

FINAL

**LEBANON CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, April 1, 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers**

Remote Via Microsoft Teams: LebanonNH.gov/Live

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Douglas Whittlesey, Assistant Mayor Devin Wilkie, Kellen Appleton, Nicole Ford Burley, Eric Cole, Andrew Faunce, Lori Key, and Laurel Stavis

MEMBERS ABSENT: Timothy McNamara

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Andrew Hosmer, Deputy City Manager David Brooks, Director of Public Works Jay Cairelli, Director of Planning and Development Nathan Reichert, DPW Administrative Services Manager Kelly Crate, City Assessor Michael Pelletier, City Engineer Rod Finley, DPW Assistant Director Christopher Kilmer, Finance Director Alesia Williams

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Whittlesey called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- City Manager Andrew Hosmer announced the meeting criteria for attendees.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Whittlesey led the Council in the Pledge.

3. BOARDS and COMMITTEE REPORTS (1st Quarter 2026)

Mayor Whittlesey announced that reports from LEAC, the Planning Board, and the West Lebanon Advisory Board were received by the Council.

Arts and Culture Commission: Assistant Mayor Wilkie

Assistant Mayor Wilkie updated the Council on the following:

- New event coming at the end of June
- Tunnel Event
- 250th U.S. Anniversary Celebration
- Nexus Arts Festival
- 2026 Poetry Contest

Conservation Commission: Sarah Riley, Chair

Chair Riley updated the Council on the following:

- Wetland applications
- Reviewed Special Exception on a stream crossing and Zoning Map
- Goals for 2026
- Mascoma Lake Watershed Program Management
- Migration Season: DPW is posting signs to make drivers aware of amphibian crossings

Tree Board: Sarah Riley member

Ms. Riley updated the Council on the following:

- Green Street Trees as part of a new Green Streets Initiative grant

Heritage Board: N. Ford Burley, Chair

Chair N. Ford Burley updated the Council on the following:

- First request(s) for Certificate of Approval under the Pattern Zoning Overlay District
- Master Plan Update – Historic Resources Chapter
- 250th U.S. Anniversary Celebration
- Focusing on public engagement and outreach
- Preservation Plans for the brick smokestack on the Woolen Mills Project
- Focus on the Soldiers’ Memorial to develop an accessibility Plan and long-range goals for the building

Joint City/School District Task Force: Mayor Whittlesey, Mayor

Mayor Whittlesey Updated the Council on the following:

- State Legislative impacts to School District
- SB 101: Changes the open enrollment for schools within the State of NH – will only pay \$9,200 at a Charter School rate/cost per student. If passed and signed by the Governor, it would override voter choice. Being closely watched because it could possibly be very expensive for the City.
- Health Care Trust costs: Research joint options to save money
- SAU building options for renting out space.
- New Fire Station now open
- City/School District Discussions regarding the Boys/Girls Club regarding Child Care Center.

4. PUBLIC FORUM: Mayor Whittlesey made the Public Forum announcement.

5. OPEN COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

In response to Councilor Key’s question regarding the utilization of the Landfill Gas to Energy Project (continued days when the system is not running at full capacity). Assistant Director of Public Works Christopher Kilmer noted they were aware this was not operating up to expectations and explained/ spoke about the ramp up and efficiency challenges of the system (i.e., problems with stabilizing the gas flow between microturbines; operational technical challenges/changes; the amount of gas the landfill can produce from its wells; State Regulations; the Vergent (contracted service and manufacturer of the microturbines) oversight contract; and, funding for the project. It is unlikely, in the future, that we would meet the 1K KWH, we just do not have enough gas in the system to run all five (5) of the turbines and spoke further about his reasoning.

- Councilor Key and Mayor Whittlesey requested a revision of the data analysis that would include the current operational costs and revenue.
- City Manager Hosmer noted it was a slow ramp up in 2025, so it is difficult to get the data necessary to make a determination regarding the efficiency of the turbines. He suggested more time be given (12 Mos.) before revisiting the trending analysis. This analysis should cover the timeframe from July 1, 2025 to the end of June 30, 2026.
- Predicted data from 2027 was also requested.

