

MINUTES

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

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

Excused: Councilor Ali Sekou.

The Mayor opened the meeting at 5:33 PM and stated that the purpose of this meeting was to hold a work session to discuss potential changes to the FY 2026 proposed budget, followed by a City Council meeting for a public hearing and budget adoption.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2025 and June 2, 2025 Finance Committee Meetings. The minutes were approved with a unanimous voice vote.

Mayor Champlin suggested making the following changes to the proposed FY 2026 budget:

General Fund Expense Reductions:

- Reduce funding of PCR #161, for a third Police Social Worker position, from a full year to six months, for a savings of \$44,000;
- Increase Police Department attrition, \$35,000;
- Reduce PCR #219, Paramedic Tuition & Backfill, by \$3,655;
- Eliminate PCR #259, AEMOT Tuition, \$20,000;
- Eliminate PCR #258, NFAFF Training, \$21,700;
- Reduce City Manager Training, \$15,000;
- Eliminating PCR #269, Eagle Square Downlighting; \$10,000;
- Eliminating PCR #274, CDL Driver Training, \$17,500;
- Reducing PCR #13, Human Services Special Program Rent, \$25,000;
- Reduce General Overhead funding of Concord Area Transit by \$9,825;
- Reduce transfer-out to Solid Waste by \$45,200;
- Reduce funding for City Council orientation, \$5,000; and
- Reduce Library Books and Materials, \$5,000.

General Fund Expense Increases:

- Increase PCR #82 for Healey Park Cleanup, \$205,000; and
- Increase funds for Event Grants, \$150,000.

General Fund Revenue Increases:

- Increase Investment Income, \$14,565;
- Increase use of Community Improvement Reserve, \$205,000; and
- Increase use of Economic Development Reserve, \$150,000.

Golf Fund Reduction:

- Reduce the Golf Fund operating budget for Grounds & Horticulture by \$5,000.

Councilor Grady Sexton proposed eliminating the entire tax rate increase and authorizing the City Manager Aspell to identify the necessary cuts to be made for a zero percent tax rate increase.

Councilor Keach proposed a reduction in the proposed tax rate by 1% and authorizing the City Manager to identify the necessary cuts to accomplish this. He also proposed removing CIP #358 (Garrison Park Pool) from the current budget proposal, as he questions whether the City can sustain seven pools. He suggested this project be referred to RPAC for further consideration.

Councilor Kretovic proposed the imposition of a \$50 capital fee to be assessed on non-resident Beaver Meadow Golf Course members; adults only.

Councilor Brown proposed the following changes:

- Taking \$50,000 out of the Economic Development Reserve to provide funding for Workforce Development;
- Eliminating CIP #235, Golf Course Irrigation;
- Eliminating the NEOCTIF;
- Taking \$500,000 from Recreation Reserve to fund the Skateboard Park;
- Funding PCR #276 to reinstate two positions in the GSD Sign Crew for a total of \$181,000;
- Eliminating funding for Golf Pro Am Tournament Entry Fees;
- Imposing a non-resident rate across the board, for all ages, at the golf course; and
- Table the proposed CIP for a new clubhouse at Beaver Meadow.

Councilor Foote proposed having the utility bills printed in black and white instead of in color for a savings of approximately \$15,000; and cutting \$50,000 out of the Memorial Field project and/or the Manchester Lighting project to put towards the skateboard park project.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Grady Sexton, and duly seconded, to amend the proposed FY 2026 budget to achieve a revenue-neutral budget that eliminates the current proposed tax increase. This amendment shall authorize the City Manager to identify and implement back-of-budget cuts across city departments and programs. When determining cuts, the City Manager shall prioritize efficiency and minimize any impact on public safety and essential services.

Discussion ensued. Some Councilors indicated that they didn't feel comfortable with the Manager making changes and not having the amended budget come back to City Council for input. They expressed their feelings that it is the City Council's responsibility, not the City Manager's, to work together to find the necessary cuts.

Councilor Keach indicated that he supports this motion and feels it is the most realistic approach, as the City Manager knows his departments the best.

Councilor Grady Sexton pointed out that the City Council has the authority to make cuts at any time. Therefore, if the Council doesn't agree with any of the City Manager's recommendations, they will have the opportunity to change them.

Councilor Fennessy pointed out the employment contract increases the Council recently approved and said he can't fathom making cuts in positions and services subsequent to those contract increases.

Councilor McNamara and Councilor Kurtz indicated that they didn't feel comfortable with a 3.96% tax rate increase and asked how painful a cut of that magnitude would be. Manager Aspell noted that there would most likely be positions not filled, possibly a hiring freeze, and it would result in some services no longer being provided.

Manager Aspell indicated that to make a 4% decrease, it would require some very deep cuts and would be very difficult. He also noted that the cuts would have to be permanent, as increases are already in motion for contract increases going forward; and it is unlikely that we will have future zero percent increases in health and dental insurance premiums, as we did this year. He noted that whatever the Council does now affects future years.

