



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Thomas J. Aspell, Jr., City Manager

DATE: January 17, 2025

SUBJECT: 2024 – 2025 City Council Priorities

Recommendation

Accept this report as to the current status of the City Council Priorities established on March 4, 2024.

Background

Members of the City Council met on March 4, 2024 to discuss and set priorities for the remainder of Calendar Year 2024, as well as for Calendar Year 2025.

Discussion

Listed below, are the accepted priorities, projects and ongoing initiatives; and their respective statuses as of December 31, 2024.

GOAL 1. FINANCE & TECHNOLOGY

a) Balance the Budget Minimizing the Tax Rate Impact

Status: For FY 2025, the City used \$560,760 to balance the budget. Subsequent to the budget adoption, the Use of Assigned Fund Balance was reduced by \$460,760 at the tax rate setting, and the Use of Unassigned Fund Balance was increased by \$965,000; \$400,000 to support Police Department retention payments; \$405,000 to support General Services Winter Operation retention payments; and \$160,000 for the preservation of the Concord Stables. The FY 2024 Audit is complete and the FY 2024 Unassigned Fund Balance percentage is 21.6%. The City's recently adopted revised Fund Balance Policy is a minimum of 20.5%.

b) Maintain AA+ Bond Rating

Status: In January 2024, the City was notified by S&P Global Ratings that it issued an AA+ rating for the upcoming bond issue, and affirmed the AA+ rating for the City's outstanding debt.

c) Maintain Compliance with Fiscal Policy Goals

Status: The City General Fund Fiscal Goal E-1 limits debt service to 10-14% of total appropriations. On June 30, 2024, the amount was 9.40%.

d) Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Implementation

Status: Implementation of all main modules was complete as of the start of FY 2024.

e) Assessing Full Measure and List and Revaluation

Status: The City's Full Measure and List and Revaluation process began in July 2024, and is expected to be completed in August 2026.

f) Pursue Federal and State Funding

Status: Notable grants applied for or received to date in FY 2025 include:

1. On July 8, 2024, the City applied for a \$25,000 Community Development Block Grant on behalf of 603 Legal Aid, Disability Rights Center – New Hampshire, and New Hampshire Legal Assistance, to conduct a feasibility study to explore the potential acquisition or development of a joint facility to house these respective entities.
2. In August 2024, the City Council authorized applying for a \$6,150,000 grant from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as part of the Airport Terminal Program; and \$1,660,000 relative to design, mitigation and construction associated with the airport terminal project.
3. In August 2024, the City Council authorized applying for a \$605,000 grant from the State of NH / FAA relative to the development of an environmental impact assessment associated with the airport and terminal parking improvement project.
4. In August 2024, the City Council authorized applying for a \$5,058,000 grant from the FAA for the Airport Terminal Project.
5. In August 2024, the City Council accepted \$144,929.47 of Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds to be placed in reserve, retroactive to June 30, 2024.
6. In September 2024, the City Council accepted \$1,140,000 in grant proceeds from the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs, Division of Economic Development, to be placed in the City's Community Improvement Reserve account for future consideration.
7. In August 2024, a CMAQ grant in the amount of \$2,447,852 was received from the NH Department of Transportation for the McKee Square Intersection Project (CIP #31).
8. In October 2024, the City was awarded \$35,000 of InvestNH demolition funds to support the development of a privately owned, independent living facility for adults with developmental disabilities at 3 North State Street. A resolution to accept these funds has been set for public hearing on February 10, 2025. The City also applied for an additional \$30,000 in InvestNH MUP Grant funds for this project; however, the application was not successful.
9. In October 2024, the Fire Department was notified that it was selected as a recipient of grant funds in the amount of \$259,062, through a Homeland Security Grant Program, for the purchase of a modular traffic barrier system to protect eventgoers that inhabit closed roadways against vehicle ramming incidents. The acceptance of

this grant is scheduled for public hearing at the February 2025 City Council meeting.

10. In the fall of 2024, the Police Department was awarded the FY24 Jeanne Shaheen Congressional Directed Spending grant in the amount of \$73,000 in unmatched funding. Funding from this grant will be used to improve crime scene processing equipment and to provide specialized training for Department members.
11. In the fall of 2024, the Police Department was awarded the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance grant in the amount of \$21,499 in unmatched funding. Funding from this grant will be used to improve equipment and technological enhancements.
12. In the fall of 2024, the Police Department was awarded \$9,626.47 through the U.S. Department of Justice Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program to be used as reimbursement for ballistic vest purchases for police officers. This funding provides up to a 50% reimbursement on ballistic vest purchases.
13. The Police Department received grant funding in the amount of \$73,000 from the NH Attorney General's Drug Task Force. This funding is designed to offset the cost of assigning a police officer to the Task Force.
14. The Police Department received \$40,000 in grant funding from the NH Department of Safety – Law Enforcement Opioid Abuse Reduction Initiative for conducting illegal drug investigations within the Concord community.
15. The Police Department received \$16,000 in grant funding from the NH Department of Safety, State Homeland Security, to aid in the purchase of specialized equipment for Concord Police Department members who are members of the Central New Hampshire Special Operations Unit.
16. In December 2024, the City applied for a \$25,000 Community Development Block Grant on behalf of Families in Transition to conduct a feasibility study to examine potential renovation of ground floor commercial spaces located at 9-11 Odd Fellows Avenue and 5 Market Lane into housing to support low/moderate income persons. The NH Community Development Finance Authority will act on this application in January 2025.
17. On December 17, 2024, the City was one of 18 municipalities in the state to be designated as a Housing Champion by the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs. This designation will give the City and the other 17 communities exclusive, preferential access to \$5 million of special housing grants to be offered through the State's Housing Champions Program.
18. In December 2024, the City was awarded a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant to help with the construction of the new Skate Board Park at Kiwanis Riverside Park.
19. In December 2024, the Fire Department was notified that the City qualifies for \$5,000 in Emergency Management Performance Grant funds for the purpose of updating its 2015 Local Emergency Operations Plan. This is scheduled for acceptance as a consent resolution at the January 2025 City Council meeting.