Councilor Cole noted that at the last meeting Mr. Below and Ms. Boschert had stated the language had changed in the C-PACER program (for the servicing of the loans). He could not find where that language had changed in the RSA and questioned how we verify some of this (as they did not give us the new

language). City Manager Hosmer was happy to get the relevant language out of the RSA and forward it to him.

Deputy City Manager Brooks noted he had a conversation with the Executive Director of the Business and Finance Authority, which is managing this program. He pointed to their website which does have template documents for all of the different steps of the C-PACER Program. One of those documents is the Assignment of Notice of Assessment, which happens at the closing of each of these case-by-case basis and that is where the assignor (which would be the City) assigns to the lending agency/bank/capital provider all of the rights and responsibilities in association with electing and servicing that loan. He will provide Councilor Cole with that template. Obviously, there have been no applications that have closed yet, so we have not had to file this document, but we have the template for when any application get to that point. Councilor Cole reiterated again that the RSA (language) has not changed and still contains the language that the City would service these loans. Deputy City Manager Brooks said he would have to look more closely at the language but noted that the BFA (NH Business Finance Authority) is aware of and has even prepared template documents in anticipation of this Notice of Assessment and Assignment.

Mayor Whittlesey noted the City is taking their role and legally, through contract, assigning it to the loan originator. You do not have to change the RSA in order to do that as it becomes its own legal document. The ultimate end result is still the same. The City is not putting any work into this beyond signing the Assignment documents. It's a complicated program but it would have been helpful to understand the mechanism a little better.

Councilor Stavis noted that C-PACER is undergoing yet more changes because there is a Senate bill coming to her State Committee for review. This will change some of the requirements for adoption of the C-PACER program if approved. She will keep the Council informed. This is NH SB 440.

Deputy City Manager Brooks noted that he looked at that Assignment of Notice template form, and it does reference RSA 53F:8 (paragraph 1) that says, "The municipality shall be responsible for billing collection and enforcement of the Special Assessment and Loan provided, however, that the municipality may delegate such responsibilities to any outside third party approved by the program administrator and further being acceptable to the municipality." This is the language that allows the City to assign its rights and obligations for this program from us to the capital provider. BFA is our administrator and they have already prepared the template documents in anticipation that in all likelihood most communities are going to choose to do that. He will look again to see where RSA 53F:8 (paragraph 1) has changed, but the language is there to allow for this delegation.

Councilor Stavis added it looked like the (State) changes now should not be substantive to Lebanon.

City Manager Hosmer noted that the previous language required that the provider of the (C-PACER) loan to file a mortgage, which stopped all the deals in their tracks. This was not working because, as he understands it, they would stand behind a primary lender and while they were secure, they were unlikely to get paid in the event of a default. The C-PACER program is a loan retained through a tax bill and will follow the property and does not follow the mortgagee.

6. OPEN TO PUBLIC:

- **Mr. Doug Cogan (Clean Energy NH)** came forth and spoke about the C-PACER Program noting that there is also, as part of your record of materials on the C-PACER, there is a 101

document that goes into RSA 53 and changes this RSA to really guarantee that the City is only servicing the record keeping role for real estate transactions.

7. RECOGNITIONS: This item was taken out of order and was discussed later in the meeting because Captain Buchanan was not present.

8. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: March 18, 2026 (Regular Meeting)
Councilor Cole questioned the retention duration of the videos on the City’s Website. He was trying to figure out how important the minutes are and how detailed minutes needed to be.

Deputy City Manager Brooks noted that the RSA requires the City to keep the minutes of the meetings, basically forever. There is no such requirement with respect to audio or video right now. Typically, when there is a recording of a meeting, for the purpose of the recording secretary, it is their responsibility to create the minutes. That recording is generally erased after the minutes have been created/approved. He did not think the regulations/Statutes have caught up with the technology that is now available to have a Teams Meeting at every meeting, so with that said, he did not think those videos would last forever but he will check with Cyber Services and the City Clerk.

