City of Concord

City Council

Meeting Minutes - Final

Thursday, June 4, 2026 | **5:30 PM** | **City Council Chambers, 37 Green Street, Concord, NH 03301**

The City Council Meeting will begin immediately following the Finance Committee Work Session, which starts at 5:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call.

Present: 15 - Councilor Stacey Brown, Mayor Byron Champlin, Councilor Mark Davie, Councilor Nathan Fennessy, Councilor Jeff Foote, Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton, Councilor Michele Horne, Councilor Aislinn Kalob, Councilor Fred Keach, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Councilor Judith Kurtz, Councilor Jim Schlosser, Councilor Kris Schultz, Councilor Ali Sekou, and Councilor Brent Todd

3. Agenda overview by the Mayor.

Public Hearings

4A. Resolution fixing and determining the amount of money to be appropriated by the City of Concord for the Fiscal Year 2027 ending June 30, 2027 for the General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Enterprise Funds, Debt Service Funds and De Minimis Accounts.

Action: Mayor Champlin opened the Public Hearing on the proposed budget for all items. Mayor Champlin noted there would be a two minute timeline for public testimony.

Charles Russell, Ward 5 resident, questioned why City Council has not tapped into approximately $3.2 million dollars from the Downtown Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) to help balance the budget, pay off the bonds, and close out the district. He further raised his concerns about the cuts being made and emphasized that the citizen's need tax relief.

Jessica Vaughn-Martin, Executive Director of the Thrive Survivor Support Center, formerly known as the Crisis Center of Central New Hampshire, expressed her

gratitude for the support that the City Council has provided for the work Thrive does. She spoke about her strong support of the FY27 appropriation of $12,500 and noted the services that will be provided to survivors in Concord with the approval of the funding.

Council showed their gratitude for the difficult and important work that Thrive provides. Councilor Todd thanked the organization for the critical services the Thrive Center provides to those in need. Councilor Kretovic highlighted the prevalence of abuse, noting that one in four people are survivors. Councilor Brown shared that a constituent had recently experienced difficulty contacting the Thrive Center and expressed hope that those roadblocks could be addressed. Councilor Sekou also shared his support and appreciation for the services the Thrive Center provides, emphasizing the importance of its services to the immigrant community, whose members may be hesitant to come forward. He further noted that the organization's role is important for promoting public safety within the community.

Ms. Vaughn-Martin mentioned that there is a 1-866 number that is available, emphasizing to the community that they are providing services every day.

Elyse McKay, Thrive Interim Chair and resident of Ward 6, expressed her deep gratitude for the support of the City Council and the ongoing support of Thrive and its survivors. She noted that the organization serviced nearly 1,200 survivors and provided more than 10,000 services in 2025, with over one-third of those benefiting Concord residents. She emphasized the importance of the prevention programs, particularly in light of uncertain state and federal funding, and stated that the City's $12,500 will fund critical services and public safety initiatives.

Terri Page, Transportation Director for the Community Action Program Belknap-Merrimack Counties who directly oversees Concord Area Transit (CAT), expressed her appreciation for the City Council's hard work and ongoing support. She thanked the Council for recognizing the important services that CAT provides to both residents and businesses in Concord. Council asked for Ms. Page to share what the impact will be of the funds that the Finance Committee approved. Ms. Page discussed the impact of the funding, explaining that the funds will help meet CAT's FY27 budget needs and provide the required local match funds to access available federal funding. The funds will help to stabilize the budget, which will allow CAT to pursue additional funds in future years and continue to expand transit services.

Councilor Keach acknowledged the downshifting from the State of NH and asked Ms. Page how those changes have affected CAT. Ms. Page explained that one direct impact has been the inability to provide staff with pay increases over the past three years, despite rising inflation. She also noted that CAT's bus fleet is aging, which increases maintenance costs, therefore she is actively pursuing funding opportunities and other avenues to replace busses.

