

FINAL

LEBANON CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES Tuesday, April 23, 2024 5:30 p.m. Council Chambers

Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/Live

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Tim McNamara, Assistant Mayor Clifton Below, Erling Heistad, Karen Liot Hill, Christian Simon, George Sykes (late), Douglas Whittlesey, Devin Wilkie, and Karen Zook

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Shaun Mulholland, Deputy City Manager David Brooks, City Clerk Jaseya “Josie” Ewing, Director Cyber Services Perry Eaton, Human Services Director Lynne Goodwin, Deputy Library Director Amy Lappin, Finance Director Vicki Lee, Deputy Finance Director Alesia Williams, Chief Innovation Officer Melanie McDonough, Director of Planning & Development Nathan Reichert, Recreation, Arts & Parks Director Paul Coats

-
1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor McNamara called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
 - City Manager Shaun Mulholland announced the meeting criteria for the public.

2. **ANNUAL WORK SESSION: PRESENTATION OF DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES**

HIGH PERFORMING GOVERNMENT: (NOTE: All detailed information regarding the Strategic Plans and Action Items can be found on [pages 2-14](#), Council agenda packet.)

City Manager Mulholland noted this is the second year the City is making updates and changes to the Strategic Plan. We had two sessions for input on strategic planning, one with the business community and one with the public. There were a number of suggestions made (i.e., having video blogs). Part of that is exposing different members of the staff, as well as elected officials to the public. We used part of the NH ICMA (International City Managers Association) model for budgeting.

At this session, the Council reviewed five (5) of the ten (10) functional areas of the City’s government and focused on things that have change and current status updates as listed below:

- High Performing Government
- Housing and Neighborhood
- Financial Stability and Efficiency
- Social Health & Justice
- Recreation, Arts, & Park

City Manager Mulholland noted that in the category of High Performance Government nothing has changed from the past except adding a new Strategic Objective 1.7 (below) and explained what Chief Innovation Officer Melanie McDonough has done for training staff and her involvement with regional/national associations involved with AI (Artificial Intelligence) initiatives, regulations, etc. to make government more effective.

City Manager Mulholland requested the Council to send any proposed language changes to him/city staff

and these could be added for the May 1, 2024 City Council meeting for the public’s review.



High Performing Government

Strategic Objectives

- 1.1 Operate City government at a very high level of Transparency. To the extent possible government documents are available in digital formats through the City's website minimizing the need to make requests to staff.
- 1.2 Recruit, Develop, and Retain trained and qualified City staff.
- 1.3 Enhance process innovation using technology, data, and key performance objectives.
- 1.4 Advocate at the Regional, State, and Federal level.
- 1.5 Enhance the credibility of the City's government.
- 1.6 Enhance community engagement.
- 1.7 Implement and operationalize artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to align with our AI Policy (ADM-143).

Responsible Groups

City Departments

- City Clerk
- City Manager
- Cyber Services
- Human Resources
- Library
- Planning and Development

Boards and Committees

- City Council
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Commission

Partners

- Hypertherm

Vision Statement

The city government has to be responsive to the needs of its residents, businesses and partners. The delivery and/or the facilitation of the delivery of services is one of the cornerstones of effective local government. A responsive and effective city government does the following:

Transparency- the decision-making processes must be open and as accessible as possible to allow the public to participate. Government records need to be available, easily accessible, and in a timely manner.

Ethics- City officials and staff meet public expectations of very high ethical standards while representing the City. Ethical expectations directly relate to the credibility of the City and the view that people have of it. City officials comply with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Problem Solving- the expectation is that the City government is an organization that functions to identify and develop solutions to address problems and the needs of the community. Data-driven decision-making is operationalized when and where appropriate.

Teamwork- highly effective organizations are those that can bring together the players to achieve the mission. Our team consists of elected officials, appointed officials, staff, volunteers, service providers and our partners who work together to drive and achieve success.

Communication- an effective City government utilizes multiple modes of communication to inform residents, including emergency messaging, how-to information, education materials, opportunities, and the organization's activities. This must be timely, accurate, accessible, and sufficient to keep the public informed.

Engaging- the City takes proactive steps to engage the general public and key stakeholders in the development of public policy.

