CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

Public Safety Advisory Board
Thursday August 20, 2026 (3:00 PM) – City Council Chambers
DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Andrew (Drew) Biemer, Bouzned (Moe) Djabelarbi, Steve Edwards, Jessica Eskeland, Councilor and Chair Amanda Grady Sexton, Natch Greyes, Kate Lipman, Councilor Jim Schlosser, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic
City Staff Present: Fire Chief Chisholm, Interim Police Chief Barrett Moulton, Deputy Police Chief Casey, Police Social Worker Nicole Petrin, Police Social Worker Sara Curran, Deputy Chief Patrick Ofrias
Guest: Nikki Haas, Project Director, Committee for Concord's Plan to End Homelessness.
Minute Taker: Taryn Davidson and Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton

Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes
A motion was made by Councilor Kretovic and seconded by Drew Biemer to approve the minutes from June 18, 2026. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Extreme Heat / Cooling Center Plan
Nicole Petrin, Concord Police Social Worker, and Nikki Haas, Project Director for the Committee for Concord's Plan to End Homelessness, presented a proposed community cooling plan for periods of extreme heat. Ms. Haas explained that Concord does not currently have a formal cooling plan for vulnerable residents. During a period of extreme heat over the July 4th weekend, an informal cooling location was established through the efforts of City Councilors and community partners. Based on that experience, several nonprofit organizations have expressed willingness to participate in a more formal plan provided that the City also participates as a partner. The organizations are not seeking financial assistance from the City.

The proposed cooling plan would generally mirror the City's winter warming plan, although overnight accommodations would not be necessary. Cooling centers would operate during the hottest portion of the day, generally between approximately 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., when weather conditions meet an established threshold. The current proposal uses a National Weather Service heat-index threshold of approximately 95 degrees when conditions are considered unhealthy for vulnerable populations.

The cooling centers would be available to the general public, including older adults, families without adequate air conditioning, individuals experiencing homelessness, and others vulnerable to extreme heat. Participating organizations and service providers would assist with communicating when cooling centers are activated.

Ms. Haas said that community partners are asking the City to consider making municipal facilities available as part of the plan, including the Green Street Community Center and West Street Ward House.

Councilor Kretovic suggested that Beaver Meadow Golf Course also be considered because of its location, public accessibility, and air-conditioned facilities. Members generally agreed that City staff should assess which municipal properties would be best suited for this purpose rather than limiting the plan to predetermined locations.

Members discussed operational and public safety considerations, including individuals subject to protective orders or bail conditions, registered sex offenders, interactions among individuals who may be prohibited from contact with one another, staffing and volunteer training, liability, and whether additional police or emergency response resources would be necessary.

Chief Moulton explained that the Police Department routinely manages similar situations in shelters, social service agencies, businesses, and other public locations. Police Social Worker Petrin added that local service organizations frequently coordinate around protective orders and other restrictions and that training could be provided to cooling-center staff and volunteers regarding appropriate responses and when to contact law enforcement.

Members emphasized that the cooling plan should clearly communicate that the service is intended for anyone vulnerable to extreme heat and is not solely a homelessness initiative. Members also discussed the importance of reviewing potential municipal liability, identifying appropriate City facilities, communicating with surrounding neighborhoods when locations are selected, and providing flexibility for activation during unusual weather conditions outside the typical summer period.

An initial motion to refer the proposal directly to the City Council was discussed and subsequently withdrawn in favor of completing additional staff review before making a formal recommendation. By consensus, members agreed to table the matter while additional information is gathered regarding potential City locations, operational considerations, legal and liability issues, and other elements of the proposed plan. Ms. Haas and Ms. Petrin will work with the Chiefs and other City staff and return to the PSAB with a more developed proposal.

Merrimack River Safety

Councilor Kretovic raised concerns regarding water safety along the Merrimack and Contoocook Rivers following a recent drowning and correspondence from an individual who previously lost a loved one.

Councilor Kretovic noted that areas where waterways converge can have strong currents that may not be apparent from the surface and that drownings have occurred at numerous locations along the Merrimack River over the years. She recommended that the City consider warning signage at locations where people commonly access the river.

Potential locations discussed included the confluence of the Contoocook and Merrimack Rivers, Sewalls Falls, City boat launches, the area near the Douglas N. Everett Arena, the Second Street area, and other commonly used fishing or swimming access points.

Members discussed whether signs should be limited to locations presenting the greatest risk so that warnings retain their effectiveness. The Board also discussed the importance of easily understood messaging, potentially including multiple languages and/or universal symbols, because not all river users speak English as their primary language.

Chief Moulton agreed to contact the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to determine whether established river-safety signage or recommended warning language is already available. Members also discussed reviewing FEMA or other emergency-management guidance.

Because the Merrimack River is a federal waterway, the Board discussed whether federal approvals or standards could apply to signage. Members noted that signs placed on City-owned land may present different legal considerations than signs placed within or immediately adjacent to the waterway.

Chief Moulton will consult with New Hampshire Fish and Game regarding existing signage, recommended language, and high-risk locations. City legal staff may be consulted as necessary regarding placement of signs and any applicable state or federal requirements.

Future Agenda Items

Chair Grady Sexton advised Members that the City Council has referred an item concerning tobacco use and potential regulation of certain tobacco-related businesses to the Public Safety Advisory Board. Chair Grady Sexton will contact the individual who originally proposed the ordinance so that he may attend a future meeting and provide background information if interested/available. The Chair will also consult with the City Solicitor regarding Concord's existing regulations and approaches taken by other municipalities. The item will be scheduled for either the September or October meeting depending upon the availability of the interested parties.