Councilor Todd noted that the funds from City Council may not always be available and that it was prudent for CAT to reach out to local businesses for further support and explain that the funding might not always be available. He emphasized his support and appreciation for the services CAT provides to the community.

Cara Meeker, Ward 7 resident and Concord School Board member, stated that she was speaking on her own behalf and not representing the School Board. She expressed her appreciation for the City Council's service and acknowledged the difficult budget decisions facing both the City and the School Board. She emphasized the importance of continued collaboration, and voiced her support for future improvements to Memorial Field. She commended City staff for their professionalism, knowledge, and diligence throughout the budget process.

Justin Kantar, Vice President of the Concord Firefighter's Union, thanked the City Council for its continued commitment to public safety and noted the strong community support for the Fire Department. He spoke in support of reestablishing Engine 1, noting that Concord operates the busiest fire engines and ambulances in the state and continues to experience increasing demand for services as the community grows. He emphasized that restoring Engine 1 is a part of a long-term plan that will require continued investment and he encouraged the City Council to consider the proposal in order to meet future public safety needs. He invited the Council to participate in a ride-along to better understand the operational demands.

Mayor Champlin expressed his appreciation for the working relationship with Mr. Kantar. He emphasized that the key takeaway from the budget process should be that the tax payers are stressed, noting that the highest City expense is personnel. He noted prior collective bargaining decisions were made to improve recruitment and retention, with the understanding that those decisions would have a financial impact. He encouraged continued awareness of affordability concerns for residents, and asked that the message be conveyed to the unions.

Councilor Kretovic expressed appreciation for the City's public service efforts and noted concerns about indicators in the budget, particularly regarding response and wait times. She stated that any decline in response performance would be a step backward and acknowledged awareness of these challenges among City Council. She also referenced the Council's commitment to prioritize economic development and to make the City more business-friendly, noting that growth will require an expansion of services. She affirmed the City Council's support for continued investment in public safety, noting that while such support may not occur this year, efforts are underway to address those service needs.

Mr. Kantar read the names of the four individuals who were lost to fires in the City of Concord in the past two years: Alexis Palmacci, Darlene Phillips, Ronald Fowler, Jr., and Alan Thorgerson. He noted the common theme among those four fires was that operations were resource limited. He noted that at the end of the day, it will be people in seats that will make an impact to help prevent these losses.

Councilor Todd noted that reestablishing Engine 1 at Central Station would significantly improve response times to the Penacook area, particularly when Engine 5 is unavailable. He expressed support for the proposal and emphasized the importance of careful long-term planning because of the financial impact of the truck as well as the increased cost in staffing in order to avoid skyrocketing expenses. He thanked Mr. Kantar for his work and dedication.

Robert Washburn, Ward 8 resident, spoke regarding the Opportunity Corridor and stated that terminating it would reduce the budget by approximately 6%. He questioned the need to continue the TIF district, citing uncertainty around the project timeline and financing for I-93. He stated that he supports the Storrs Street Extension, but recommended terminating the TIF district. He also suggested the budget be provided earlier in the year to allow for more time to review and encouraged the Finance Committee to identity potential budget reductions throughout the year for Council consideration. Lastly, he questioned why impact fees have not been updated.

Councilor Todd noted that there is an Impact Fee Committee working on these issues, and the Committee may bring recommendations in the near future. He further noted that the process is complex, and the Committee is working on preparing a well-informed recommendation to the Council.

Councilor Keach asked whether TIF districts have value initially. Mr. Washburn

responded that they do, but cautioned against expanding them over time, noting that state law allows for expansion under certain conditions. He clarified that the duration of a TIF district is tied to the length of the association bond issue. He stated that once bonds are retired, surplus funds remain and suggested those funds could be applied to reduce the current tax burden. He reiterated support for the concept of TIF districts as an investment in infrastructure, while emphasizing the need to evaluate the benefits.

