during discussion, with the motion to table carrying until today's meeting. Tonight's session resumes at that point, as the Public Hearing portion has already been completed.

Councilor Kurtz expressed interest in continuing the discussion of the proposed project and in exploring whether the overall cost could be reduced by approximately \$5 million without causing delays or requiring a redesign.

City Manager Aspell explained that the project team could review the plans and work with contractors to identify potential cost reductions, similar to the \$1.4 million reduction considered in the original presentation. He noted that if costs could be reduced by an amount approaching-but slightly less than-\$5 million, it might be possible without a redesign. However, if larger reductions were needed, a redesign would likely be necessary.

Councilor Kurtz asked how the Council could proceed to identify a feasible project cost below \$45.5 million without causing delays or compromising any of the essential elements presented by the project team.

City Manager Aspell explained that by using a three-bond approach over multiple years, along with the Community Improvement Fund reserve and Use of Fund balance, the Council could potentially apply an additional \$1.4 million and explore

further reductions, such as another \$3 million, to try to lower costs. He emphasized that the current figures are construction cost estimates provided by the project's construction management team, not actual bid prices. Based on prior experience with projects like Main Street, the Community Center, and the skate park, he expressed confidence that the team could adjust the project to achieve the targeted numbers. While he could not guarantee success, he noted that the less aggressive the reductions required, the greater the likelihood of achieving them, and reassured the Council that the team would do its best, citing a history of delivering on past projects.

Councilor Kurtz proposed a friendly amendment to reduce the appropriation by roughly \$4.5 million, from \$45.5 million to \$41 million, allowing the project to proceed as designed on the proposed timeline with no construction delays. The amendment was duly seconded by Councilor Fennessy.

Councilor Foote asked for clarification, noting that the \$1.4 million represents known value-engineering or alternate items, and questioned whether the additional \$3 million is part of the project's contingency fund. He summarized that incorporating the value-engineering items and reducing the contingency to zero would achieve the proposed appropriation reduction.

City Manager Aspell stated that he would focus on the bottom-line number rather than distinguishing between contingency, HVAC, or parking line items.

Councilor Schultz asked Councilor Kurtz why she supports the proposed appropriation reduction specifically, rather than pursuing a larger reduction or postponing the project for another year to explore additional cost savings, questioning the need to adhere to the current schedule.

Councilor Kurtz explained that she supports the proposed appropriation reduction due to the urgent needs of the department, including significant deficiencies and health and safety risks to both sworn and civilian staff. She expressed concern that delaying the project for potential additional cost savings would not outweigh the risks of inflation and further deterioration. She noted that the proposed \$41 million appropriation was determined after closely reviewing plans, asking detailed questions, and working with staff to identify a reduction that still allows the project to proceed safely and urgently.

Councilor Sekou asked for confirmation that the proposed \$4.5 million cost

reduction would maintain the same project footprint.

Councilor Kurtz confirmed that the \$4.5 million cost reduction would not alter the proposed designs or the building footprint, with savings achieved through value engineering.

The motion to amend, to change the not to exceed number to 41 million, passed with two dissenting votes.

Councilor Schultz expressed appreciation for Councilor Kurtz's work but said she felt blindsided by the proposed \$4.5 million reduction. She noted that the public and Council had not been involved in this discussion and voiced concern that the number seemed hastily proposed. While she supports the need for a better police station and recognizes the project's urgency, she emphasized that the cost remains a significant burden for taxpayers, particularly renters, and does not feel comfortable casting a yes vote at this time. She suggested that additional time and discussion could allow for further cost savings and a more equitable allocation of financial responsibility.

Councilor Fennessy thanked Councilor Kurtz for her work on the amendment and acknowledged the challenges of the project's price tag. He noted that the current facility is inadequate and may hinder recruitment for the police force. While he would prefer a lower cost, he believes the proposed plan represents the best option for meeting the community's needs at a reasonable price and stated that he will support it.

Councilor Sekou thanked colleagues for their work on the project and emphasized the extensive due diligence involved, including building tours, staff consultations, and detailed planning. He noted that the \$4.5 million reduction to \$41 million was not an arbitrary decision but the result of careful review over the past two weeks. He expressed support for the \$41 million appropriation, contingent on reviewing the financial impact and tax implications based on the proposed bond plan.