g) Cost Containment – Health Insurance Costs

Status: The City received a 9.5% not to exceed rate with Harvard Pilgrim for FY 2026, following a period of time which showed an improvement in the member loss ratio, but an increase nationwide in healthcare trend. The City continues to offer a high deductible health plan with a Health Savings Account to driver consumerism, and have piloted an enhanced Reduce My Cost program to encourage employees to pursue lower cost providers for ancillary services like CT scans, MRI's, and lab work. The program pays a percentage of savings directly to the employee for choosing the low-cost provider.

The City, along with its benefit consultant, Borislow, continually looks at ways in which to contain costs on health insurance.

h) Technology Infrastructure Improvements

Status: The Information Technology Department has completed the replacement of the wired networking infrastructure. Cybersecurity efforts funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to improve security around the water and wastewater systems (to be completed mid-2025) are continuing on schedule. We will soon begin upgrading all Windows workstation operating systems from Windows 10 to Windows 11. This upgrade must be completed by October 2025, which is Microsoft's end-of-support date.

New infrastructure projects to begin this year include replacement of half of the City's wireless networking infrastructure; expansion of fiber network to the new Penacook Library & Activity Center, the new Police Station, and, potentially, the new terminal building at the Airport; and replacement of Human Services software.

The Community Development Department recently acquired georeferenced aerial photos for the entire City for calendar years 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024. This was achieved via a transition to an annual subscription for aerial photographs, which is funded through the Department's annual operating budget. Historically, the City had commissioned custom aerial flyovers of the City every five years to update its digital, georeferenced aerial photos for the geographic information system. However, this new approach allows the City to receive data on an annual basis at a significantly reduced cost as compared to past practice.

GOAL 2. ORGANIZATIONAL

a) Recruitment and Retention

Status: The Retention and Recruitment Committee has now made way for five of the City's six labor unions to negotiate either out of date or soon to be out of date collective bargaining agreements with an eye on retention and recruitment. The committee's recommendations were put into action with results reported below.

The earned leave bonus for CY 2024 was approved for union covered positions and has seen high usage. All employees were able to use some, if not all, of the earned leave bonus in calendar year 2024. At this time, the discounted rate at Beaver Meadow Golf Course has been utilized by employees to play 84 rounds of golf; the non-resident Library card has been utilized by 14 non-Concord resident employees; and 18 non-Concord resident employees received free family pool passes. Our employee referral bonus has paid out \$55,000 to current employees, \$6,000 of which was paid in the second quarter of FY 2025. Paid Family Medical Leave has had utilization, particularly with claims for child bonding in the first year of birth/placement, with 25 claims year to date. The Human Resources Department continues to look for trends in turnover by data analysis and exit interviews.

The Community Development Department has experienced significant vacancies and turnover during the past two years. Presently, five of the Department's 38 positions (13%) are vacant. Current vacancies include: Civil Engineer, Project Manager (Capital Projects), Senior Engineer Technician, Engineering Technician II, Code Division Fiscal

Supervisor, and Assistant City Planner - Zoning. Recent staffing successes include filling the vacant Electrical Inspector, Senior Planner, and Administrative Coordinator positions. The Administrative Coordinator, which supports the Administration Division of the Community Development Department, is shared with the Human Resources Department. The Community Development Department continues to use private recruitment companies to support efforts to fill vacant Engineering positions.

The Police Department has made great strides in the right direction with staffing. In December 2024, the City Council approved a second retention payment for sworn police officers (minus the Command Staff). This retention payment was the second retention payment in 2024 and was implemented as an emergency stop gap to retain police officers. In 2024, the Police Department lost five police officers: two retired, two left for other law enforcement opportunities, and one was terminated while on probation. This is a dramatic turn around from 2023 when the Police Department lost 19 police officers.

Despite hiring seven new police officers in 2024, the Police Department still has 14 police officer vacancies. While this has strained our workforce, the retention bonus, new police contracts, and positive movement on building a new police station are creating positive momentum.

The Police Department was successful in filling both Police Social Worker positions. This new program has made an immediate impact within the community and the Department. In 2024, the Department was also successful in hiring a new full-time employee in its Records Unit and in Dispatch.

The Police Department remains steadfast in its commitment to filling all sworn police officer positions in 2025. The Department is optimistic that it can build on the above listed positive momentum to improve its sworn staffing level in 2025.

For the first time since 2019, the Parks & Recreation Department managed to hire all 2024 summer seasonal employees for all three divisions (Parks, Cemeteries, and Recreation); however, an additional 25 seasonal employees needed to be hired in order to cover the required hours. The Department has experienced higher than normal turnover due to the retirements of several full-time employees in the Cemetery Division; several permanent part-time staff working at the Citywide Community Center having left for full-time positions outside of the city; and turnover of the four full-time shared Laborer Truck Driver positions remains excessively high, as they move to non-shared positions when available. These shared positions work for nine months with the Parks & Recreation Department, and three months with the General Services Department.

b) Class and Compensation Study

Status: The consultant chosen for the Class and Compensation Study, Paypoint HR, began the study in October, at which time it held kick-off meetings in person and virtually throughout the City. Employees completed the Position Vantage Point questionnaires, which were then reviewed by the Supervisors. The project team consists of the City Manager, the Deputy City Manager – Finance, and the Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations. The project team worked with the consultant to deploy the external wage and benefit survey for comparisons of total compensation and are tasked with providing a project report in the 4th quarter of FY 2025.

c) Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Belonging (DEIJB)

Status: The City Council DEIJB Committee will report on the status of this goal. The internal DEIJB committee has partnered with Avant Consulting, and the Leadership Team has been meeting bi-weekly to create systemic equity infrastructure, revise recruiting policies, and develop the guidelines around Employee Resource Groups. Employee Resource Groups will kick off in Calendar Year 2025, and the DEIJB committee has selected and begun work with leaders throughout the organization, a team known as L2.

d) Solid Waste Contract Implementation

Status: Having signed a new solid waste contract in November 2022, which transitioned curbside collection to a cart-based system and increased disposal costs, the General Services Department has been working with the Solid Waste Advisory Committee to evaluate alternate diversion programs.

e) Community Communication

Status: On May 10, 2024, the City was notified that its 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was adopted by City Council on April 8, 2024, after a two-year update process, was formally approved by FEMA. The plan, which is good for five years, will be due for another update in 2029.

In October 2024, in recognition of Fire Prevention Week, the Fire Department distributed Fire Safety educational materials to schools within the city. On-duty companies, as available, visited schools to speak to students about fire safety and familiarize them with what to expect in the event of a fire. The theme for this year was “Smoke Alarms: Make Them Work For You!”

GOAL 3. HOUSING / HOMELESSNESS

Status: As of October 15, 2024, there were 2,352 housing units in development. Of this total, 584 units were recently completed or will be completed by the end of 2024; 783 units have been approved by the Planning Board and are awaiting construction; and 985 units are currently in the development permitting process. The 2,352 housing units in development will increase the City’s housing stock by 12.1% and the City’s population by 5,409 people.

The City, using a variety of tools, has directly supported several recent and proposed housing projects. Tools employed by the City include the sale of City-owned real estate, procurement of grants supporting the development of housing projects, construction of infrastructure improvements, zoning amendments, granting of RSA 79-E Community Tax Relief Incentives, as well as gap financing through the City’s Revolving Loan Program. Recent examples of housing projects directly supported by the City using the aforementioned tools include, but are not limited to: Penacook Landing / 33-35 Canal Street (54 units, affordable); Rosemary’s Way / 95 Village Street (42 units, affordable); Isabella Apartments / 32 South Main Street (64 units); First Church / 177 North Main Street (30 units); 6 South State Street (8 units, affordable); as well as ROI Properties / Black Hill Road (385 units); among others.

Housing, and especially income restricted housing (a.k.a. affordable housing), is a regional issue. As reported in the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission's 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment, in 2020, the City's population comprised 36.5% of the total population of the region (43,796 persons in Concord vs. a total regional population of 120,515). Additionally, as of 2020, 37.7% of the region's total housing stock was located in Concord (19,085 units in Concord vs. a total of 50,647 units in the Central New Hampshire Region). However, the same report noted that in 2020, Concord contained 57.6% of the region's total affordable housing (or income restricted housing) in the region (1,214 units of 2,106 income restricted units in the region). As such, Concord has a disproportionate share of income restricted housing for the region. Additionally, 8 of the 20 communities (or 40%) within the Central New Hampshire region had zero income restricted (affordable) units.

Since 2020, an additional 373 income restricted (affordable) housing units have been built in Concord, and another 132 units have been approved and are awaiting construction. The City was directly involved in several of these projects through several of the tools mentioned above, such as sale of City real estate, securing of grants, or assistance with financing via the City's Revolving Loan Fund Program.

With 2,352 housing units in development, the City has satisfied housing development targets within the 2023 Central New Hampshire Regional Housing Commission's Regional Needs Assessment through 2030 (which suggested the development of 2,223 total units).

On December 17, 2024, the City was designated as a "Housing Champion" by the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs. As noted in the award letter, the City was selected because of its "outstanding commitment to fostering an environment that supports innovative and sustainable solutions to address New Hampshire's housing needs." The letter also noted that Concord's "efforts have demonstrated leadership and vision in creating pathways for housing development that will positively impact residents and contribute to solving the State's housing crisis." There are 234 municipalities in New Hampshire (13 cities and 221 towns). Concord was one of 18 communities selected for this designation. Concord was selected as it was able to demonstrate the following:

- Compliance with NH State Law, RSA 674:59 (the State's Workforce Housing Law).
- Ample opportunities to develop housing in Concord. Presently, Concord has 17 different zoning districts, of which housing is permitted in 14. Therefore, housing is permitted in approximately 95% of the City's total land area (60.2 of 64 total square miles).
- The City's adoption of innovative land use regulations in accordance with NH State Law RSA 674:21. These include a Cluster Development Ordinance, a Planned Unit Development Ordinance, and Conditional Use Permits.
- Ordinances permitting manufactured housing and mixed-use developments.
- Routine investments in public infrastructure improvements, which support housing.
- The adoption of a Complete Streets policy and promotion of walkable neighborhoods.
- Intermunicipal utility agreements with some neighboring municipalities which have, or could encourage, housing development.

The Town of Boscawen was the only other municipality in central New Hampshire to be designated as a "Housing Champion."

a) **High Functioning, Coordinated, Quantified Approach to Homelessness**

Status: The Police Department continues to be directly involved in responding to citizen complaints related to homelessness issues throughout the city. The Police Department has responded to complaints related to encampments, trespass issues, welfare checks, illegal dumping, and more serious criminal issues, such as a 2nd degree assault.