Councilor Brown asked Mr. Washburn to share his professional background. Mr. Washburn stated that he was a Certified Public Accountant and formerly operated an investment advisory practice. He also noted that he previously served as the Controller for the New Hampshire Finance Authority and for a period of time on the Crime Commission.

There being no further testimony, Mayor Champlin declared the public hearing closed.

4B. Resolution repurposing Capital Project Funds for use in the Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Improvement Program and Annual Closeout of Capital Projects; together with a report from the Director Office of Management & Budget.

Action: All public testimony was heard at the start of the Public Hearing session.

4C. Resolution appropriating for Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027) the sum of $22,026,600 for Capital Projects, authorizing the issuance of Bonds and Notes in the sum of $18,018,600, accepting the sum of $950,000 in Capital Transfers, and authorizing the use of $3,058,000 in Reserve Funds for various Capital Projects more specifically identified in the budget document.

Action: All public testimony was heard at the start of the Public Hearing session.

4D. Ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Title I, General Code; Chapter 1, Government Organization; Article 1-5, Fees, Fines, and Penalties, Schedule I, by amending Chapter 9, Water, Section 9-1-6 Water Use Rates, Section 9-1-8 Water Fixed Charges, Section 9-3-8 Sewer Use Rates, and Section 9-3-8(a) Sewer Fixed Charges.

Action: All public testimony was heard at the start of the Public Hearing session.

City Council entered a recess at 10:26 p.m.

At 11:06 p.m., Council reconvened and the Mayor entertained a motion to suspend the rules to meet after 11:00 p.m.

Councilor Kretovic moved to suspend the rules to continue the meeting after 11:00 p.m. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Grady Sexton and passed by majority vote.

Deputy City Manager Finance Brian LeBrun noted that there are two packets. The first packet contains the capital budget, and the cover sheet outlines the changes made to the capital plan, including fire station improvements and a $350,000 reduction, intersection safety improvements with a $70,000 addition, a $50,000 reduction for the golf course clubhouse and maintenance buildings, and a $35,000 reduction for golf course equipment.

He stated that the resolutions have been updated to reflect these changes, and the bonding amount has been revised to $17,583,600. He explained that this figure requires a two-thirds vote of the City Council for adoption of the remaining capital projects.

Deputy City Manager Finance Brian LeBrun referred to the packet labeled with the green cover, noting that it includes the details of the adjustments made prior to finalizing the budget changes. The first items address the freezing of positions, reflecting multiple positions originally discussed. The transfer from the Solid Waste Fund is shown as a reduction, and the fund itself is reduced in the resolution. The Deputy Police Chief position is also shown as a reduction. He noted the City Manager elected to use $175,000 in additional funds from the Unassigned Fund Balance of up to $1.2 million, resulting in a total of $1,025,000, which is less than originally authorized.

Deputy City Manager Finance Brian LeBrun also referenced adjustments to grant funding for events, changes to transfer in from the Economic Development Reserve, and cap funding and transfer in from the Economic Development Reserve, along with other expense reductions to meet the targeted budget goal of 4%. He noted that on the second page of the document, under the resolution, the overall budget change for FY27 is shown as 3.93% in the far-right column, which is below the 4% target previously requested, with a proposed tax rate of $10.58.

City Manager Aspell began by referring to the green sheet, starting midway down at the City Manager section, noting that the other reductions listed had already been previously identified. He stated that the $4,000 UNH sustainability contribution is funding provided to the University of New Hampshire. In Human Resources, the $3,900 reduction relates to benefits consulting services, which can be absorbed through Harvard, the City's health insurance firm. A Community Smart expense reduction in Finance reflects a transition to cloud-based services, which he indicated can be managed within existing resources.

City Manager Aspell also noted under City Council, the $1,200 ICLEI expense was identified as unnecessary this year following discussions with energy staff. Human Resources staffing efficiencies account for an additional reduction of $41,866 due to internal changes. In the Library, the Hoopla program for online audio books would be eliminated as part of the reduction. In Parks and Recreation, funding for cemetery preservation work, including headstone repair, would be reduced by approximately half, resulting in fewer staff assigned to that work this year while maintaining some level of service.