Councilor Kretovic emphasized the importance of equity, inclusion, and trauma-informed care within the new police station, noting that current conditions fail both staff and the community. She highlighted that the project has been under discussion for over 20 years and that the budget has already been reduced from \$52 million to \$45.5 million, with Councilor Kurtz's recent efforts further lowering it to \$41 million. She stressed the City Council's responsibility to work with City

staff to ensure budget decisions are fiscally responsible and digestible for residents, acknowledging broader state-level funding pressures. Supporting the new police station, she argued, aligns with fiscal responsibility because delaying the project increases costs, and it affirms equity for staff and the community while allowing the city to progress and plan for future growth. Councilor Kretovic concluded by expressing support for Councilor Kurtz's amendment.

Councilor Todd expressed agreement with Councilor Kretovic, acknowledging the extensive effort of city staff, particularly Beth Fenstermacher, in preparing the project details. He noted the rising cost of living in New Hampshire and the pressures on residents, emphasizing that the City cannot control wages or inflation but must carefully manage tax impacts and service priorities. Despite financial concerns, he argued that delaying the police station would be detrimental, as the current facility cannot safely or effectively support police operations, including addressing quality-of-life issues like traffic enforcement in neighborhoods.

Councilor Todd highlighted that building a new station ensures public safety, supports staff, and prevents higher costs due to inflation from project delays. He stressed that while a new station alone will not reduce crime, it equips the police to perform their duties effectively. He also encouraged continued evaluation of tax relief options for those most impacted, noting the City's ongoing efforts in social services. For these reasons, Councilor Todd stated his support for Councilor Kurtz's amendment.

Councilor McNamara expressed gratitude to city staff for their hard work and thoughtful responses. She addressed community concerns about the police station's size, emphasizing that the proposed space is necessary for effective policing. Reducing the footprint would compromise critical functions, such as victim interviews, child-safe observation areas, and proper evidence storage. She referenced Manchester's experience, where reducing space led to problems, and highlighted current issues in Concord, such as inadequate evidence storage susceptible to water damage. Councilor McNamara stressed that the space is not excessive but essential for supporting both community safety and the wellbeing of staff. She concluded by affirming her support for the project as proposed, noting it preserves necessary services.

Councilor Keach expressed strong support for the new police headquarters, emphasizing the clear need due to the current building's inadequacy and safety concerns. While acknowledging the substantial financial commitment, he argued

that delaying the project would ultimately cost more, effectively postponing necessary action and increasing future taxpayer burdens. He highlighted lessons from Manchester, where a relatively new facility is already facing space constraints, reinforcing the urgency of timely construction. Councilor Keach concluded that, despite the expense, proceeding now is necessary and responsible.

Councilor Schlosser thanked Councilor Kurtz and the City Manager for their work in reducing the project's cost by roughly 10% and emphasized the responsibility of the City Council to provide clear guidance to the community. Acknowledging concerns about rising property taxes, he highlighted the unique pressures on residents with fixed or low incomes. He framed the new police station as a long-term investment, designed to last 20-50 years, and stressed the importance of planning for future trends, including an aging population, evolving crime patterns, electrification of vehicles, AI and cybercrime, and climate change. Councilor Schlosser noted that most of the proposed space (87%) addresses immediate current needs, with the remaining 13% for future growth, and that the design allows flexibility for changing requirements.

Councilor Schlosser detailed features such as virtual reality training, on-site training cost savings, EV vehicle charging infrastructure, fire suppression for battery fires, category four ballistic requirements, and hardened infrastructure for emergencies. Councilor Schlosser explained that reducing square footage would not yield significant savings, would require costly redesigns, and could delay the project. Ultimately, Councilor Schlosser framed the project as critical public safety infrastructure and a necessary investment for the community's present and future. He committed to supporting additional tax relief for vulnerable residents and affirmed that, in balance, proceeding with the proposed design at this cost serves the best interests of the Concord community.

Councilor Sekou explained that while many initially opposed the \$45 million price tag, through careful, collaborative discussions with City staff and fellow councilors, he came to recognize the police department as an essential community need. He emphasized that the question became not whether to build, but how much and in what form. He described extensive engagement with City staff and constituents, noting the public's concern about tax increases but continued support for the Concord Police Department. By working through multiple scenarios and reductions, he concluded that a \$4.5 million (roughly 10%) reduction makes the project feasible without compromising its essential functions.

