FINAL

LEBANON CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
Thursday, November 13, 2025, 5:30PM
Council Chambers
Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/Live

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Mayor Douglas Whittlesey, Erling Heistad, Nicole Ford Burley, Timothy McNamara, Christian Simon, Laurel Stavis (remote), George Sykes and Karen Zook (remote)
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Assistant Mayor Devin Wilkie
STAFF PRESENT:	City Manager Andrew Hosmer, Deputy City Manager David Brooks, Human Services Director Lynne Goodwin, Airport Manager Carl Gross (remote), Fire Chief Jim Wheatley, Library Director Sean Fleming

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CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Whittlesey called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

- **City Manager Hosmer reviewed the meeting criteria for attendees.**

1.. Review of 2026 Budget - Question and Answer Session

A. HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT (Outside Human Services Agencies/Public Health Agencies)

Included in Agenda Packet: (Please refer to all supportive documents and detailed financial information, including line itemizations, which can be found on Pages 2-4, Council agenda packet)

Lynne Goodwin, Human Services Director, reviewed the Human Services Department budget.

BACKGROUND:

Ms. Goodwin explained that this budget includes a slight decrease in the Human Services line and much of that was planned. Since May 1st, she has been working 32 hours per week and using vacation time for the additional eight hours per week. As of January 1st, she intends to drop down to 35 hours per week for the remainder of her tenure with the City. The emergency winter shelter is also not planned to be open in December 2026, leading to a reduction in funding for shelter operations. The Department will need, at most, $120,000 to operate the shelter from January 1st through April 15th, 2026. There is also a modest decrease in outside human service agency funding. She reviewed achievement highlights of the Department over the past year.

Ms. Goodwin explained that, given the generous reimbursement of $30,000 for cold weather shelter funding and the fact that the Department has not yet overspent the line item for rent, which includes all housing related needs, she has reduced the budget for rent by $10,000. As of today, the Department has spent $138,500 from the rent line item.

Council/Staff Discussions:

Councilor Sykes noted that the shelter opened a bit late last year, January 8th, due to staffing issues. He asked about staffing for this December. Ms. Goodwin stated that the funding is available, as it was last year. There is a struggle to find the unique population of workers needed for these seasonal positions.

Jay Simms, Ward 2, asked about the direct assistance budget. Ms. Goodwin explained that the cold weather shelter reimbursement needs to be taken into account for this calculation. Mayor Whittlesey suggested that the reimbursement should be a revenue line item in the future.

- **OUTSIDE HUMAN SERVICES AGENGIES / PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES**

Included in Agenda Packet*:* (Please refer to all supportive documents and detailed financial information, including line itemizations, which can be found on Pages 5-6, Council agenda packet)

BACKGROUND:

Ms. Goodwin reviewed the outside service agencies budgets.

Council/Staff Discussions:

Councilor McNamara asked about the increase in the LISTEN line item by 44% from $62,400 to $90,000 as this has not traditionally been increased. Ms. Goodwin explained that LISTEN has received a record demand for services. She recommended a flat budget request, but LISTEN felt that they are seeing an unprecedented demand for services and requires additional funding at this time. Kristi Lenart-Rikert, Executive Director of LISTEN, explained that the request is for $90,000 for FY26. For the last two years, the City has generously granted over $62,000. The request for FY26 represents less than 8% of the value of services LISTEN will provide to Lebanon residents. Last year, LISTEN delivered $1,065,115 to Lebanon residents via direct and indirect assistance to 1,018 Lebanon households or 2,174 residents. 36% of residents served are new to LISTEN.

Councilor McNamara asked how the food pantry documents if someone is a Lebanon resident. Ms. Lenart-Rikert stated that basic demographics are requested from those who visit the pantry. Councilor McNamara stated that he would like to know if other communities in the Upper Valley make contributions to LISTEN.

Councilor McNamara suggested removing Hannah House and Upper Valley Community Nursing from the list as they have been zero funded for a couple of years.

Jennifer Mercer, Ward 3, asked if the City was able to receive cost recovery from other towns for their residents that utilize the overnight shelter. Ms. Goodwin explained that the towns of Canaan and Claremont will allow for their residents to be billed for this year. These towns did not reimburse the City for the past year. The State of Vermont also contributed $51,700 last year and is budgeted to contribute up to $66,200 for the 2025-26 shelter season.

B. MUNICIPAL AIRPORT FUND

Included in Agenda Packet*:* (Please refer to all supportive documents and detailed financial information, including line itemizations, which can be found on Pages 7-10, Council agenda packet)

Airport Manager Carl Gross reviewed the Municipal Airport Fund.