He also noted the referral bonus program would be discontinued, as hiring challenges, particularly in public safety, have largely been addressed. The Assessing Department would forego a $3,000 training seminar. IT reductions would eliminate funding for unscheduled software upgrades, with the expectation that departments operate within existing systems. Finally, downtown hand-shoveling services related to snow removal would be eliminated, resulting in reduced supplemental clearing in downtown areas during snow events.

Councilor Todd asked, given the 3.93% increase, what the dollar impact would be on a property valued at $400,000. Mr. LeBrun responded that the annual increase on a $400,000 home would be approximately $163, compared to $224 under the prior calculation. Councilor Foote asked what the actual spending increase would be if they did not use the Unassigned Fund balance. Later in the meeting, Mr. LeBrun noted that if the Unassigned Fund Balance had not been increased the tax rate would have been 4.27% instead of 3.93%.

Councilor Sekou thanked staff for their work. The Mayor concurred, commending staff for their efforts and thanking the City Manager and staff for their hard work, acknowledging the demands placed on them throughout the process.

Public Hearing Action

5. Resolution fixing and determining the amount of money to be appropriated by the City of Concord for the Fiscal Year 2027 ending June 30, 2027 for the General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Enterprise Funds, Debt Service Funds and De Minimis Accounts.

Action: Mayor Champlin requested a motion to approve the revised resolution. Councilor Grady Sexton moved approval of the revised resolution. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Keach.

Councilor Brown advised Mayor Champlin that she was recusing herself from voting on all items related to the Concord Police Department. Councilor Kalob advised Mayor Champlin that she was recusing herself from voting on any items related to Thrive Survivor Support Center.

The motion passed by the required two-thirds majority.

6. Resolution repurposing Capital Project Funds for use in the Fiscal Year 2027 Capital Improvement Program and Annual Closeout of Capital Projects; together with a report from the Director Office of Management & Budget.

Action: Councilor Fennessy moved approval of the resolution. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Kurtz.

Councilor Brown advised Mayor Champlin that she was recusing herself from voting on all items related to the Concord Police Department. Councilor Kalob advised Mayor Champlin that she was recusing herself from voting on any items related to Thrive Survivor Support Center.

The motion passed with one dissenting vote.

7. Resolution appropriating for Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027) the sum of $22,026,600 for Capital Projects, authorizing the issuance of Bonds and Notes in the sum of $18,018,600, accepting the sum of $950,000 in Capital Transfers, and authorizing the use of $3,058,000 in Reserve Funds for various Capital Projects more specifically identified in the budget document.

Action: Mayor Champlin requested a motion to approve the revised resolution. Councilor Kurtz moved approval of the revised resolution. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Kretovic.

Councilor Brown advised Mayor Champlin that she was recusing herself from voting on all items related to the Concord Police Department. Councilor Kalob advised Mayor Champlin that she was recusing herself from voting on any items related to Thrive Survivor Support Center.

The motion passed by the required two-thirds majority.

8. Ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Title I, General Code; Chapter 1, Government Organization; Article 1-5, Fees, Fines, and Penalties, Schedule I, by amending Chapter 9, Water, Section 9-1-6 Water Use Rates, Section 9-1-8 Water Fixed Charges, Section 9-3-8 Sewer Use Rates, and Section 9-3-8(a) Sewer Fixed Charges.

Action: Councilor Fennessy moved approval of the ordinance. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Grady Sexton and passed with one dissenting vote.

Comments, Requests by Mayor, City Councilors

Action: There were no additional comments by City Council.

Mayor Champlin expressed his appreciation to City staff for their hard work on the FY27 budget.

Comments, Requests by the City Manager

Adjournment

Action: Councilor Keach moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:18 p.m. The motion was duly seconded by Councilor Todd and passed unanimously.

A true copy, I attest:

Deborah Tuite
Deputy City Clerk