Councilor Sekou stressed that every dollar saved matters, but that providing the police department with adequate facilities is critical. He highlighted that while a beautiful building alone does not ensure staff retention, a strong organizational culture does-and the Concord Police Department already demonstrates that culture. The new building and space would support ongoing training, community engagement, and effective policing. Ultimately, he framed his support for the \$41 million project as a careful, thoughtful decision made in service of both fiscal responsibility and the public safety needs of the Concord community.

Councilor Grady Sexton emphasized gratitude to the City staff, particularly Ms. Fenstermacher and her team, for contributing over 12,300 hours to the project. She praised the effort as professional, data-driven, collaborative, and transparent, with multiple opportunities for public input. She also acknowledged the city manager's work in identifying cost savings. She stated that supporting the proposed police station was an easy decision for her because the project is neither extravagant nor optional-it reflects the real cost of building a modern, safe, code-compliant facility in 2025. She compared it to other local projects, like the \$50 million renovation of the county nursing home, to highlight current construction costs.

Councilor Grady Sexton detailed serious deficiencies in the current station, including inadequate space for female employees, juveniles, and high-risk offenders, exposing both staff and the public to daily safety and legal risks. She argued that delaying or scaling down the project would not save money; instead, it would trigger redesign costs, escalation, and operational inefficiencies, citing Manchester's experience as an example. She framed the vote as a choice between protecting first responders and the community versus passing on risks, costs, and legal exposure to future councils and taxpayers. She concluded that failing to act would be fiscally and operationally irresponsible, whereas moving forward ensures public safety and supports the well-being of City staff.

Councilor Horne expressed support for the police and their staff, noting prior votes in favor of police contracts and retention bonuses. She agreed that a new police station is needed but stated that the proposed \$41 million plan is not aligned with what the community can currently afford. Her main concern is fiscal responsibility. She highlighted recent financial pressures on residents, including a 5.1% property tax increase, rising costs for Social Security, electricity, and health insurance, and negative growth in commercial and industrial property values. She emphasized that many homeowners and renters, particularly in her economically disadvantaged ward, cannot shoulder additional costs.

Councilor Horne argued that the city should prioritize expanding its tax base through business development and building financial reserves before committing to large expenditures. Drawing on her personal experience managing a business budget, she advocated for a conservative, savings-first approach to capital projects. For these reasons, she stated that she could not support the police station proposal at this time.

Mayor Champlin began by thanking Beth Fenstermacher, her team, and the city manager for their extensive work on the police station project, noting over 12,000 staff hours spent and creative financial strategies to minimize taxpayer impact. He emphasized the critical role of the police in public safety, sharing an example of a recent bomb threat to illustrate the risks officers face daily and the importance of providing them a safe, functional workspace.

Mayor Champlin highlighted the growing needs of the department, particularly in investigations and cybercrime, citing rising fraud targeting elderly residents as a major concern. He stressed that proper facilities and resources are essential to allow officers to perform these duties effectively. He also tied public safety to economic development, noting that communities perceived as safe attract investment. He pointed out the importance of providing adequate facilities for both male and female officers and ensuring officers can be fully equipped to meet modern policing challenges.

Acknowledging the financial burden on taxpayers, Mayor Champlin stated that careful planning and compromise had been made to balance cost with necessity. He concluded by expressing pride in the council's work and declared his support for the motion.

The motion as amended passed, with two dissenting votes.

7. Ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances; Title II, Traffic Code; Chapter 18, Parking, Article 18-1, Stopping, Standing and Parking, Section 18-1-7.1, Parking Prohibited During Certain Hours and Months in Designated Places, Schedule IX; to modify parking requirements on School Street between Pine and Liberty Streets; together with a report from the Assistant Director of Community Development. (Action on this item tabled at the August 11, 2025 City Council meeting.)
8. Resolution appropriating the sum of \$84,000 to support efforts by Concord's Plan to End Homelessness and authorizing a transfer in from the Community

Improvement Reserve in the sum of \$84,000 for this purpose; together with report from Councilor Jim Schlosser. (Action on this item tabled at the April 14, 2025 City Council meeting.)

Consideration of Item pulled from the Consent Agenda

20. Report from the Rules Committee recommending the adoption of a Financial Interest Disclosure Form. (Pulled from consent by Councilors Kretovic and Brown).