Councilor Todd suggested the Committee start by looking at the Mayor's proposal, determine which of his suggestions are feasible, and then go from there.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 12-2.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Keach, and duly seconded, to amend the proposed FY 2026 budget to reduce the tax increase by 1%, which would translate to approximately \$550,000 in spending; authorize the City Manager to affect this spending reduction at his discretion, giving direction to the City Manager to prioritize public safety as a priority when he makes these reductions; suggest that positions not be eliminated, but instead impose a hiring freeze to achieve this reduction; and recognize that going forward, Council always has the discretion to add positions and appropriate funds as circumstances change.

Discussion ensued. Some Councilors again indicated that they didn't feel comfortable with the Manager making changes and not having the amended budget come back to City Council for input. Some Councilors indicated they would like to see more than a 1% cut to the proposed tax rate increase. Councilor Foote suggested a 2% decrease in the proposed tax rate.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 12-2.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Fennessy, and duly seconded, to amend the proposed FY 2026 budget to reduce the tax rate by 1%, with 1/2% proposed by the Mayor, and the other 1/2% proposed by the City Manager.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 7-7.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Schultz, and duly seconded, to review and vote on each individual proposed amendment made by the Mayor.

The motion passed with no dissenting votes.

Discussion ensued about the Mayor's proposed amendments. Councilor Grady Sexton and Councilor Kretovic felt strongly against cutting the Police Department Social Worker position funding from 12 months to 6 months.

Councilor Kretovic also expressed concerns with cutting training in the Fire and Police Departments.

Councilor Grady Sexton pointed out that her motion was to sustain public safety.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to remove the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce funding of PCR #161, Police Department Social Worker position, from 12 months of funding to 6 months of funding, which would result in a savings of \$44,000.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 8-5. Councilor Brown recused herself from the vote.

The next item on the Mayor's list was to increase PD attrition, resulting in a savings of \$35,000. Deputy Police Chief Steve Smagula was asked to join in the discussion. Deputy Chief Smagula indicated that there are currently 10 vacant police officer positions. There was discussion amongst the committee about freezing some of those positions and increasing the attrition amount, as it is unlikely that all 10 positions will be filled within the next year.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Fennessy, and duly seconded, to increase PD attrition to \$100,000, instead of \$35,000 as proposed by the Mayor.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 8-5. Councilor Brown recused herself from the vote.

The next item on the Mayor's list was a proposed reduction to PCR #219, Paramedic Tuition and Backfill, in the amount of \$3,655. Fire Chief John Chisholm was asked to join in the discussion. Committee members asked Chief Chisholm how this cut would affect the Fire Department. Chief Chisholm indicated that he agrees with this cut, as he feels the Department can manage the Paramedic Tuition and Backfill despite this reduction.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce PCR #219, Paramedic Tuition and Backfill, by \$3,655.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 11-3.

The next two items on the Mayor's list were the elimination of funding for PCR #259, AEMT Tuition, in the amount of \$20,000; and the elimination of funding for PCR #258, NFAFF Training. Discussion ensued. Chief Chisholm was asked if only one of these were to be funded, did he have a preference of which one. Chief Chisholm indicated that, of the two, he would prefer to see PCR #258. He indicated that both PCR #259 and #258 were strategies to improve recruitment efforts.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to eliminate funding for PCR #259, AEMT Tuition, in the amount of \$20,000.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 8-6.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to remove the Mayor's proposed amendment to eliminate funding for PCR #258, NFAFF Training, in the amount of \$21,700.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 9-5.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce the City Manager's training account by \$15,000.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to eliminate funding for PCR #269, Eagle Square Downlighting, in the amount of \$10,000.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

The next item on the Mayor's list was the reduction of funding for PCR #274, CDL Driver Training, in the amount of \$17,500. Discussion ensued. Some Councilors expressed their opinions that this training is very important. Councilor Foote noted that some municipalities do their own in-house training and suggested the City could save money if we did this.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to remove the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce funding for PCR #274, CDL Driver Training, in the amount of \$17,500.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 14-0.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce funding for PCR #13, Human Services Special Program Rent, in the amount of \$25,000.

Discussion ensued. The consensus amongst Committee members was that Human Services are mandated by State law, and regardless of whether this cut is made or not, if the funds are needed to meet the State mandate, the City will have to provide the funds. Therefore, it won't hurt anything to make this cut.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 13-1.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce funding for Concord Area Transit in the amount of \$9,825.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 9-5.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce the transfer out to Solid Waste by \$45,200. Councilor Todd suggested an amendment to the motion and a reduction of the transfer out to Solid Waste of \$90,000 instead of \$45,200. The motion was duly seconded.

