Thursday April 16, 2026 (3:00 PM) - Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

Present: Andrew Biemer (arrived at 3:50 p.m.), Lisa Brown, Steve Edwards, Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton, Natch Greyes, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Kate Lipman (arrived at 3:15 p.m.), Councilor Jim Schlosser (arrived at 3:45 p.m.)

Staff Members Present: Deputy Police Chief Casey, Fire Chief Chisholm, Deputy Fire Chief Costello, Deputy Fire Chief Hebert, Police Chief Moulton, Deputy Police Chief Smagula

Guests: Justin Kantar

Minute Taker: Stepfanie Breton and Chair Amanda Grady Sexton

Call to Order

Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. A quorum was not present at that time, and the Chair noted that no votes could be taken until a quorum was achieved.

Social district discussion

The Chair revisited the Board's recent subcommittee work on social districts. She explained that the subcommittee had done strong work, although the timeframe would not allow the Council to adopt a policy in time for a potential Market Days social district this year. Because a public hearing would be required and notice could not occur until May, the earliest possible action would be in June, which would be too late for the desired Market Days launch.

The Chair stated the subcommittee would reconvene and continue its work, with a possible goal of developing a broad enabling policy that if approved by council, could allow social districts to be approved on a temporary basis in the future. Under that approach, applicants who would like to establish a temporary district to coincide with an event would have an application process that would be reviewed by City departments and administration. The City would make a recommendation to the City Council when an application meets the criteria to establish a temporary district. Applications that are approved would be placed on the Council's consent agenda.

Board members discussed the state statute governing social districts and whether the City Council itself must establish management and maintenance plans. The discussion centered on the need for a high-level enabling policy that would comply with state law while still leaving case specific operational decisions to City staff, including police, fire, code, and legal.

Members of the subcommittee stated the importance of an after-action review process, noting

that any first use of a social district in Concord would effectively be a test case. In response, the Chair said the subcommittee could work with the City Solicitor to explore language such as a sunset provision or a formal review requirement after a set period of time.

Lisa Brown, public representative, expressed support for not rushing the matter and said the issue should go through a public hearing. The Chair confirmed that the Board would not move forward with a one-time approval for Market Days this year and that the matter would go back to the subcommittee for development of a broader policy that would have a public hearing.

Members also discussed possible future uses, including Cars and Coffee, Midnight Merriment, and other events, and agreed that it made sense to continue working on a policy so the City would be prepared for future requests.

Quorum Discussion

Councilor Schlosser later arrived at 3:45 p.m., establishing a quorum and allowing the Board to act on agenda items.

Concord Fire Department Annual report

The Fire Chief presented the Department's annual report. He reported that the department had been in a severe recruitment crisis for several years but had recently begun to improve. The department had hired eight new recruits at once and conducted a four-week recruit school. At the time of the meeting, the department had two vacancies on the floor, a deputy chief vacancy, a training officer vacancy, and a recent retirement notice from the EMS captain. He described this as a significant vacancy rate within headquarters and said filling those positions would be a major focus.

The Chief said one of the department's central priorities had shifted from recruitment to retention. He emphasized the importance of training, professional development, succession planning, and investment in current staff. He outlined a proposed reconfiguration of Fire Headquarters that would elevate the department's fiscal supervisor role and allow one deputy chief to focus more fully on training, EMS, and professional standards. He said the change would improve the department's operational capacity while being the least financially disruptive option.

The Chief also discussed the need to reinstate Engine 1 as an operational necessity, though he acknowledged the City's broader budget pressures. Rather than requesting full staffing immediately, he proposed a phased approach by adding one firefighter per battalion over time. He explained that these staff would improve safety and service delivery, especially in outlying areas such as District 5, and could eventually support reopening Engine 1 in future years.

The Chief highlighted the workload of the communications center, which serves 24 communities and handles tens of thousands of emergency calls each year with only two people on duty at a time. He proposed adding one peak load dispatcher, explaining that the position would have a limited fiscal impact and would also help with succession planning in the dispatch

center. He noted that a substantial portion of dispatch wages is reimbursed through the Capital Area Mutual Aid Fire Compact.