Action: Councilor Kretovic reported that the Rules Committee has been working for several years to clarify council rules and ethics. The proposed voluntary conflict-of-interest disclosure form is intended to increase transparency and community awareness, while maintaining council members' responsibility to declare conflicts during meetings. She indicated that Acting City Solicitor John Conforti will lead discussions with boards and committees, including the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission, and Heritage Commission, to ensure consistency and understanding across all bodies.

Councilor Brown expressed concern that the proposed voluntary disclosure form may not ensure consistency, noting that mandatory disclosure for City Councilors might be more effective. She emphasized the importance of understanding what constitutes a conflict of interest and requested clarification from the city solicitor regarding scenarios such as a councilor's family member or employer receiving discounts from city facilities, like the golf course, and whether that would constitute a conflict of interest.

City Solicitor Conforti explained that the City Council is self-governing with respect to ethics rules and conflicts of interest. He noted that conflicts of interest are delineated in the City's Code of Ethics, and City Council ultimately determines whether a conflict exists. He clarified that it is not his role to make determinations on individual conflicts of interest.

Councilor Fennessy asked why the Rules Committee chose to make the disclosure form voluntary rather than mandatory.

Councilor Kretovic explained that the consensus of the Rules Committee was that a voluntary form would serve as a starting point to increase transparency for the community. She noted that a motion to make the form mandatory was brought forward but ultimately failed.

Councilor Fennessy asked about the section on business relationships, specifically regarding the terms “agent” or “consultant.” He sought clarification on whether someone in a professional role, such as an attorney with clients, would be expected to disclose clients on the form.

Councilor Kretovic responded that it would be the responsibility of an individual to disclose conflicts of interest, even if they serve as an agent or consultant for an entity. However, she noted that any superseding documents, such as non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements, would take precedence over the council rules. The language in the form allowing individuals not to disclose specific clients was intentionally included to respect such legal obligations.

Councilor Fennessy noted that, while he has not personally encountered such a situation, he could foresee circumstances where he might need to recuse himself due to a representation, yet remain bound by ethical rules not to disclose client information.

Councilor Kretovic moved to approve the report. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Grady Sexton.

Councilor Horne asked about the completed forms, specifically where they would be stored and who would have access to them.

Councilor Kretovic responded that the forms would be kept with the City Clerk.

Councilor Schlosser thanked the Rules Committee for their work and suggested that the Council request a follow-up assessment of the voluntary disclosure form. He asked whether the Rules Committee would be willing to report back after a year (or another appropriate period) summarizing how the form is working, whether it is promoting transparency as intended, and whether any amendments may be needed.

Councilor Kretovic agreed with Councilor Schlosser’s suggestion, noting it was a great idea. She added that since other boards and commissions—including the Zoning Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Heritage Commission—are also involved, collecting feedback from their voluntary forms would be an important first step before reporting back to the City Council.

Councilor Brown moved to table the report, expressing concerns that the form is not comprehensive enough and lacks enforcement since it is voluntary. She noted

that only select committees are included, and other committees handling contracts or recommendations are not addressed. She stated her misgivings that some members may not recuse themselves when appropriate and emphasized that the current proposal does not go far enough. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Schultz.

Councilor Schultz expressed support for strengthening ethics within the City Council and commended Councilor Kretovic and the Rules Committee for their work. She stated that while she appreciates the current proposal, she believes making the disclosure form mandatory would be preferable.

Councilor Sekou emphasized the importance of clarifying “direct or indirect” conflicts and supported making the disclosure form mandatory for all elected officials, rather than a select few. He noted that each council member should recognize their own ethical responsibilities and be accountable for completing the form, allowing for reminders when needed.

Councilor Kretovic noted that all council members and appointed committee members take an oath of office to follow federal, state, and local laws and ordinances. She emphasized that the disclosure form is intended to promote transparency, not to replace existing rules or create new obligations. Any conflict of interest is addressed through existing complaint processes. She clarified that while the state requires annual reports for elected officials, this form is voluntary, and its purpose is to allow the public to see potential conflicts, promoting trust and transparency.

Councilor Kurtz asked Councilor Brown what her intentions would be for the item if it were tabled, seeking clarification on how she would proceed while it remained in unfinished business.