BACKGROUND:

Mr. Gross explained that in 2025 the Airport completed construction of Phase 1 of the parallel taxiway to Runway 1836. The Airport also relocated a navigation aid to Runway 1836, which will allow for Phase 2 of the taxiway construction to proceed. In 2026, the Airport will add 200' to the runway. The FAA found additional funds and is offering to move Phase 2 of the taxiway into 2026 funding. This would be a benefit for the Airport as the federal government would pay 95% of the costs in 2026 for the project. This will be brought before the Council for discussion. This would bring the City portion of the $4 million project to approximately $100,000. The major cost increases for the FY26 budget include insurance costs. The Airport is projecting an increase of roughly $80,000 in landing fees in 2026. On the revenue side, there was a proposed $68,000 transfer from the Airport Fund to cover operations in 2026, but with the new landing fees, this should not be needed. He reviewed the revenue and expense items.

Council/Staff Discussions:

Councilor Simon asked about the increase in the general supply line item. Mr. Gross explained that the increase is proposed to fund under seat charging stations and a charging table for Airport customers.

Councilor Heistad asked about potential legal expenses in the upcoming year. Mr. Gross explained that in 2026 the Essential Air Service contract goes out to bid, and he would like the previous lease agreement to be reviewed.

Jay Simms, Ward 2, asked about the proposed increase to the diesel fuel line item. He believes the Airport will be $18,000 over budget in this area. Mr. Gross stated that he used a five-year average of diesel fuel usage in order to run this calculation. In terms of diesel fuel, another 1,300 gallons for the Airport was recently ordered for the year.

Mr. Simms asked about the administrative overhead line item and noted that he would expect to see an increase in it.

C. FIRE DEPARTMENT:

Included in Agenda Packet*:* (Please refer to all supportive documents and detailed financial information, including line itemizations, which can be found on Pages 11-16, Council agenda packet)

Fire Chief Jim Wheatley reviewed the Fire Department budget.

BACKGROUND:

Chief Wheatley explained that in 2025 the Department is anticipating approximately $1.8 million in revenue. Revenue for FY26 is proposed to be $1.9 million. The bulk of that revenue is ambulance billing fees. The payer pool for the billing fees includes Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance companies. Approximately 20% of the payer pool is private insurance companies. There is a new piece of legislature that will that allows us to bill private insurance companies at 300% of the Medicare rate. This law applies to 20% of our total payer pool. This will require the Department to go in-network with insurance companies, which will be a contractual agreement. It will also eliminate balanced billing. This will have an impact on revenues, though it is yet unclear what the increase will be. This should take effect on January 1st. On the expenses side, the request this year is $5,815,820 which is essentially a 0% increase over last year. As part of last year's budget, the Department was unable to hire five firefighter/paramedics and instead hired firefighter/advanced EMTs. The lower salaries for these positions led to a reduction in the budget. The Department also reviewed its training budget in terms of overtime expenses. The new Station will have a training tower which will allow the Department to complete most of its technical rescue disciplines on site. Last year, the Department saw a large spike in workers compensation rates and there was a large drop this year. Also, the wages and benefits for the community paramedic and nurse's positions are 100% paid for by DH through the pilot program.

Chief Wheatley stated that the call volume for the Department is projected at 4,700 emergency calls this year. This is comparable to towns such as Londonderry, Derry, and Laconia. The operations divisions of those departments generally do not contain fewer than 40 full time employees. The City’s Department currently has 29 people in its operations division. There will be 30 once the fire inspector position is moved in. His request for staffing has not changed since 2022 when he stated that he would like to get to eight people on each shift. He is still seeking a net of two positions in the next few years.

Council/Staff Discussions:

Councilor McNamara asked how many of the Department staff live in Lebanon or within five miles of Lebanon. Chief Wheatley explained that the Department’s emergency callback policy is that someone has to live within 15 minutes to be eligible. There are currently eight members that live within the City of Lebanon, and 14 or 15 that live within the 15-minute callback radius.

Councilor Ford Burley asked about the uniform and protective clothing lines under the fire operations budget. Chief Wheatley explained that the protective clothing line was high last year due to the hiring of new people. The uniform line item was high partially due to anticipated new hires, but there was also a new State law that any station uniform has to be PFAS-free. Some of the uniforms were already PFAS-free but moving forward the Department should make every effort not to buy PFAS containing protective clothing.

Councilor Sykes asked for additional information regarding the number of inspections the Department has carried out over the last few years.

Councilor Simon asked about the intergovernmental revenue line and the reductions seen for paramedic intercepts. Chief Wheatley explained the reduction is due to a decrease in demand for this service.

Mayor Whittlesey asked about the Fire Ops Other Purchase Services line item. Chief Wheatley stated that this is for the EMS billing contract with ComStar. The Fire Prevention General Supplies line will likely be rolled into another line for future budgets.

Mayor Whittlesey asked about the Fire Facility Maintenance Electricity line being down 17%. Chief Wheatley stated that he reviewed a five-year utilization calculation using the old fire station. He has spoken with the electrical engineers who designed the new fire station and asked them for an estimate on the consumption in the building. The number he projected is approximately a 10% overage on what they estimated based on anticipated rates.