The Chief also addressed fire apparatus replacement. He said current lead times for new engines and ladder trucks are now measured in years, not months, and argued that the City should add another engine to the capital plan even before personnel are fully in place for Engine 1. He noted that existing spare apparatus are aging and unreliable and said the department had at times been left without a reserve engine available for service.

Board members asked questions about apparatus replacement costs, trade in or resale value for retired equipment, recruitment and retention, and the causes of increased call volume over the years. The Chief noted that aging demographics, changes in public behavior, easier access to 911, and the widespread use of cell phones have all contributed to more calls.

Members also asked about recent increases in building fires and whether more community education and prevention could reduce risk over time. The Chief said community risk reduction efforts would be valuable, but that prevention staff had long been consumed by required inspections and investigations. He noted that a recently added prevention staff member would help, but that rebuilding education and outreach work would take time.

Further discussion addressed inspection capacity, pre-planning, Knox box maintenance, and whether the City could use billing inserts or other communications to share fire safety information and encourage residents to provide emergency contact information for properties.

Vote on Fire Department Annual Report

A motion was made and seconded by to approve the 2025 annual report for the Concord Fire Department.

The motion passed unanimously.

Concord Police Department Annual Report

The Police Chief then presented the Concord Police Department's annual report. He said the department's primary goal this year was to maintain current progress rather than make major new requests.

The Chief reported that police staffing had improved significantly compared to prior years. Although the department had recently lost several officers, including some leaving law enforcement entirely, he said overall turnover had dropped dramatically from the department's worst year in decades to one of its best. Department leadership credited this improvement to targeted recruitment, better treatment of applicants, retention incentives, and a stronger internal culture that made employees feel heard and valued.

Department representatives emphasized that Concord's approach to recruitment had changed

during and after COVID. Rather than relying only on traditional testing processes, the department began using more personalized and relationship-based recruitment. Leadership said this change had improved both hiring and retention outcomes.

The Police Department also discussed continued investments in officer wellness and mental health, noting the strain that traumatic calls can have on staff. One recent example involved a tragic accidental death of a young child. Department leadership described how officers handled the investigation professionally while also relying on the department's social workers and support structure to help the family and staff.

The Chief highlighted community policing efforts, including events such as Ski with a Cop, school skating activities, toy distribution efforts, and the department's comfort dog and canine programs. He described these efforts as important ways to build trust and strengthen the connection between officers and the community.

The report also addressed major investigative priorities, including drug enforcement and financial fraud. Department leadership said fraud schemes, especially those involving cryptocurrency and bitcoin machines, have become a growing and devastating problem for residents, particularly older adults. They noted that Concord residents had collectively lost more than one million dollars to such scams in 2025, though some funds had been recovered through investigative work.

The department also discussed homelessness related calls for service. The Chief said the Police Department often becomes the default responder for homelessness related concerns and that it works closely with outreach teams, social workers, CAP, and other partners. He said that as colder weather shelters close and warmer weather returns, the department typically sees an increase in calls related to encampments, trespassing, and other quality of life issues. He said current trends appeared generally consistent with prior years.

Board members asked questions about the sources of calls, including high call volume locations such as Walmart, Market Basket on Storrs Street, certain housing developments, and police headquarters. Department representatives explained that many calls at retail locations are shoplifting related and that many calls at certain residential complexes involve repeat issues, mental health concerns, welfare checks, or noise complaints. They also explained that calls recorded at police headquarters include walk ins, follow up meetings, sex offender registrations, and courtesy surrenders on warrants.

The department reviewed statistics regarding officer-initiated activity, arrest frequency, repeat contacts, and the challenges posed by repeat low level offenders and protective custody cases. Board members also asked about the state law that requires intoxicated persons taken into protective custody in Concord to first be brought to the hospital before they may be taken to jail.

Vote on Police Department Annual Report

A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2025 annual report for the Concord Police

Department.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Having met a quorum earlier in the meeting, a motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilor Jennifer Kretovic and seconded by Steve Edwards. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.