Councilor Brown stated that if the item were tabled, it would allow time for further discussion. She emphasized that the form should be mandatory, that councilors should be held to a higher standard, and that transparency is essential so that the public is aware of all councilors’ conflicts of interest.

The motion to table failed.

The motion to approve the report passed with two dissenting votes.

Consideration of Suspense Item

Sus1 Item to be tabled for a December 8, 2025 Public Hearing

Resolution appropriating the sum of \$370,000, in the General Fund as a transfer out to Capital for the acquisition of 153.09+/- acres of real estate from 2 Granite Place LLC, authorizing the use of \$370,000, from General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance for this purpose, appropriating the sum of \$370,000, in the Property Acquisition Project (CIP #674), and accepting the sum of \$370,000, as a transfer in from the General Fund for this purpose; together with a report from the Deputy City Manager - Development,

Action: Councilor Fennessy moved to suspend the rules and consider items not previously advertised. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Kretovic and passed with no dissenting votes.

City Manager Aspell addressed the Council, noting that there is a request to set an appropriation of \$370,000 for a public hearing scheduled on December 8, 2025.

Councilor Fennessy moved to set Suspense Item #1 down for a public hearing on December 8th. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Kurtz and passed with one dissenting vote.

Comments, Requests by Mayor, City Councilors

Action: Councilor Todd shared several updates regarding upcoming events in Penacook. First, the Penacook Village Association will hold its annual meeting on Monday, December 1, at 6:30 p.m. in the Penacook Elementary School Library at 60 Village Street. This meeting provides residents with an opportunity to offer input on the future of Penacook, local businesses, and community development. John Christ, UNH Extension's Community and Economic Development Field Specialist in Merrimack County, will lead the discussion. The UNH Extension Community Business Engagement Program is assisting with this effort, and the resulting report will outline business opportunities, obstacles, and actionable recommendations to support Penacook's growth and the city's master planning.

Second, Councilor Todd highlighted the 20th annual Penacook Tree Lighting, scheduled for Wednesday, December 3, at Boudreau Square on Village Street. Attendees are invited to gather at 5:30 p.m. for caroling and performances by the Penacook Elementary School chorus and the Blanchard Family Singers, along with treats and the arrival of Santa, courtesy of the Concord Fire Department. The tree lighting ceremony will begin at 6:00 p.m.

Finally, the Penacook Village Association will host a community meeting on Tuesday, December 9, at 6:30 p.m. in the Penacook Elementary School Cafeteria. Residents will have the opportunity to hear a preview of the proposed Merrimack Valley School budget and warrant articles, provide feedback, ask questions, and engage directly with school board representatives and the finance officer. Councilor Todd noted that he plans to attend all three events and encouraged community participation.

Councilor Brown raised concerns about the impact of upcoming projects on condo and mobile homeowners. She noted that a double-wide currently paying \$2,800 could see taxes triple to \$8,671 next fall, even before adding costs for the police station and golf clubhouse. With 1,033 mobile homeowners in Concord, she urged the council to consider ways to mitigate this burden.

Councilor McNamara announced that Kimball Jenkins will host its first annual holiday and arts event from November 29 through December 19 and encouraged community members to volunteer. Volunteer opportunities include greeting, assisting inside, or helping with setup, and interested individuals can sign up through the Kimball Jenkins website.

Councilor Sekou thanked the organizers of Saturday's parade, noting the strong turnout from Concord residents despite the cold weather, and shared that it was his first time participating in the parade, which he greatly enjoyed.

Mayor Champlin thanked Brian Blackden and the Concord Grange for organizing the parade last Saturday, noting the event was impressive despite the cold and overcast weather. He shared a personal anecdote about walking back with Councilor Foote and being amazed at the parade's size. He also recommended the Penacook tree lighting, highlighting the Blanchard Family Singers and the school children's participation. Mayor Champlin reminded the Council that the Capital Region Food Program will be presenting next month and will be accepting food or monetary donations. He noted the program's history, founded by Mark Manus, continued by his daughter Maria Manus Painchaud, and now led by Board Chair Elena M. Alois, marking the third generation of leadership.

Comments, Requests by the City Manager

Adjournment

Action: Mayor Pro Tem Sekou moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Todd and passed unanimously.

A true copy, I attest:

Deborah Tuite

Deputy City Clerk