A roll call vote was taken. The amended motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce funding for City Council Orientation Training by \$5,000.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to remove from the Mayor's list of proposed amendments the reduction of \$5,000 for Library Books and Materials.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 11-3.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to increase General Fund expenses for PCR #82, Cleanup of Healey Park, in the amount of \$205,000; to be funded by a transfer of \$205,000 from the Community Improvement Reserve.

Councilor Foote noted that he had asked City Administration, at a previous meeting, to obtain an estimate for the cleanup of the Manchester Street area near Exit 13, and the property between Exit 13 and Exit 15. City Manager Aspell indicated that staff looked into the matter and the City can accomplish the cleanup of all of these areas with the \$205,000.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

The next item on the list was a proposed increase to General Fund Expenses in the amount of \$150,000 to continue the City Manager's grant program for special events.

Councilor Brown expressed concerns that this funding is being provided to the same organizations more than once. She raised concern that the Multicultural Event has never been awarded an event grant. City Manager Aspell indicated that the organizers of the Multicultural Event have never applied for funding. Mayor Champlin responded that the City Manager has a limit whereby an organization will not be provided funding more than three times. Councilor Brown indicated she would rather see the money put towards Workforce Development.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to increase General Fund expenses by \$150,000 to continue the City's grant program for special events; to be funded by a transfer of \$150,000 from the Economic Development Reserve.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 13-1.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to increase Investment Income revenue by \$14,565.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

MOTION: A motion was made and duly seconded to uphold the Mayor's proposed amendment to reduce the Golf Fund operating budget for Grounds and Horticulture by \$5,000. This has no impact on the tax rate.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

At this time, the Committee had voted on all of the Mayor's proposed amendments to the budget, and the outcome was a total reduction in the General Fund of \$280,980, just shy of 1/2%.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Fennessy, and duly seconded, to direct the City Manager to find additional changes in order to accomplish a 1% decrease on the proposed tax rate.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 12-2.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Kretovic, and duly seconded, to impose a \$50 capital fee on non-resident Beaver Meadow Golf Course members; adults only.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 12-2.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Brown, and duly seconded, to remove CIP #235, Golf Course Irrigation.

Councilor Brown indicated that the holes to be completed in FY 2026 have already been done. Deputy City Manager LeBrun indicated that the holes to be completed in FY 2026 have not yet been done, and that the misunderstanding is due to a typographical error in a previous document where the incorrect hole numbers were listed. He noted that this is the final phase of a years long project, which was spread out so as not to incur the expense of 18 holes all at once.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 13-1.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Brown to eliminate the NEOCTIF.

There was no second on the motion; therefore, the motion failed.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Brown, and duly seconded, to transfer \$500,000 from the Recreation Reserve to provide funding for the Skateboard Park.

Many of the committee members indicated that they want to support this project. Mayor Champlin indicated that he had a conversation recently with Ted Rice, President of the Concord Skatepark Association, who said he feels the organization can raise \$500,000 by December. Councilor Kretovic suggested the City find ways to help them be successful in their fundraising. As the grant

award requiring the match doesn't expire for four years, the general consensus of the group was to hold off on this and see where the Concord Skateboard Association is at for funds in December. Councilor Fennessy suggested the Council could tap into reserves in December if necessary.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 12-2.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Brown to reinstate the Sign Crew (PCR #276) in the amount of \$181,000.

There was no second on the motion; therefore, the motion failed.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Brown, and duly seconded, to eliminate funding for Pro Am Tournament entry fees for golf course staff.

Deputy City Manager LeBrun was asked to speak to this. He said he considers the Pro Am Tournaments to be professional development opportunities for the golf pros.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 9-5.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Brown to impose a non-resident rate across the board to all ages.

There was no second on the motion; therefore, the motion failed.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Brown, and duly seconded, to table the Golf Course Clubhouse project.

Councilor Brown expressed her opinion that not enough public input has been received on the project. Councilor Horne agreed with Councilor Brown and added that she feels the golf course needs to get its affairs in order as far as its accounting methods and development of a business plan before this project goes forward. She also said she would like to see the Golf Course Advisory Committee consist of varied community members, including non-golfers.

Several Councilors indicated that they felt the City Manager did a good job in scaling the project back and coming up with a good plan so that the clubhouse project will have minimal impact on the tax rate. It was noted that the longer the City waits to move forward with this project, the more expensive it will become.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion failed with a vote of 12-2.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Foote, and duly seconded, to have future City utility bills printed in black and white, instead of in color, as it is more cost efficient.

Councilor Horne suggested all City invoices be in black and white, not just the utility bills.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

MOTION: A motion was made by Councilor Horne, and duly seconded, to push out CIP #358, rebuilding the Garrison Park Pool.

Councilor Keach expressed concern that the City can sustain seven pools. Councilor Kretovic suggested the matter be referred to the Recreation & Parks Advisory Committee.

A roll call vote was taken. The motion passed with a vote of 14-0.

With no other discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 PM. The Mayor indicated that they would take a break and reconvene as the City Council for a public hearing and adoption of the budget.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Stevens, Executive Assistant