Efficiency- the City utilizes management practices and process review procedures such as LEAN to reduce wasted time and money while at the same time enhancing the quality of city services. City officials and staff operate in a culture of continuous quality improvement.

Technology- the City utilizes technology to enhance the quality, accessibility, timeliness and efficiency of City services.

Innovation- the City uses or develops innovative approaches to problem- solving and service delivery.

Director of Planning & Development Nathan Reichert and Deputy City Manager David Brooks reviewed the Strategic Objectives, the proposed Action Plans for each (as noted on [pages 4-14](#), Council agenda packet), and described what has been done in the City to date to accomplish the action plans.

Deputy City Manager David Brooks noted that Chief Innovation Office Melanie McDonough has updated the multi-step 911 process (Police Department, Public Works, Planning Department, GIS, and the State 911 Department of Safety) by identifying the steps in the process and then automating them.

Library Deputy Director Amy Lappin spoke about the Library's website noting it can now be translated into various languages.

Council/Staff Comments:

The Council discussed various ways to get the public involved (public engagement) because attendance at previous listen sessions has been low. Suggestions included speaking at the UVBA- Upper Valley Business Association; the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary; the Farmers' Market; taking advantage of events that are already happening within the City; and building more interactive pathways.

In response to Assistant Mayor Below's question regarding the Citizens Academy, Deputy City Manager David Brooks noted they had 16 new graduates and spoke about how they had similar concerns regarding public engagement and how this could be enhanced within the City.

Chief Innovation Officer Melanie McDonough spoke about the Strategic Objective of 1.7 regarding AI initiatives. She has been following the AI discussions coming down from the White House all the way to bigger and smaller cities and what they are doing with technology. As she engaged with all the different groups her take away is that (AI) is not going away and spoke about the products that are already using AI (i.e., Microsoft, etc.). The directive she sees coming from the Federal Government side is: How do we manage this? We can do this by identifying who our leaders are and making a plan.

Lebanon has developed an AI Policy and transparency plan to let people know what is being done within the City to help the City become more efficient, more accessible, and provide more services. The City is trying to be very transparent about what types of AI we are using, which will be part of the AI registry being created. The City also has a Technology Review Committee to review all the software coming into the City, which will be frequently reviewing the AI Policy. We have also done inhouse training courses, which are very specific to local government, so everyone understands what/what not to do with AI. On the City's intranet, a Resource Hub is being created where employees can go to get further training and addressed what would be placed into this Resource Hub. The idea is for the City to use AI only when it makes sense and what tools the City should use and gave examples. AI is just another phase in a shift in technology and there are opportunities for the City to really do a lot of good.

In response to Mayor McNamara's question regarding the use of AI automation to better manage utilities, the wastewater/water treatment plant, etc., Ms. McDonough noted there is already a lot of AI built into those systems. She would say that in the tools they are already using AI is there and has been around for a long time. What we are mostly talking about here is more of a generative AI that will allowing us to interact with it at every staff level. Using ChatGPT on water and utilities will not be happening and spoke about her reasons, noting this is one of the things the Technology Review Committee will be keeping track of.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD: (NOTE: All detailed information regarding the Strategic Plans and Action Plans can be found on [pages 16-24](#), Council agenda packet.)

Deputy City Manager David Brooks, Director of Planning & Development Nathan Reichert, and Human Resources Director Lynne Goodwin came forth to review the Strategic Objectives and Action Plans for this topic as listed on [pages 16-24](#), Council agenda packet and explained what was happening in the City to achieve the Action Plans for this item.

Strategic Objectives

- 2.1 Facilitate the healthy continuum of development/redevelopment of housing.
- 2.2 Work cooperatively to address homelessness.
- 2.3 Revise Land Use Regulations to limit barriers to development/redevelopment while nurturing neighborhood character.
- 2.4 Develop a comprehensive citywide housing strategy.
- 2.5 Develop policies and a plan to move new residential construction toward being zero carbon ready, being mindful of how collaboration with other stakeholders, planning regulations, zoning, and building codes might best support and encourage sustainable and affordable development such as through creative infill and construction of high-performance energy efficient buildings that can be run on renewable or zero-carbon energy.

2.6 Will be added to the Strategic Objectives. The topic will be “Develop more housing on City Owned properties” and will include the Action Plans.