Jennifer Mercer, Ward 3, asked about the percentage of calls for other towns versus Lebanon. Chief Wheatley explained that the contracted towns of Grantham, Plainfield, and Enfield represent approximately 11% of the call volume and generate approximately 27% of the revenue. Beginning in 2026, the Department bills the towns for a flat fee per capita item, which includes wear and tear to the vehicles, staff time, overtime, etc., and bills the patients as well.

D. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FUND

Included in Agenda Packet*:* (Please refer to all supportive documents and detailed financial information, including line itemizations, which can be found on Pages 16-17, Council agenda packet)

Chief Wheatley reviewed the Emergency Management Fund.

BACKGROUND:

Chief Wheatley explained this budget is typically funded with $25,000 per year as a revolving fund. Some of that funding has been used recently to invest in two shelter trailers. One is a human shelter trailer for 150 people, and the other is a pet shelter trailer for 50 cat/dog sized animals. The Department's management plan is up to date and was last thoroughly updated in 2019-2020. The hazard mitigation plan was completed last year. He is working on a citywide continuity of operations plan, and a disaster recovery plan as well. He noted that the revolving fund was not funded with $25,000 this year due to the current balance of $194,000.

Council/Staff Discussions: None at this time.

E. LEBANON LIBRARIES:

Included in Agenda Packet*:* (Please refer to all supportive documents and detailed financial information, including line itemizations, which can be found on Pages 18-20, Council agenda packet)

Library Director Sean Fleming reviewed the Lebanon Libraries budget.

BACKGROUND:

Library Director Fleming explained that the proposed 10% increase in the proposed budget is due to adding a position back into the budget which was unfunded in the 2025 budget. This is a needed position for the Library. It is a professional position that works at the public service desk, and this person would be involved in a significant number of public service hours. This is an IT Librarian position. The position that was unfunded last year was a Systems Librarian position. The Systems Librarian position was merged with the IT Librarian position, creating one position due to the significant overlap between the two positions. He spoke with the head of Cyber Services for the City, and they cannot take on the additional workload at this time. At the current staffing level, the Library is able to maintain its current items but cannot take on anything new. One person in this position is unable to get that amount of work done.

Council/Staff Discussions:

Councilor McNamara asked how much of the $131,000 requested in additional full-time wages is for the new position. Library Director Fleming stated that the new position was budgeted at approximately $86,000 and is only budgeted for from April 1 onward in order to advertise for the position. Councilor McNamara questioned this position in comparison to the other budget item requests this year.

Mayor Whittlesey expressed concern with the phasing in of this position, as the amount requested is not the amount that will be needed for a full year.

Councilor Simon expressed concern that the Library, as a City Department, is no longer receiving a City service that is for all other departments. This should be reexamined. The Library's need could likely be covered without encumbering an additional position.

Mayor Whittlesey noted that some of the services provided by the IT Librarian are to the residents and not to the Department. Library Director Fleming explained that this is a professional Librarian position. The services of the IT Librarian position being sought cannot be replaced by the Cyber Services Department. The unfunded position has led the Library to be at a lower level staffing-wise than in the last 13 years. He is concerned with being able to retain the existing IT Librarian position.

Councilor Sykes asked if the Library tracks the instances of the digital librarians' interface with the public, as part of the rationale for this increase due to that. Library Director Fleming stated that reference interaction level is tracked but the nature of that interaction is not tracked. Many people come to the Library due to some amount of a digital divide.

Councilor McNamara stated that if the position was not funded for the year, the 11% increase would likely be reduced to approximately 4%. This is a significant difference in the overall budget. Mayor Whittlesey noted that the position was cut last year because it was vacant. He has previously spoken of restoring that position due to the public-facing component of it.

Councilor Ford Burley asked about the impact of closing two hours early in terms of personnel costs and operational savings. Mayor Whittlesey stated that this is an 8% reduction in the overall hours, but all wages are proposed to increase. Library Director Fleming stated that this will lead to a savings in the temporary seasonal wages and a shift for the Children's Librarian that will allow for more desk time to be covered by professional librarians. The Library Board of Trustees would not be opposed to considering restoring these hours, if the City would like to reinstall $25,000 back into the Library budget. The meeting rooms would not be available at the Lebanon Library when the Library is closed.

Mayor Whittlesey asked about the savings from closing early, as it does not seem to be reflected in the budget. Library Director Fleming explained that the previous City Manager put into place a wage range for temporary and seasonal employees and the Library followed suit last year. The Library is now planning to move people up through that range to recognize seniority and experience.

Mayor Whittlesey noted that the electricity line is proposed to increase 13% and asked for historical data on this from the past three years. Mayor Whittlesey asked if the heat pumps may be updated or replaced. Library Director Fleming stated that these are currently being replaced.

Jay Simms, Ward 2, asked if snow plowing and lawn care for the Library could be taken on by the DPW. Mayor Whittlesey asked that the City Manager consider this. Mr. Simms also suggested that user fees for meeting room rentals could be collected by the Trustees in order to reimburse the City for certain items. Library Director Fleming stated that he would ask the Trustees about this.

2. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude
Recording Secretary