The Police Department is committed to working with other community stakeholders to address these problems. The Concord Police Department has forged strong relationships with those impacted by homelessness, as well as groups whose charge it is to support those in need. Officers know members of the homeless community very well and work to ensure that they are connected to services. Officers work with the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, the Concord Homeless Resource Center, the Friendly Kitchen, the Salvation Army, the McKenna House, and the Community Action Program.

Police Department members have worked collaboratively with other organizations to address encampment cleanups throughout the city. In addition, the Police and Fire Departments participate in a subcommittee of the Public Safety Advisory Board, which is tasked with looking at homelessness specific to how it impacts the City of Concord. In the fall of 2024, the Police Social Worker actively worked to close gaps in our response to experiencing homelessness. The Police Social Worker is actively involved in community conversations geared toward addressing the state of homelessness within the city and lending support to other stakeholders throughout the City of Concord.

During the last three months of calendar year 2024, the Fire Department averaged over one emergency call per day attending to issues related to homelessness, with the highest being five calls in a single day. This includes both medical calls and fires.

In the spring of 2024, six units of transitional housing for persons exiting homelessness were completed at 129 Pleasant Street. The project was completed by the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness.

In 2023, the City secured a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant to support the purchase and redevelopment of real estate located at 6 South State Street into eight units of transitional housing to support persons exiting homelessness. The project, which is also being developed by the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, is scheduled to start construction in spring 2025. The City also waived the street excavation moratorium for this property to allow the redevelopment to move forward.

On December 9, 2024, the City Council approved an agreement with the Granite United Way to support the Steering Committee on Concord's Plan to End Homelessness in providing fiscal sponsorship services for the purpose of supporting initiatives of the committee, as well as for the hiring of a full-time project manager to work in a joint cooperative effort in combatting the sources and impacts of homelessness within the City of Concord. Staff has initiated efforts to explore potential sources of grant funds to support this initiative.

GOAL 4. TRANSPORTATION & UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

a) Fully Fund Street Paving and Sidewalk Program

Status: Through the Purchasing Division, the General Services Department awarded a multi-year paving project to GMI Paving early last year. With the exception of a portion of Airport Road, where a new sidewalk is being designed by the City's Engineering Division, all of the FY 2024 paving was completed. Since the contract was for a two-year period, GMI Paving is scheduled to complete approximately half of the streets included in the FY 2025 budget, as well as temporary pavement repairs on the Loudon Road bridge. The following streets were paved in calendar year 2024: Airport Road, from Loudon Road to #91; Farmwood Road; Fernald Street; Fox Run; Freedom Acres; a portion of Hannah Dustin Drive; Kearsarge Street; Long Pond Road; Mill Street; Oak Hill Road, from Appleton Road to #52; Old Turnpike Road, from Airport Road to Park Street; Pine Crest Circle; Regional Drive, from Chenell Drive to Airport Road; Shoe String Road; and Winthrop Street. Efforts to secure property rights and bid prices for the construction of the Airport Road sidewalk and related improvements are presently underway.

b) McKee Square

Status: Traffic studies and preliminary design concepts are underway. A community meeting to review the outcome of these efforts and receive feedback will occur in the coming months. The project is included in the State's 10-Year Plan. Eighty percent (80%) of the project will be financed with State grants. On August 23, 2024, the City was notified that its application for a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant in the amount of \$2,447,852 was awarded for the project.

c) I-93 Project With or Without Bridge Deck (Including Storrs Street Ext.)

Status: The I-93 Project has been included in the 2024-2025 State 10-Year Transportation Plan. Design and permitting are scheduled from 2025-2028, with construction commencing in 2029. The project is tentatively scheduled to be completed in the mid to late 2030's. Estimated project cost is approximately \$504 million. The State has agreed to relocate the State's Lincoln Line and portions of the CSX Northern Main Line to facilitate Storrs Street Extension North (CIP #18).

Work on the Bridge Park is nearing completion. An initial public meeting was held on February 20, 2024. Development of preliminary alternatives is nearing completion, and a public meeting to present design alternatives will likely occur before winter/spring 2025.

d) State Parking Garages

Status: Demolition of the former NH Department of Justice Building at 33 Capitol Street has been completed. The State recently awarded a contract to PC Construction in the amount of \$17.7 million for construction of the State's new 409-space Legislative Parking Garage. Construction has been delayed as the State is presently abating asbestos contaminated materials at the site. Construction is scheduled to begin in late winter and will take approximately 12 months to complete. Once the new garage is finished, the State will demolish the existing Legislative Parking Garage located above

the Storrs Street rights-of-way. Demolition will involve termination of the City's 1974 Air Rights Leased to the State for the garage.

GOAL 5. COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

a) Interim Zoning Amendments / Initiate Master Plan Update / Concord Next 2.0

Status: On July 8, 2024, the City Council adopted Ordinance #3167, which established zoning regulations for charitable gaming halls/casinos.

On August 12, 2024, the City Council approved Ordinance #3168, which modified the Zoning Ordinance. Specifically, the ordinance created a conditional use permit for obstruction of the view of the State House dome for development projects located within the Central Business Performance and Opportunity Corridor Performance Districts; created a separate conditional use permit to allow for the maximum building height to increase from 80' to 90' within the Central Business Performance District; and also modified previously existing conditional use permit provisions which allow the maximum building height to be increased from 45' to 80' within that portion of the Opportunity Corridor Zoning District located between Loudon Road, Storrs Street, Hills Avenue, and I-93. Said ordinances were adopted, in part, to promote redevelopment of Phenix Hall and adjacent properties. Upon passage, said ordinances were referred to the Planning Board for further review. The Planning Board has completed its review and has proposed modifications to the originally adopted ordinance, as well as other zoning amendments. Said amendments have been set for public hearing on January 13, 2025.