Responsible Groups

City Departments

- City Manager
- Library
- Human Services
- Planning and Development

Boards and Committees

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Commission
- Downtown TIF
- Economic Development Committee (EDC)
- Heritage Commission
- Planning Board

Partners

- Housing Authority
- Tri-County CAP
- LISTEN
- Twin Pines Housing
- The Haven

Photo by John Merrill



Vision Statement

The City of Lebanon shall actively foster a diverse range of housing opportunities and choices for current and prospective residents, and will strive to promote the development of diverse, sustainable neighborhoods that reflect Lebanon's "small-town" character and distinctiveness.

The City of Lebanon shall encourage a range of housing options for all segments of the population. New housing development should contribute positively to existing neighborhoods and create safe and desirable new neighborhoods consistent with the other planning goals of the City as expressed in this Master Plan.

An inclusive community has a range of housing types to meet the needs of a diverse population. Those housing types include:

- Single Family
- Multi-Family (spanning duplexes to large apartment buildings)
- Elderly Housing
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Manufactured Housing
- Temporary Housing - Homeless Shelters and Transitional Housing Units

The housing inventory of the City must include a mix to meet the affordability needs of its residents such that no more than 30% of combined household income is committed to housing. That mix of housing affordability includes:

- Market Rate Housing
- Workforce Housing
- Low Income Housing

[Chapter 7 of the City's Master Plan](#) is incorporated into this Strategic Plan.

Access to safe shelter is a basic necessity for all people, the absence of which can result in severe health, social, and economic harms to both individuals and communities. The City of Lebanon shall seek to support its residents who have been afflicted by homelessness by establishing and facilitating the means by which the people of the City can prevent or overcome homelessness. The goal of the City is to ensure all residents have access to permanent, secure housing, and temporary housing is for many people a necessary step towards permanent housing and therefore a component of this goal.

Council/City Staff Comments:

Deputy City Manager David Brooks specifically spoke about what the State is trying to do with the 79-E Program, noting it is not clear how to use the new legislative condition tools for the housing and revitalization zones that were created over the past couple of years

In Mayor McNamara's opinion, he thought the legislature is relying on the 79-E Program as a silver bullet noting the City should be more cautious.

Deputy City Manager David Brooks said Lebanon could make better use of the 79-E Program to make sure we are targeting the use of this tool for projects that need it or would happen without it as opposed to the way we have used it for the past 4-5 times that these requests have come before the Council.

City Manager Mulholland noted that on May 8, 2024, the existing Policy will be discussed in more depth. This is part of the larger policy that deals with the City's financial situation to streamline this process and ways in which this could be done and explained his reasoning.

FINANCIAL STABILITY AND EFFICIENCY: (NOTE: All detailed information regarding the Strategic Plans and Action Plans can be found on [pages 25-31](#), Council agenda packet.)

Deputy Finance Director Alesia Williams came forth to review the Strategic Objectives and Action Plans for this topic as listed on [pages 25-31](#), Council agenda packet and explained what was happening in the City to achieve the Action Plans for this item. More time will be spent on this topic at the May 8, 2024 Council meeting.

Strategic Objectives

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 3.1 | Maintain a responsible debt management plan. |
| 3.2 | Maintain a long term strategy to mitigate tax rate and user fee spikes. |
| 3.3 | Advocate and seek funding at the State and Federal level to reduce the impact on property taxes and user fees. |
| 3.4 | Maintain adequate cash reserves to ensure cash flow, the ability to respond to emergencies and the resources to take advantage of opportunities. |

Responsible Groups

City Departments

- City Manager
- Finance
- Library
- Planning & Development

Boards and Committees

City Council

Partners



Photo by Patricia McGovern

Photo by Patricia McGovern

Vision Statement

The City strives to diversify its revenue streams to reduce the reliance upon the property tax as the primary source of revenue for general government operations. User fees have a direct relationship to the services provided and are commensurate with the actual cost of the services provided. The use of Unassigned Fund Balances in the General Fund as well as the enterprise funds is a strategy to minimize tax and fee rate spikes.

The Unassigned Fund Balance in the General Fund is healthy when it:

- is within a range of 15% to 19% of the current General Fund expenditure budget;
- provides a cash reserve to address emergencies;
- provides sufficient cash flow between semi-annual tax billings.

