

FINAL

**LEBANON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES
Wednesday, October 1, 2025, 5:30 p.m.
Council Chambers**

Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/Live

MEMBERS PRESENT: Assistant Mayor Devin Wilkie, Erling Heistad, Nicole Ford Burley, Laurel Stavlis, Christian Simon

SAU MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Lilian Maughan, Laila Volle, Joseph Castelot

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mayor Douglas Whittlesey, Timothy McNamara, George Sykes, and Karen Zook

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Andrew Hosmer, Deputy City Manager David Brooks, Superintendent Amy Allen, SAU Business Administrator Tim Ball, Director of Planning & Development Nate Reichert

1. Call to Order: Assistant Mayor Wilkie called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

2. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Discussion about the SAU Building (20 Seminary Hill, West Lebanon)

Superintendent Amy Allen explained that the SAU Building at 20 Seminary Hill is currently operating with a shared space for the district offices and the Lebanon Fire Department. A study group has been considering four options. The first is to continue with the use of the SAU Building for SAU offices with no changes. The second option would be to sell the building to a private developer. The third option would be to close the SAU Building down, leave it vacant for future undetermined plans, and move the SAU staff to another rented space. The fourth option is to consolidate the SAU staff after renovations to 1.5 floors and partner with the City or others for alternative uses. The group has met with a developer. Costs to operate the building and/or renovate the building are being considered.

Councilor Simon asked if there is a covenant on the building that could preclude making a sale or renovations easy. SAU Chair Maughan stated that the deeds for the building have been reviewed and there is nothing to preclude any of the four proposed options. Business Administrator Tim Ball explained that there is a new law which requires that a building for sale by a public school would have to first be offered to a charter school, if one was interested.

Councilor Simon stated that this building is a gem for the community, and he would hate to see it lost completely. He could see the City becoming a roommate in the building. City Manager Andrew Hosmer explained that both the Recreation and Human Services Departments are currently renting from the private sector, and it may be helpful to explore these possibilities further.

Councilor Stavlis echoed Councilor Simon's comments. This building could be a key to the revitalization of Downtown West Lebanon. The building is an opportunity for both West

Lebanon, and Lebanon as a whole. The building is part of West Lebanon's history. She asked if the Council could assign a representative to be a party to the ongoing discussions. SAU Chair Maughan stated that a Council member being assigned to the working group would be appropriate.

Joan Townsend, Ward 2, encouraged the groups to discuss the options with the Recreation Department. SAU Chair Maughan noted that Paul Coats, Director of Recreation, Arts, & Parks, is on the working group for this item.

B. Discussion about Dana House (3 Elm Street West, West Lebanon)

Superintendent Amy Allen explained that the City owns Dana House, and it is located on School District land. The SAU has a shed in the back of the property which is on City land. There have been some discussions regarding the use of Dana House and a potential adjustment for property lines.

Director of Planning and Development Nate Reichert explained that Dana House itself is the oldest known house in the history of Lebanon. The house is owned by and managed by the Department of Public Works within the City and sits on School District property. There have been many ideas over the years regarding how to reinvigorate the Dana House property. An initial thought was to have some form of a visitor center or museum but that never came to fruition. The Heritage Commission has more recently adopted the Dana House from a day-to-day perspective, with the first goal being to do no harm. In analyzing the property, one option would be to turn it into a house or a public use space. This would require significant lead and asbestos abatements. Bids for this were sought and came back significantly higher than what was expected. The ownership issue of having a City building on School District property also needs to be solved. This could be considered through a land swap between the City and the School for the Dana House and the storage/maintenance shed on City property. This would require an Article on the ballot. There is also land that fronts on the street in front of the Dana House and it is important to engage this area to get it back on the tax base and providing services to either the people who own it or to the City.

Councilor Stavis asked about the ownership of the entire piece of property. Mr. Reichert explained that there are contractual obligations which tie Dana House to the property. The owner of the property would have responsibilities to the Dana House. Dana House could be given its own lot and be transferred to a not-for-profit or left in the ownership of the City to create a long-term lease agreement with an entity to maintain Dana House as a private residence.

Councilor Ford Burley stated that most of the Heritage Commission's recommendations hinge on the land swap. A request for proposals was drafted in the hopes that a developer would step in and convert Dana House back to its original purpose, which was housing. Other options could be explored.

SAU Chair Maughan stated that she would like to hear more information about the numbers involved in the land swap proposal. Mr. Reichert explained that the first step would be to engage

a land surveyor, and this has a cost. A CDBG planning grant could also be sought to examine the building for mixed uses.

Councilor Stavis stated that the taxpayers of West Lebanon would not likely want to see the building sold to a private entity without having adequate input into the decision.

Ms. Volle stated that it is difficult to comment on potential future uses of the property without first knowing information about the acreage that could be part of a land swap.

Assistant Mayor Wilkie stated that it seems to make sense, in theory, that the Dana House should be on City property and the SAU shed should be on School District property. However, the School District also needs to attend to its own interests with regard to the property. It may be premature to put funding into a potential land swap until there is some decision regarding the building itself. It would be a shame for the City to lose the property, as long as it makes sense for it to remain.

Mr. Brooks stated that the property with the Dana House on it ranges from approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ acre-1 acre and the property with the shed on it is approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ of an acre.

Councilor Simon stated that both groups are part of the City of Lebanon. The project should move forward with the best interests of the taxpayers at heart. Councilor Stavis stated that she would like to see some sort of commitment to proceed forward on this item together. SAU Chair Maughan would like more information in order to delineate the options clearly, including what a land swap would look like.

Superintendent Amy Allen stated that, if the SAU were to continue and operate at 20 Seminary Hill, it could continue to have the conversation regarding reviewing the boundary lines and options for addressing the Dana House.

Councilor Heistad stated that Seminary Hill's original name was Hubbard. His grandfather was a Hubbard. Tilton Seminary was built with the Hubbard family and the Tilton family. 87.5% of the funding which went into it has been documented as coming from the two families. He hopes that the City can see the gifting that occurred to allow the seminary to be gifted to the City to function as a seminary. This is a wonderful asset for West Lebanon that needs to be maintained.

Assistant Mayor Wilkie stated that there seems to be plenty of interest in trying to make sure the boundary adjustment can be considered for the 2027 ballot, if the property remains in the City's hands.

C. Discussion of Potential Adjustment of Seminary Hill Property Boundaries

This item was discussed as part of the previous agenda items.

D. Budget

Superintendent Amy Allen stated that the Lebanon School District received a surprise bill of \$1,033,000 from the risk pool School Care. There will be an interest rate if the bill is not paid by a certain date and they will stop paying claims for the group. The proposal is to use some of the retained fund balance and some of this year's unexpended funds to cover the cost. More information will be provided to the School Board on October 8th. If funding is used from the retained fund balance, there will likely be a public hearing in November. The intention is to pay the bill before January and to not have any interruptions for service for employees and no impact to taxpayers.

SAU Business Administrator Ball explained that there will likely be around a 16% increase in healthcare premiums this year. Any increases for support staff will be proposed as a separate Warrant Article. The revenue for Special Education aid from the State this year will be higher than he estimated. There are not many new budget increases expected other than those previously discussed.

SAU Chair Maughan expressed the importance of moving into the budgeting process with the City as a united front.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Ford Burley MOVED for adjournment.

Seconded by Councilor Stavis.

****The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved by all members present (5-0).***

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude
Recording Secretary