Despite being understaffed, the Planning Division has begun preparing interim amendments to the existing Zoning Ordinance to address the most significant, persistent issues therewith. Staff hopes to have a working draft for review by the end of March 2025. Following the completion of an upcoming City Master Plan, which, subject to future City Council appropriations would commence in FY 2026, and likely will take approximately two years to complete, more comprehensive amendments to the Zoning Ordinance will be initiated to implement the goals and objectives of said forthcoming Master Plan.

b) Implement Economic Development Advisory Committee

Status: During its March 2024 meeting, the City Council adopted Ordinance #3159, which re-established the Economic Development Advisory Committee. Appointments were confirmed by City Council on April 8, 2024. To date, the Committee has met on June 25, 2024; September 24, 2024; and December 3, 2024. The focus of the Committee's initial meetings has been to review the City's various economic master plans.

c) Economic Development Web Site Overhaul / Digital Marketing Package

Status: In April 2024, the City launched a newly revised and updated web site, which included an Economic Development page. The Economic Development page continues to be refined by staff. In the near future, staff will be adding additional content to the website, including an overview of public/private partnership success stories, review of RSA 79-E supported projects, and others.

d) New Airport Terminal

Status: The current terminal building was constructed in 1937, and later expanded in 1965. The building is obsolete, fully depreciated, and inadequate to support this growing general aviation airport. Additionally, the building is not compliant with modern building codes, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Due to these shortcomings, it has been a long-standing City goal to demolish and replace the current terminal with a new, modern facility that will support the airport for decades to come. Specifically, the goal of replacing the current terminal has been carried in various City Airport Master Plans since at least 1996.

Subject to State and Federal permitting processes, upon completion of the new terminal, the existing building would be demolished. Once demolition is completed, the property occupied by the current terminal will be used for additional hangar development at the airport.

In February 2024, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) notified the City that it intended to award a \$2.51 million grant to support the construction of a new terminal as part of the Federal Aviation Administration's FY 2024 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – Airport Terminal Buildings Grant Program. This potential grant is a key financial component of making the long-desired project a reality in the coming years.

On March 11, 2024, the City Council approved Resolution #9622, which appropriated City, State and Federal funds to proceed with design, permitting and bidding of the new terminal building and associated parking, in anticipation of the aforementioned grant funding for construction of these improvements.

Following the approval of Resolution #9622, staff and project consultants began the process of designing the project, including presentation to the Planning Board in May 2024, and have currently completed the preliminary design phase.

As design of the new terminal and related improvements progressed in early to mid-2024, the City was informed by the FAA that the 2011 environmental assessment for the Airport is insufficient for the new Terminal Project. As such, a consultant must be engaged and a new environmental assessment prepared.

The environmental assessment (EA) process may take as much as 18 months to complete. It is anticipated that the updated EA will include an alternative analysis for the proposed new terminal building, demolition of the existing terminal building, as well as other projects programmed in the City's current Capital Improvement Program.

The results of the updated EA process may affect design details for the terminal building and related improvements. As such, findings of the updated EA, as well as any potential modifications to the terminal project resulting therefrom, will be presented to the City Council prior to resumption of design efforts.

During its August 12, 2024 meeting, the City Council approved a consent resolution which authorized the City Manager to apply for Federal and State funding in an amount up to \$605,000 for various purposes, including the completion of an updated environmental assessment for the Airport pertaining to the proposed terminal project. This application is currently pending.

e) Heights Sewer Project

Status: The FY 2024 Budget included \$1.9 million, combined, for CIP #91 and CIP #275, to design a replacement sewer pump station and piping improvements to address sanitary sewer capacity for certain areas of the Heights. The FY 2025 Budget appropriated the sum of \$16,900,000 for CIP #91 (sewer main improvements) and \$6,250,000 for CIP #275 (sewer pump station improvements) to fund construction of the project. Design is underway. The project will be bid in late FY 2025. Construction will begin in early FY 2026. The project is currently scheduled for completion in late calendar year 2026/early 2027.

f) Regulatory Amendments – Review Charitable Gaming

Status: During its February 12, 2024 meeting, the City Council set for public hearing on July 8, 2024, proposed zoning amendments pertaining to charitable gaming. The Planning Board held a public hearing on May 15, 2024 on the proposed ordinance. The final ordinance was adopted by City Council on July 8, 2024.

g) Mayor's Business Visitation Program

Status: The Mayor's Visitation Program was implemented in August 2024. To date, three businesses have been visited (Boyce Highlands, Grappone Mazda, and Northeast Delta Dental). The goal is to conduct one business visitation per month (on average).

GOAL 6. ENERGY / ENVIRONMENT / SUSTAINABILITY**a) Community Power Review**

Status: On March 11, 2024, City Council approved Resolution #9620, adopting a Community Power Plan and authorizing the City to join the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire (CPCNH). The Draft Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan was submitted to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on April 15, 2024. The Community Power program launched on October 1, 2024.

b) Complete Solar Arrays at Old Turnpike Landfill / Hall Street Wastewater Treatment Plant

Status: In May 2023, the City issued an RFP for the lease of the capped landfill for a ground-mounted solar array. Kearsarge Solar, LLC, was selected for the construction of a 5 MW solar array on the landfill. The City will benefit from annual rent payments for a 20-year lease term; annual property tax payments in the form of a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT); and annual electric cost savings from group net-metering credits.

In fall 2023, Kearsarge Solar submitted their interconnection plan to Unitil and is currently awaiting final comments prior to finalizing design. City staff is working with the developer on the final terms of the PILOT agreement and group net-metering agreement.

Design is underway. Permitting will be completed this winter. Construction is scheduled for summer 2025.

