



# CITY OF CONCORD

## REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

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

**DATE:** April 30, 2024

**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 April 30, 2024.

## **GOAL 1. FINANCE & TECHNOLOGY**

### **a) Balance the Budget Minimizing the Tax Rate Impact**

**Status:** For FY 2024, the City used \$295,150 as part of the budget adoption with a tax rate increase of 3.95%. As of June 2023, the City's Unassigned Fund Balance was calculated at 22.4% of expenditures. The City's Fund Balance Policy is a minimum of 18.5%.

Subsequent to the FY 2024 Budget adoption, the City Council approved the following four additional resolutions utilizing Unassigned Fund Balance as the funding source:

1. \$100,000 on November 13, 2023 to support the construction of the Concord Coach display container;
2. \$385,000 on December 11, 2023 to support General Services retention payments;
3. \$305,000 on March 11, 2024 for Fire Department PFAS-free firefighter gear; and
4. \$66,190 on April 8, 2024 for Earned Leave Overtime Payments.

Total subsequent use of Unassigned Fund Balance is \$856,150, which results in a revised fund balance of 21.2%. These amounts and percentages will change upon completion of FY 2024.

**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, 2023, the amount was 9.4%.

**d) Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Implementation**

**Status:** The City is in the final phase of the original ERP implementation that started in September 2017. This last phase is the Munis Tax module, which went live on March 6, 2024, for the billing and collection of real estate taxes. The new tax bills in the new format will be sent out to taxpayers at the end of May for tax bills that will be due on July 1, 2024.

**e) Assessing Full Measure and List and Revaluation**

**Status:** The City has awarded a contract to Vision Government Solutions, Inc., for the Full Measure and List and Revaluation. Once the agreement is finalized and approved by the NH Department of Revenue, we anticipate field inspections to begin.

**f) Pursue Federal and State Funding**

**Status:** Notable grants received to date in FY 2024 include:

1. \$496,112 from the FAA and the State of NH for the Airport Terminal Project;
2. \$400,000 from the Land & Water Conservation Fund for the White Park Playground Project;
3. \$18,000 from the NH Council on the Arts for the Eastman Clock Tower Restoration Project;
4. \$240,000 from the NH Department of Transportation in matching funds for the Manchester Street Project;
5. \$275,000 from the Land & Water Conservation Fund for the Merrimack River Greenway Trail; and
6. \$68,000 from the NH Drinking Water & Ground Water Trust Fund for the Source Development Charge Study.

On January 12, 2024, the Fire Department submitted an application for \$259,062 from the NH Department of Safety, State Homeland Security Competitive Grant Program, to secure funding for a modular vehicle barrier system for the protection of crowds occupying closed roadways at public gatherings. The application has been deemed complete and is still pending.

**g) Cost Containment – Health Insurance Costs**

**Status:** The City negotiated with Harvard Pilgrim to bring a not-to-exceed rate of 15.79% down to a 10.5% renewal rate. 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. Moving to a self-insured dental plan is just one of those strategies.

**h) Technology Infrastructure Improvements**

**Status:** The Information Technology Department is working to close out last year's projects, which includes replacement of networking infrastructure (to be completed in June), and cybersecurity efforts funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to improve security around the water and wastewater systems (to be completed mid-2025).

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 Fire Department continues to fortify its newly installed computer-aided dispatch (CAD) platform, as well as the newly deployed Fire Records Management System (RMS). Work has been done this quarter to better align the integration between the two systems to allow for increased fire reporting efficiency and more reliable emergency notifications. Also, crew scheduling from the Fire RMS has been interfaced with the City's Munis payroll module, which has reduced the time required for staff to process Fire Department payroll by two hours per week. In other news, the Fire Communications Center has been replaced with a more reliable and robust service. The Center is now working to fortify its secondary fail-over connection by changing to AT&T FirstNet to ensure prioritized communication ability during outages and times of constricted bandwidth.