The written minutes are the official record of the meeting. The minutes are not meant to be a transcript, are not meant to be verbatim or to capture every single point. They are supposed to capture a general overview of the discussion(s) along with the details of Motions, Seconds, and Votes. The rest of the minutes are just meant to be an overview. If there are key points of a discussion that are not captured in the draft minutes and you, or the Council, thinks there should be, then you can ask the recording secretary to add that information before the minutes are finalized. He can ask those questions regarding the durations of video recording and get back to the Council with his answer.

Amendments:

Councilor Cole noted he was an observer at this meeting, prior to being sworn in as a Councilor, but suggested the conversation between Mr. Casale and Mr. Clifton Below be ADDED to the March 18 (Regular Session), 2026 minutes (where Mr. Casale spoke about the C-PACER Program and spoke in support of it). P. 15, Line 19 ADD:

- **Mr. Fran Casale (Ward-2):** He spoke about his reasons why he supported the C-PACER Program, noting he felt this was a great program and will improve energy efficiency in our City. He questioned if NH RSA 53-F states that the City will be responsible for handling the billing and collection of the C-PACER loans. Mr. Clifton Below noted that was a statement made by the Mayor at the last meeting. That was under the old C-PACER program but under this new program the lenders deal with that directly. The servicing of the loan does not include the City. This was one of the reforms to break the grid lock of this (C-PACER Program) not being used.
- Page 33, Lines 40-42: Change to read: Director Reichert reviewed the supporting materials as presented in the agenda packet and noted that the fiscal impact analysis concluded that new units created in the City, regardless of the unit size or type, have a positive impact financially on the City of Lebanon.

Assistant Mayor Wilkie suggested that since there were changes, the Council should wait until next meeting to approve draft March 28, 2026 minutes.

ACTION: Tabled until the Council’s April 15, 2026 meeting.

9. APPOINTMENTS: NONE

10. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS: NONE

11. OLD BUSINESS

A. Discuss 2027-2028 NHMA Legislative Policy Process

Included in the agenda packet: (All supportive documents and information can be found on pages 22-42, Council agenda packet. Minutes do not include screenshots, maps, graphs, or images.)

1. 2025-2026 NHMA Legislative Policy Positions
2. 2027-2028 NHMA Legislative Policy Process, Questions & Answers
3. 2027-2028 NHMA Legislative Policy Process, Proposed Policy form

Mayor Whittlesey noted the Council has one more opportunity to reviewed/discuss the NHMA policy process in terms of any policy positions that Council would like to see in NHMA’s Legislative Policy. The deadline for changes needs to be done by April 15th.

BACKGROUND

The New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) is currently planning for its Legislative Policy Conference in the Fall of 2026. The policy process begins with a solicitation of policy proposals from local officials to create an initial issues list. The deadline for submission of a policy proposal is April 17, 2026.

NHMA’s legislative policy committees - Finance and Revenue; General Administration and Governance; and Infrastructure, Development and Land Use – will review all policy proposals in order to make recommendations which will go to the NHMA Legislative Policy Conference in September.

Council/Staff Comments:

Councilor Stavis: She felt we need to use whatever powers of persuasion we can with the NHMA regarding tracking Data Mining Centers. She believes this is a significant issue for us and for municipalities around the State and further explained her reasoning. Mayor Whittlesey will bring this policy recommendation up at the (State) Mayor’s meeting. Councilor Stavis will send a copy of the specific proposed bill to the Mayor for his review.

Councilor N. Ford Burley spoke about legislation that limits municipal control and implementing State-wide priorities in Zoning and Land Use Regulations.

Whittlesey requested that Councilors use the fillable form (found on page 42, agenda packet) and send back to him so their requests can be discussed at the April 15, 2026 Council meeting.