Through the City's Purchasing Division, the General Services Department procured Kearsarge Solar to install a solar array at the Hall Street Wastewater Treatment Plant, funded through a grant received from the NH Department of Environmental Services. Construction of the array began in September 2024. The project was completed in November 2024.

c) Convert Remaining Ornamental Street Lights to LED

Status: A citywide street light conversion project in 2021-2022 resulted in the installation of 2,005 LED cobra head lights and 20 LED flood lights. Not included in this program were 72 ornamental lights (referred to as the "Bishop Crook" lights) located between Exit 13 and the southern limits of the Main Street Project, and between Exit 14 and the northern limits of the Main Street Project.

In January 2024, City staff worked with a lighting designer to select fixture options that are similar in design to the existing, but meet EnergyStar specifications for energy efficiency. A quote for the fixtures, including installation, was submitted in February 2024. Staff continues to seek potential grant opportunities to advance this project.

GOAL 7. PUBLIC SAFETY

a) New Police Station

Status: On April 8, 2024, the City Council received a comprehensive staff report and presentation concerning acquisition of 4 Bouton Street for a new Police Station (CIP #643), as well as projected costs and a schedule for a new station if the City Council elected to move forward with said initiative. Following said report, the City Council unanimously voted to proceed with acquisition of 4 Bouton Street. In accordance with the City Council's directive, the City acquired 4 Bouton Street on May 24, 2024 for the sum of \$3,924,232. The FY 2025 Budget appropriated the sums of \$240,000 to weatherize and secure the building, as well as \$3,131,800 to design the new Police Station.

The building was weatherized in fall 2024. Using a competitive bid process, on October 15, 2024, Milestone Construction was selected to serve as the City's Construction Manager/General Contractor for the project.

On November 13, 2024, the City received proposals from five design teams for the project. Four teams were selected for interviews. Interviews were completed on December 17, 2024. A finalist has been selected and efforts to execute a contract with the preferred design team are nearing completion. Staff anticipates the design team will be under contract by the end of January 2025. Once engaged, design will begin immediately. It is anticipated that design will take approximately one year to complete. Subject to available funding, the City may undertake interior demolition of the existing structure to help facilitate the design process, as well as identify any unusual conditions which may affect the design, with the goal of reducing potential future change orders. Subject to final design and future funding appropriations by City Council, construction is tentatively scheduled to begin on or about April 1, 2026. The current project schedule anticipates the project will be completed in late summer 2027.

b) City Hall Campus Master Plan & Schematic Design

Status: On April 8, 2024, City Council was briefed on City Administration's proposed strategy to proceed with a City Hall Campus Master Plan, presuming relocation of the Police Station to 4 Bouton Street. The FY 2025 Budget included \$250,000 to undertake a campus master plan. A consultant for the project will be selected later this fiscal year.

c) Fire Gear Replacement

Status: The effort to replace each set of primary structural firefighting gear with a PFAS-free ensemble has continued to encounter setbacks. Additional testing of the PFAS-free gear has not upheld the manufacturer's standards for sewn seams. They continue to aggressively seek solutions that will improve performance and durability. The manufacturer will not begin sales of the gear until it reliably passes their testing.

The Fire Department continues to withhold the purchasing of PFAS-containing gear while the manufacturer works through its process. There is still a sufficient amount of protective gear to safely operate, although some members no longer have a back-up set of gear assigned to them. The Department has set aside a small cache of secondary gear that will serve as a back-up set for multiple members until new gear is purchased.

Fire Administration will continue to monitor this situation closely.

d) Build Out Police Department Social Worker Staffing & Funding Options

Status: After an exhaustive recruitment effort, on February 4, 2024, the Police Department hired a lead Police Social Worker. Over the last year, the new Police Social Worker has worked hard to establish her role within the Department and has done a great job at reviewing calls for service and identifying individuals in need of service. She has networked with other key community groups to open the lines of communication to help improve services; has worked directly with homelessness issues throughout the city, and is a member of the Merrimack County Drug Court team. Soon, the Police Department will move forward with the recruitment for an Outreach Social Worker.

In the fall of 2024, the Police Department recruited for an Outreach Social Worker. The job posting generated significant interest and the Police Department received 105 applications. In December, the Department filled the Outreach Social Worker position. The Police Department is now staffed with a Master level Police Social Worker, an Outreach Social Worker, and a Masters level Police Social Worker intern.

e) Community Policing

Status: The Concord Police Department continues to work very hard to foster positive engagements with the community. The Department is fortunate to have a dedicated Community Services Division; however, the entire Department is dedicated to community policing.

This past quarter, the Police Department logged 98 community policing calls for service. Despite staffing shortages, members of the Police Department continue to go above and beyond with their dedication to fostering positive engagements with the community.

The School Resource Officers are actively involved at Concord High School and Merrimack Valley High School. Currently, due to workforce shortages, there is no SRO at Merrimack Valley Middle School. The Community Services Officers stay in contact with Bishop Brady High School, Trinity Christian School, and St. John's School as well. Liberty, the Department's comfort dog, also makes frequent visits to the schools in the city. Safety assessments continue to be conducted at several of the public and private schools. Recommendations have been made to the schools to help officers in accessing the schools during threatening events.

On August 6, 2024, the Police Department hosted its annual National Night Out event at Rollins Park. National Night Out is an evening of local and state police officers coming together to help increase awareness of community police programs, which in turn helps build bridges between officers and those they serve to protect. Approximately 4,000 attendees participated in the event.

During the month of September 2024 – Food Action Month - the Police Department partnered with the NH Food Bank and sponsored several food drives. Participants were challenged to "Help Stuff a Cruiser". Three local charities were the benefactors of the food drives. Enough food was collected to provide 3,602 meals and \$1,446 was raised. The Department also participated in two Coffee with a Cop events.