The Fire Department continues to work with businesses, non-profit organizations, and government agencies in the city to transition them from the wired master box fire alarm system to a wireless mesh network radio box system. The wired infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and all account holders were notified two years ago that they must transition before July 2024. Despite the City making new hardware available to account holders through grant funding, almost half will not meet the July deadline. The Fire Department has proposed doubling the fees of account holders who remain on the wired system after July 2024 to entice them to perform the required upgrades.

**GOAL 2. ORGANIZATIONAL****a) Recruitment and Retention**

**Status:** The Retention and Recruitment Committee continued their efforts through the first quarter of CY 2024 by bringing their recommendations to the Fiscal Policy Advisory Committee, and, ultimately, City Council.

An earned leave bonus for CY 2024 was approved for union covered positions, as well as a perks package for all employees, to include a discount rate at Beaver Meadow Golf Course, a non-resident Library card, and a family pool pass. The Human Resources Department continues to look for trends in turnover by data analysis and exit interviews. Our employee referral bonus has paid out over \$20,000 to current employees. Paid Family Medical Leave has strong utilization and was one of the recommendations of the first report from the committee.

**b) Class and Compensation Study**

**Status:** An RFP for a consultant to conduct a class and compensation study went out in the first quarter of CY 2024. Six firms responded and are under review. The award will be made in the spring and the study will begin soon after.

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

**Status:** The City Council DEIJB Committee will report on the status of this goal.

**d) Solid Waste Contract Implementation**

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

**e) Community Communication**

**Status:** The City's 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted by City Council on April 8, 2024, after a two-year update process. The effort was led by the Fire Department and engaged businesses, non-profit organizations, community groups, and residents throughout the city to identify potential hazards that could impact the community and prioritize efforts to mitigate them. The plan is awaiting final approval from FEMA. A municipality must have an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan in order to qualify for certain federal grants through FEMA.

**GOAL 3. HOUSING / HOMELESSNESS**

**Status:** There are 1,546 housing units in pre-development; 349 units in permitting; 660 units that have received Planning Board approval and are working towards securing building permits; and 501 units presently under construction. The new transitional housing project at 120 Pleasant Street is nearing completion and will open later this spring. Staff is working with the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness to assist with gap financing for its proposed 8-unit transitional housing project located at 6 South State Street.

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

**Status:** During the first nine months of FY 2024, the Police Department has been 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

The Fire Chief is working with the Chair of the City's Steering Committee to End Homelessness, at her request, to explore the idea of applying Emergency Management and Incident Command System theories on disaster management to the problem of homelessness.

#### **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.

##### **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 for construction in 2025. Eighty percent (80%) of the project will be financed with State grants.

##### **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 underway. An initial public meeting was held on February 20, 2024. Development of preliminary alternatives is underway. The next public meeting is tentatively scheduled to occur this summer.

##### **d) State Parking Garages**

**Status:** Demolition of the former NH Department of Justice Building at 33 Capitol Street is currently underway. Construction of the State's new 409-space Legislative Parking Garage will begin later this year. 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:** Once the Planning Division is fully staffed, the Community Development Department will initiate efforts to prepare interim amendments to the existing Zoning Ordinance to address the most significant, persistent issues therewith. Following the completion of an upcoming City Master Plan, which, subject to future City Council appropriations, would commence in FY 2026 and likely take approximately two years to complete. More comprehensive amendments to the Zoning Ordinance will be initiated in the future 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.

**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.

**d) New Airport Terminal**

**Status:** In February 2024, the Federal Aviation Administration announced \$2.51 million in grant funds to construct a new terminal building. During its March 2024 meeting, the City Council accepted State and Federal grant funds, and appropriated City funds, to proceed with design and permitting for the new terminal building. Design is underway. Subject to receipt and appropriation of these grant funds, construction will begin in FY 2025.

**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. Design is underway. Construction funds will be discussed during the FY 2025 Budget proceedings.

**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 will hold a public hearing on May 15, 2024 on the proposed ordinance.