Financial planning is based on a long-term strategy to mitigate tax rate and user fee spikes. When possible, planning for capital projects in the six-year Capital Improvements Plan allows a more even spread of debt service payments.

The City's debt load is maintained within the statutory requirements and the City Council's Debt Management policy for all funds.

The City utilizes federal, state, and private grant funding to offset the cost of capital and operating expenses. Additionally, the City advocates in partnership with other municipalities and the New Hampshire Municipal Association for more state funding to offset the impact to local property taxes. The City takes active steps to transition education funding from the statewide and local property tax to a more equitable cost share with other revenue sources.

SOCIAL HEALTH & JUSTICE: (NOTE: All detailed information regarding the Strategic Plans and Action Plans can be found on [pages 32-41](#), Council agenda packet.)

City Manager Mulholland reviewed the Strategic Objectives and Action Plans for this topic as listed on [pages 32-41](#), Council agenda packet and explained what was happening in the City to achieve the Action Plans for this item.

Strategic Objectives

- 9.1 Develop and implement a citywide Equity Plan.
- 9.2 Maintain the City's ADA Transition Plan.
- 9.3 Implement equity in all policies, codes, charter and in the delivery of City services.
- 9.4 Build a welcoming community to people of all cultures, races, skin color, national or ethnic origin, language, religions, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, age, political opinion or activity, economic status, immigration status or housing status.
- 9.5 Develop the concept of Environmental Justice throughout the organization and the community.
- 9.6 Enhance connections and community well being.

Responsible Groups

Departments

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| • City Manager | • Library |
| • Human Resources | • Planning and Development |
| • Human Services | |

Boards and Committees

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| • City Council | • Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee |
| • Conservation Commission | • Planning Board |
| • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission | • Tree Advisory Board |

Partners

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| • Dartmouth Health | • Sustainable Lebanon |
| • SAU88 | • UV Business Alliance |

Vision Statement

The City supports and upholds the federal and state constitutions.

The City resolves the following:

- Preserving the public trust and promoting community identity, civic pride, and quality of life for all residents, regardless of race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, religious or political opinion or activity, immigration status, socio-economic status, or housing status.
- The City takes a leading role in protecting civil liberties, promoting inclusiveness, and providing equal protection under the law to all persons in the City.
- A diverse population supports a resilient economy and fosters a high quality of life for its residents and visitors, in accordance with the City's Sustainability Principles.
- That while Free Speech is protected under the First Amendment; we can speak out against and discourage hate speech as contrary to our values.

(continued)



Photo by Shawn Donovan

Vision Statement (continued)

- The City demonstrates its commitment to protecting its residents and visitors against discrimination on the basis of race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, immigration status, religious or political opinion or activity, socio-economic status, or housing status.
- The City takes a stand against ideologies of violence, hatred, and intolerance. The City denounces and rejects all ideologies based on discrimination, hatred, and intolerance, including racism, xenophobia, transphobia and homophobia, and condemns activities that promote these ideologies regardless of the targeted group.
- The City is committed to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, including in housing, education, employment, and healthcare, and will strive to ensure all of our actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect this commitment.



Photo by Marie Roberts

Council/Staff Comments:

Councilor Liot Hill spoke about the DEI Commission's discussions for possibly creating a Housing Board Task Force and felt the DEI, Planning Board, Economic Development Commission (EDC) and maybe LEAC (Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee) should all be a part of this task force. The Council should expect a joint request within the next couple of weeks to create a Housing Board Task Force.

Councilor Wilkie, member of DEI, concurred with Councilor Liot Hill, noting that even though the DEI has multiple projects, housing is probably the one that emerges most frequently. He also noted that communication with our community comes up frequently, especially with the people who are less likely to come to a Council meeting and suggested interactions with other cultural communities such as at the Listen Center Community dinners, events like the Farmers' Market, the Opera House's Nexus Festival, etc.

RECREATION, ARTS & PARKS: (NOTE: All detailed information regarding the Strategic Plans and Action Plans can be found on [pages 42-58](#), Council agenda packet.)

Recreation, Arts & Parks Director Paul Coats and Deputy Lebanon Libraries Director Amy Lappin reviewed the Strategic Objectives and Action Plans for this topic as listed on [pages 42-58](#), Council agenda packet and explained what was happening in the City to achieve their goals and Action Plans under their purview.