In December 2024, Police Department members teamed up with Toys for Tots to acquire and distribute Christmas gifts to families in need. Police Department members volunteered their time and resources and traveled to Manchester on December 23rd to pick up 30+ large boxes of toy donations for our community.

Beyond having police officers hand out toys on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the Police Department worked diligently to partner with community stakeholders to share these gifts in order to expand the reach of the Police Department. Hundreds of toys were provided to Concord High School, the City's Parks and Recreation Department, Concord Housing, and Project S.T.O.R.Y.

The Police Department works closely with the New American communities throughout the city in an attempt to open communication and to plan for informational events with the Department. The Department also serves on the Refugee Advisory Council (RAC), which meets monthly. The RAC helps ensure the coordination of services for refugees and immigrants, and raises awareness of issues that affect refugee and immigrant communities throughout New Hampshire.

f) Fire Department Equipment Replacement

Status: The Fire Department has worked with City Administration and the General Services Department to draft a tentative plan to address the upcoming challenge of balancing the 48-month lead times on new fire apparatus with the increasing call volume's impact on an aging fleet. This plan will be presented to City Council once the details are formalized.

There have been no changes as the Fire Department continues to wait for the arrival of several apparatus that have been ordered with FY 2023 and FY 2024 CIP funds, comprising two ambulances (one ordered on February 5, 2023 and the other ordered on July 19, 2023); a tanker (ordered on June 15, 2023); and a tower truck (ordered on

August 9, 2023). The tower truck is expected to arrive in spring/summer of 2025, and the remainder of the vehicles are expected to arrive in fall/winter of 2025.

With the increase in call volume expected over the next few years related to growth of residential units, coupled with the fact that the Department is already at operational capacity, the Fire Department recommends maintaining possession of an Engine that would normally be traded as part of a purchase agreement.

g) Continuous Improvement in Public Safety Effectiveness

Status: The Police Department continues to make forward progress with departmental policy improvement. The Department is gearing up for State accreditation, and part of that process is meeting or exceeding gold standard policies for the profession. Accreditation ensures accountability and transparency in police operations and promotes trust and confidence within the community.

The Fire Department continues to bolster its reporting capabilities of Fire and EMS incidents and response profiles over the past 25 years. This information will soon be used, with the assistance of the Public Safety Board, to establish service level expectations and metrics for the City in anticipation of pursuing additional staffed apparatus in the near future.

h) Recruitment and Retention

Status: The Fire Department is having significant struggles with recruitment and retention. The Concord Fire Officers Association (CFOA – Local 3195), which represents the Department's lieutenants, captains, and battalion chiefs, has been out of contract since July 1, 2024. Prospective candidates have cited this as one reason for not applying to the Concord Fire Department. Also, a widespread shortage of new firefighters is occurring throughout the region, and those that graduate from certification programs tend to already have a relationship with other departments or seek one of the many open positions at Nashua or Manchester Fire Departments. The Concord Fire Department has been recently unsuccessful in attracting members from other fire departments due to a clause in the collective bargaining agreement with the Professional Firefighters of Concord, NH (IAFF – Local 1045), which requires all newly hired Firefighter/EMTs, Firefighter/AEMTs, and Firefighter/Paramedics to start at Step A of the wage schedule. Fire Administration does not have the ability to adjust starting wages based on experience for lateral transfers from other fire departments, which has significantly impacted recruitment.

The Fire Department currently has five vacancies, two members assigned to Temporary Alternate Duty, and one member acting as the Assistant Fire Marshal due to turnover in the Fire Prevention Division. These eight positions need to be filled with overtime, which is causing members to work many hours. The resulting burnout is noticeable and has caused a sharp decline in morale. There have been a handful of times when ambulances have been browned out (closed) due to lack of sufficient staffing, causing reduced service levels throughout the community. These occurrences are anticipated to increase in frequency until vacancies are filled. The amount of forced overtime has been a key factor cited to Fire Administration during exit interviews of some recently department employees. Each time an employee leaves, additional overtime is needed to maintain current service levels, which causes further employee burnout, enticing additional members to leave. This compounding problem is near a critical breaking

point. Fire Administration will work with Department members and City Administration on how best to stop this cycle.

The Police Department is actively recruiting for, and struggling to fill, 14 vacant police officer positions. The Department's retention efforts have slowed its turnover rate; however, the we are still experiencing great difficulty finding police officer candidates. This is a national problem with the majority of police departments competing over a diminished hiring pool. These vacancies have significantly increased overtime spending to cover basic police services. This has also inhibited promotional and training opportunities for our existing staff members.

The Police Department has worked with its staff members and made necessary changes so that staff feels supported and valued. Through a combination of equipment upgrades, training opportunities, and compensation, the Command Staff has worked hard to stabilize the Department's staffing crisis.

GOAL 8. RECREATION & LEISURE

a) Complete Construction of a New Canal Street Riverfront Park

Status: On April 3, 2024, a ribbon cutting was held for the new park. The park was substantially completed in late fall 2024. A soft opening event was held on December 16, 2024. Final punch list items will be addressed in spring 2025, following which an official opening ceremony will occur. The City's total budget for the project is \$3.37 million. The project is being funded by a mixture of Tax Increment Finance District supported bonds, Parking Fund supported bonds (new Canal Street Public Parking Lot), development impact fees, as well as a \$500,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund grant from the State of New Hampshire.

b) White Park Inclusionary Playground

Status: An RFP for construction of the new playground went out in early summer 2024. The City was awarded \$400,000 in Land and Water Conservation Grant funds; received \$50,000 in donations; and appropriated \$350,000 of GO bonds for the construction. The City worked with the Friends of White Park to select a vendor via RFP process for the construction of the new playground. City staff is now working with the vendor with the goal of having the new playground completed by fall of 2025.

c) Complete New Penacook Library & Activity Center (Divest of 3 Merrimack St.)