**g) Mayor's Business Visitation Program**

**Status:** Staff is working with Mayor Champlin to implement this program. A preliminary list of potential businesses to visit across all sectors of the city has been provided to the Mayor for review.

**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 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 Energy & Environment Advisory Committee has begun work developing a public information campaign. Additional public information meetings will be planned for early summer. Pending response from the PUC, and ability of the CPCNH to procure power on behalf of the City in a timely manner, the Community Power program is anticipated to launch in fall 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. Pending response from Unitil, design and permitting will commence in April/May 2024, with an anticipated start of construction in spring 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.

**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 is currently researching grant opportunities.

**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. Closing is scheduled for late May 2024. Funds to secure and weatherize the existing structure at 4 Bouton Street, as well as to proceed with design of the new facility, will be addressed in the upcoming FY 2025 Budget.

**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. Funds to advance the Campus Master Plan will be addressed in the upcoming FY 2025 Budget.

**c) Fire Gear Replacement**

**Status:** The Fire Department has received funding to order up to 92 sets of PFAS-free structural firefighter gear. The initial order has been placed and is expected to arrive in fall 2024. Less than the total allotment has been ordered, as members who are planning to retire in the interim have requested that a new set not be ordered for them, so their successor will be able to receive a correctly-fitted set of PFAS-free gear. According to an article published by Bloomberg Law on April 10, 2024, the Director of Science and Research with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) indicated that Concord, New Hampshire, was the first city in the United States to commit public funds to purchase PFAS-free gear.

**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 month and half, 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.

**e) Community Policing**

**Status:** The Concord Police Department has continued 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.

The Concord Police Department logged 96 self-initiated calls for service during the first quarter of CY 2024 for community policing. This included engagements with several community organizations, like the Friends of Forgotten Children, the Boy Scouts of America, the Friendly Kitchen, The Concord Homeless Resource Center, the NH Coalition Against Violence, the Fellowship House, the Concord Boys & Girls Club, Community Bridges, the Community Action Program, and the Merrimack Valley County Child Abuse Advocacy Center.



Police officers routinely visited schools throughout the city, including the Christa McAuliffe School, Beaver Meadow School, Concord High School, Merrimack Valley Middle and High Schools, Mill Brook School, Penacook Elementary School, St. John's School, and St. Paul's School. Additionally, 38 D.A.R.E. classes were taught throughout the city. Officers also participated in Police Readers, where officers go into the elementary schools across the city and read books to students.

Officers are actively involved at Concord High School, Merrimack Valley High School, and 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.

During the first quarter of CY 2024, police officers met with several members of the business community to discuss public safety issues, such as to identify organized retail crime at Target and Best Buy stores, as well as fraud education at several area banks. Members of the Police Department have conducted active shooter trainings, as well as safety presentations to businesses, schools, and community groups.

The Police Department hosted several community events in the first quarter of CY 2024. In February, the Department hosted Skate with a Cop, which was held at the Everett Arena and allowed for children and other community members to ice skate with members of the Police Department for several hours. In March, the Department hosted Coffee with a Cop at the Bean and Bakery. This event provided a great opportunity for community members to have conversations, ask questions, and get to know members of the Concord Police Department. Also in March, the Police Department organized the Egg My Yard fundraiser through which several Department members volunteered to help facilitate Easter Egg hunts across the city.

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 is still waiting for the arrival of several vehicles 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 April 2025, and the remainder of the vehicles are expected to arrive in August 2025. The Fire Department has been told by its vendor that, moving forward, newly ordered apparatus may take up to 48 months (4 years) to arrive from the date of order. This is concerning, as steadily increasing call volumes and training requirements have accelerated wear and tear on first line apparatus. The Fire Department will work with City Administration and the Equipment Services Division to craft a plan to address this issue.