Downtown Public Safety

Councilor Kretovic requested that the issue of downtown public safety be placed on a future agenda. She reported experiencing safety concerns and hearing from downtown property owners, business owners, employees, and residents regarding late-night noise, aggressive or disruptive behavior, harassment, public intoxication, individuals experiencing behavioral health crises, and other activity affecting perceptions of safety.

Councilor Kretovic noted concerns raised by women working downtown who walk between their workplaces and parked vehicles during evening hours. She suggested obtaining data to determine whether reported experiences reflect a measurable increase in incidents and whether similar concerns exist in other commercial areas of the City.

Chair Grady Sexton stated that she has also heard concerns from downtown residents and businesses and that a relatively small number of individuals appear to be responsible for a recurring portion of the disruptive activity.

Chief Moulton discussed the Police Department's experience responding to individuals experiencing mental health crises, substance misuse, and other behavioral challenges. He described recent cases in which the Police Department and Police Social Workers worked with providers and agencies in other communities to connect individuals with appropriate services.

Members discussed the limitations police may face when disruptive or concerning behavior does not constitute a criminal offense. Chief Moulton encouraged residents and businesses to continue reporting incidents so that the Department can identify trends, investigate specific concerns, and direct patrol resources appropriately.

Jessica Eskeland stated that, as a downtown resident and employee, she has personally observed a significant increase in aggressive and harassing behavior and has heard similar concerns from downtown business owners and other women. She emphasized that her concern relates to individuals engaging in threatening, aggressive, or volatile behavior and should not be equated with homelessness generally. Members discussed the distinction between ongoing public-safety concerns and the separate obligation to protect human life during extreme weather emergencies. Members also noted that individuals experiencing homelessness may themselves be targets of aggressive or threatening behavior.

Councilor Kretovic suggested working with Intown Concord and the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce on a survey of businesses to better understand the nature, locations, frequency, and timing of public-safety concerns. Possible responses discussed included targeted patrols, examination of existing ordinances, possible policy changes, and other strategies informed by collected data.

Members also discussed concerns regarding unattended shopping carts and personal belongings blocking sidewalks, business entrances, and accessible routes. Chief Moulton described the practical and legal challenges involved when the property represents an unhoused individual's personal possessions. Members discussed whether additional partnerships or storage options could help address the issue while preserving accessibility and treating affected individuals respectfully.

Councilor Kretovic advised that she would be meeting with the President of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce and would begin a conversation regarding whether the Chamber would be interested in assisting with the development and distribution of a business survey.

A motion was made by Ms. Kate Lipman and seconded by Ms. Jessica Eskeland to place downtown public safety on the September agenda. Members unanimously agreed to continue the discussion at its September meeting, including consideration of a potential business survey and available public-safety responses.

Public Safety and the City Master Plan

Chief Chisholm raised the upcoming City Master Plan process and recommended that public safety be specifically incorporated into the planning effort. He noted that prior master planning efforts have not necessarily included a detailed analysis of how anticipated residential and commercial growth will affect police, fire, and other public-safety services.

Members discussed the importance of evaluating projected growth alongside future public-safety needs, including personnel, apparatus, facilities, service demand, station locations, response volumes, and other infrastructure needs. Members agreed that incorporating measurable data, best practices, and projected demand into the Master Plan would provide a stronger basis for future public-safety investments.

Members also discussed participating directly in the Master Plan's community-engagement process and reviewing the existing engagement schedule to determine whether an additional Public Safety Advisory Board session would be beneficial.

Ms. Kate Lipman moved that the Board issue a report recommending that the City's Master Plan process include an analysis coordinating anticipated City growth with future public-safety needs, including personnel, apparatus, facilities, potential future facility locations, service capacity, and community engagement. The motion was seconded by Mr. Drew Biemer. The motion passed with no dissenting votes.

The recommendation will be transmitted to the City Council and the appropriate Master Plan/Planning Board process and members of the PSAB are encouraged to attend upcoming Master Plan meetings.

State Funding for Police and Fire Responses to State Properties

Councilor Kretovic provided a brief follow-up regarding prior discussions about State reimbursement to the City for police and fire responses involving State properties. Councilor Kretovic reported that she and Chief Chisholm are working to compile supporting service-calls and cost data develop, and that legislation may be filed to increase State funding based upon the current level and cost of public-safety services Concord provides to State facilities.

Member Comment

Ms. Jessica Eskeland addressed comments made by the Ward 5 City Councilor at a recent City Council meeting regarding social districts. Ms. Eskeland stated that the Ward 5 Councilor had made allegations regarding her participation in discussions on the topic of social districts. Ms. Eskeland stated that although her firm represents a beverage distributor, the client did not communicate with her regarding the social district proposal, had no involvement in the issue, and had no interest in its outcome. She stated that she takes her ethical responsibilities, integrity, and transparency seriously and would have recused herself had a conflict existed.

Ms. Eskeland expressed concern that publicly questioning the integrity of volunteer board members without a factual basis could discourage residents from serving on City boards and committees. Chair Grady Sexton thanked Eskeland for her service and expressed appreciation for the time and commitment of all Board members.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Kretovic and seconded by Ms. Kate Lipman. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Grady Sexton adjourned the meeting at 4:21 p.m.