Strategic Objectives

- 4.1 Provide a wide array of cultural and recreational opportunities for residents across age and demographics groups in the City and in partnership with other entities in the Upper Valley.
- 4.2 Maintain and expand recreation infrastructure in the City including parks, athletic facilities, trails, and greenways.
- 4.3 Enhance the vitality of Arts & Culture in the City in cooperation with the arts community in the Upper Valley. This includes energizing the arts economy as well as opportunities for public art.
- 4.4 Celebrate the City's rich history and enhance the public's awareness of its history through multiple modalities.
- 4.5 Celebrate the City's diverse cultural makeup and vitality by providing/supporting opportunities allow the public to experience the diverse cultures in the Upper Valley.

Responsible Groups

Departments

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| • City Manager | • Planning and Development |
| • Library | • Recreation, Arts, and Parks |

Boards and Committees

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Arts and Culture | • Economic Development Committee (EDC) |
| • Conservation Commission | • Heritage Commission |
| • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEI) | • West Lebanon Revitalization Committee (WLRC) |
| • Downtown TIF | |

Partners

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • AVA Art Gallery | • Lebanon Outing Club |
| • CCBA | • Lebanon Youth Baseball |
| • Lebanon Historical Society | • UV Hockey Association |
| • Lebanon Opera House | • UV Music Center |

Vision Statement

Recreation

The City has a wide array of recreational opportunities available to its residents. Some programs are operated by the City while others are provided by not-for-profit entities and for-profit entities. A robust range of recreational opportunities has a positive impact on the physical and emotional health of our residents. The City's vision for Recreation is further outlined in Chapter 10: Recreation of the Master Plan.

Arts, Culture, and the Humanities

The City celebrates the arts, culture and the humanities in its various modalities. The City's recently created Arts and Culture Commission is the primary City body to advocate and advance the arts in the community. The City supports a vibrant partnership with a growing arts community to enhance opportunities for equitable participation and inclusion. The City continues to enhance opportunities for displays of art in public places to create a livelier living environment. The City's vision is further outlined in Chapter 12: Community Design and Civic Art of the Master Plan.

Parks

The City maintains parks in various parts of the City to enhance neighborhood environments and provide outdoor spaces for its residents to enjoy the outdoor world. Everything from athletic fields, the Storrs Hill Ski Area, the Mascoma River Greenway, the Northern Rail Trail and various nature trails and conservation areas provide a variety of opportunities to exercise and enjoy nature.

Libraries

Our vision is to be the hub of the community, a place where individuals of all ages and backgrounds can find the resources, technology, and support they need to achieve their goals and realize their full potential. We strive to create a dynamic and innovative library system that reflects the diverse needs and interests of our community and empowers everyone to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.



Photo by Sarah Riley

Council/Staff Comments:

Recreation, Arts & Parks Director Coats specifically noted that volunteerism is down and it is a struggle to make things happen within the City without it and gave examples. We really need to be thinking about unique new ways of having volunteer appreciation events throughout the year so we can make a culture around volunteering a bit more attractive. He also spoke about the uptick in vandalism

throughout the City and the costs and staff time it takes to remedy this.

Deputy Library Director Lappin also noted the libraries are struggling to offer free access for their programs and gave examples. They are constantly looking at some of the programming that others can afford but some cannot and try to offer programs at no cost for those residents who cannot afford them. She also highlighted building an Abenaki Heritage garden and an ADA compliant garden.

City Manager Mulholland suggested the Council send Staff and him any suggested strategic plan language changes as soon as possible. He also noted the last five (5) functional areas will be discussed on Thursday, April 25, 2024. There will be public comment on the Strategic Plan at the regular Council meeting on May 1, 2024. On May 8, 2024, the Council will hopefully adopt the changes and renew the Strategic Plan for the ensuing year. He emphasized the City is dealing with an unprecedented situation in terms of tax rate increases and we need to have a cohesive policy on how we are going to deal with this.

Councilor Liot Hill suggested that time be given at an upcoming meeting for the Council to share what their 2-3 top priorities are for the coming year.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Dona E. Gibson
Recording Secretary