**g) Continuous Improvement in Public Safety Effectiveness**

**Status:** During the first quarter of CY 2024, the Police Department has continued 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 has made initial connections between the new Fire RMS and ArcGIS in an effort to support continuous quality improvement with data heat maps. This will also support using geospatial time cube analysis tools to identify and predict trends and assist with future planning. A project is underway to create a common dataset that incorporates both the old and new Fire RMS platforms, as well as three generations of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) data. This will eventually allow mapping and analysis tools to combine Fire and EMS data over the past 15+ years.

**h) Recruitment and Retention**

**Status:** During the first quarter of CY 2024, the Police Department has continued to lead the way in response to its significant staffing crisis. In response to massive vacancies and employee burnout, the Police Chief worked with the City Manager to extend the vacant patrol shift overtime incentives from January 1, 2024 until February 17, 2024. This overtime pay incentive increased officer overtime engagement and worked to spread the work out among a larger pool of officers. Overall morale within the Department improved, as officers felt that the Command Staff and the City Administration recognized their extra work.

In addition, retention bonuses were paid on April 12, 2024, to further incentivize employees to resist job-hopping, as our police officers are heavily recruited. The Concord Police Department has developed an innovative staffing strategy where the retention of our employees is paramount, followed closely by new recruitment.

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.

During the first quarter of CY 2024, the Police Department hired three new police officers, which is the same number of officers hired during the same time period in 2023. A promising factor is that two of the three newly hired officers are individuals with prior experience. This is significant because it is the first time in several years that we have hired a certified police officer from another police department within Merrimack County. A benefit of being able to attract and hire previously certified police officers is that it shortens their training period by at least 16 weeks. This not only translates into officers being released on patrol sooner, but it also represents a savings of over \$42,000 in training costs.

The Professional Development Unit of the Police Department is actively recruiting using both in-person and online approaches. The Department attends college job fairs, hosts internships, works with military groups, and uses referral bonuses to find quality applicants. These efforts will need to continue, as the Police Department still has 13

police officer vacancies, and eight employees who are eligible to retire. This includes the Chief of Police and the entire Command Staff.

The Fire Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), Local 1045, adjusting language in their contract to change from mandatory overtime to allow for voluntary overtime prior to an employee being hired on overtime by mandatory assignment. This came after an exhaustive two-year overtime trial in which Fire Administration worked with both unions to find a more employee-friendly method of hiring overtime that still met the operational needs of the Department. This effort is expected to improve morale, and, therefore, assist with employee retention and recruitment. This new system has increased the administrative burden of overtime hiring on the Battalion Chiefs. Fire Administration is working with the vendor of the new Fire RMS to incorporate software changes to streamline these processes.

## **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. Construction is scheduled to begin in late April/early May. The project will take approximately one year to complete. The total City investment is approximately \$3.4 million.

### **b) White Park Inclusionary Playground**

**Status:** An RFP for construction of the new playground will go out by early summer. 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.

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

**Status:** Construction is well underway. The project is scheduled to be completed this summer. Once construction is finished, and condominium subdivision for the project is complete, the City will acquire the new Penacook Library and Activity Center from the Boys & Girls Club. Occupancy is projected to occur in September 2024. Once occupancy is achieved, City Administration will initiate 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. Staff will present information to both the City Council and the School Board later this summer.

### **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 are in the process of reviewing with NH Fish &

Game to make sure there is no impact to wildlife. A second public meeting will be scheduled later this summer to review facility use and maintenance needs of the project.

**f) Merrimack River Greenway Trail (MRGT)**

**Status:** Work to construct a 4,000' section of the trail through the city's Gully Hill Sunflower Fields is underway. Construction will commence in June. Total budget is \$705,000. 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.

**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, resident 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. In the event the City is unable to hire enough lifeguards to open all pools, the Parks & Recreation Department may need to look at rotating closings of Rollins, Heights, and Rolfe Park pools. The Parks & Recreation Department is actively hiring lifeguards and will most likely not know staffing levels until early June.

**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.

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 almost 3,000 new housing units in the approval or planning stages, 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.