Status: The project was completed in August 2024. Closing was delayed due to Boys and Girls Club related issues with calculating the final sale price for the City's condominium unit, which contains the new Penacook Library and Activity Center, as well as title issues related to a variety of public and private funding sources used by the Boys and Girls Club to develop the project. The City took ownership of its condominium unit on October 30, 2024. Operations at the new facility began on December 5, 2024. In accordance with Resolution #9518, which was adopted on December 12, 2022, City Administration has initiated efforts to divest of the existing Penacook Library, located at 3 Merrimack Street, for redevelopment. Divestment shall include the requirements to preserve and adaptively reuse the existing building.

d) Memorial Field Design & Partnership Review

Status: The City has held two public meetings to help develop a new Master Plan for the concept. At the last meeting, the residents present were in favor of a full renovation of the entire complex. City staff and the design team presented information to the Concord School Board at their October 2024 meeting and updated the City Council at their November 2024 meeting. City staff will continue to work with the Concord School District to move this project forward.

e) Keach Park Lights

Status: The first public meeting was held last fall. City staff are meeting with the H.L. Turner Group on final design and permitting. City staff have reviewed the project with the Airport Advisory Committee and with NH Fish & Game to make sure there is no impact to wildlife. A second public meeting was held on December 12, 2024. At the second meeting, there was a review of facility scheduling, increased maintenance needs, and other projected operating expenses, as well as new revenue from field rentals and charging user groups when field lights are used. Next, there will be a presentation to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Committee, the Airport Advisory Committee, and then City Council for final review and approval.

f) Merrimack River Greenway Trail (MRGT)

Status: Construction of the 4,000' section of the trail through the city's Gully Hill Sunflower Fields has been completed, and a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on September 27, 2024. Total project budget is \$705,000. The Parks & Recreation Department is handling the regular maintenance of this section of trail (similar to the section of trail at Terrill Park). Efforts to acquire the portion of the Northern Main Railroad, between Horseshoe Pond and the Contoocook River, are ongoing. Boundary surveys, real estate appraisals, and title review are underway. Once completed, a Purchase and Sales Agreement will be negotiated by the City and the NH Department of Transportation with CSX for this section of rail.

Additionally, staff continues to prepare for additional sections of the trail. Recently, the City acquired easements from Brady Sullivan for future phases of the trail over property located at 11 Stickney Avenue, as part of the Planning Board development permitting process for the new apartment development at that location. Similarly, provisions for future extension of the trail were included in the Comprehensive Development Plan approval for ROI Properties' development located at Black Hill Road.

In partnership with the Friends of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail, City Administration is working to negotiate an easement at property located at 6 Loudon Road to facilitate a future extension from the Gully Hill sunflower fields to the Loudon Road Bridge at the Merrimack River. The bridge is currently subject to an ongoing Capital Improvement Project (CIP #588), which includes widening the existing bridge to include a 14' wide shared use path to connect the MRGT from the east side of Concord to Downtown.

Also, the City continues to work with I-93 on provisions to construct that portion of the MRGT between 6 Loudon Road and Horseshoe Pond Lane, as part of the forthcoming I-93 Bow-Concord project.

g) Garrison Park Pool

Status: The City held a community meeting with the neighbors of Garrison Park to discuss the opportunity to convert the pool to a splash pad or keep it as a pool.

Everyone present wanted to keep it as a pool, as the City can offer swim lessons there and a pool can be used by all ages of the community, while a splash pad is geared towards younger children. As the Garrison Park Pool has not been open for the past four years, due to lack of lifeguards, residents present requested that the City keep Garrison Park Pool open this year, even if the City is unable to hire enough lifeguards. Each summer since COVID, the White Park, Kimball Park, Merrill Park, and Garrison Park pools have not been fully open. The Parks & Recreation Department was able to hire enough lifeguards and Water Safety Instructors to open all six pools and splash pads during the summer of 2024.

h) Terrill Park

Status: Terrill Park remains fully designed and permitted. Over the past year, City staff have renewed all required permits for the project and they are in place until 2027. Phase 1 of the park was finished and opened in October 2020. This phase included the construction of the first section of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail, moving the existing dog park and building a new parking lot to support the trail and the dog park. Phase 1 was funded by a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant, private donations, and City funds.

i) Kiwanis Park Design

Status: Funds were appropriated in the FY 2024 Capital Improvement budget for final design and permitting of the park. The City has been working with VHB, who was involved with the master planning process for the final design and permitting of the renovated park. The City is now working on a traffic study and permitting for the project.

In addition, the City has brought on a skateboard park designer, Gridline, to help design the new skateboard park. All design documents will be completed by late fall 2024 and then the Parks & Recreation Department, working with VHB, will be submitting required permits per the approved master plan.

During the winter of 2023-2024, the Department applied for a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant in the amount of \$500,000 to help with construction costs of the new skateboard park. During the summer of 2024, the grant was deemed complete, and, in December, the City was notified of the grant award.

The Parks & Recreation Department staff will continue to work with skateboard park committee members and the community at large to fundraise the required match of the grant award.

j) Identify Additional East Side Greenspace

Status: The Recreation & Parks Advisory Committee has discussed, at several meetings, the need for new parks and safe access to them. The City's Master Plan calls for ten acres of park land per 1,000 residents, and with 2,300+ new housing units in the approval or planning stages (including approximately 1,000 units for the Heights

neighborhood in the vicinity of the former Steeplegate Mall), there is a need to work with developers and the community to identify and plan new community parks. Areas east of Keach Park and areas around Thirty Pines have been discussed.