ACTION: NONE

7. RECOGNITIONS: This item was taken out of order and presented here. Note, all other agenda items were taken in the order as presented and discussed in the agenda packet.

- **Resolution Honoring Lebanon Fire Department Captain Chris Buchanan**

WHEREAS, Chris Buchanan has devoted himself to a career in public service, having served as a member of the Lebanon Fire Department since September 30, 2000, reaching the rank of Captain, and;

WHEREAS, Chris has demonstrated those many attributes essential to his position as a Captain of the Lebanon Fire Department, playing an intricate part in keeping our Fire Department’s facilities operational, and;

WHEREAS, Chris has conducted himself in an open and forthright fashion, reflecting credit upon himself and his profession, always demonstrating the many attributes essential to his position, continually giving of himself freely and unselfishly, and;

WHEREAS, Chris has earned the respect, confidence, and friendship of his fellow coworkers, business associates and the many citizens he has served in his 25-year tenure as a member of the Lebanon Fire Department.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the members of the Lebanon City Council, on behalf of the citizenry of Lebanon, Chris’s friends, fellow employees and associates, express our admiration of and respect for the career of our outstanding and faithful employee and extend to him our sincere gratitude and wish him well in his retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be written upon the minutes of the Lebanon City Council meeting and a copy be presented to Chris Buchanan.

Dated this 1st day of April 2026 at Lebanon, New Hampshire.

Doug Whittlesey, Mayor
On behalf of the Lebanon City Council

12. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review and Discussion of Elderly Exemption Program

Included in the agenda packet: [\(All supportive documents and information can be found on pages 43-48, Council agenda packet. Minutes do not include screenshots, maps, graphs, or images.\)](#)

1. City Council Agenda Request Form, CMCC-26-3
2. City of Lebanon Elderly Exemption History
3. Elderly Exemption Comparison – Grafton County
4. NH RSA 72:39-a, Conditions for Elderly Exemption
5. NH RSA 72:39-b, Procedure for Adoption and Modification of Elderly Exemption

Deputy City Manager Brooks reviewed the background and noted that the exemption amounts and the income amounts have changed over time since at least 2021, but the asset thresholds have not changed. The Assessing Department provided a spreadsheet of where Lebanon stands with respect to those different thresholds compared to other communities in Grafton County as presented in the agenda packet.

BACKGROUND

An agenda request was submitted by Councilor Wilkie to review the exemption amounts associated with the City’s Elderly Exemption Program. In particular, Councilor Wilkie noted that, according to the City’s website, the tax exemption amounts were last updated in 2023, and the income limits were updated in 2022, but the asset limits have not been updated since at least 2005. Councilor Wilkie requested that the Council review the current limits and decide whether they remain appropriate.

As a reminder, for eligible property owners, the amount of the elderly exemption is subtracted from the total assessed valuation of the property before the tax rate is applied resulting in a reduction of taxes owed on the property.

To support the Council’s discussion, the Assessing Division has provided a summary of the history of the Elderly Exemptions Program since February 2001 and a comparison of the elderly exemption amounts for other communities in Grafton County. Also included with the agenda packet are the existing relevant statutes associated with the elderly exemption program.

If the Council determines that changes in the exemption amounts or the income or asset limits are warranted, the Council must schedule and hold a public hearing on the proposed changes.

Mayor Whittlesey noted that Ms. Davis presented the Council with a copy of her letter (Exhibit 1) for their review.

- **Ms. Mary Davis (Ward 2):** She came forth and read her letter of concerns (verbatim) to the Council noting that two years ago she filed an application for an Elderly Tax Exemption. She spoke about her application process and the documents needed to complete her application which included her Birth Certificate; last year’s tax returns including W2s, 1099s, etc.; State interest/dividends forms; property tax inventories from other towns; Lebanon’s property bill; current bank statements for each bank account for the past 6 months; proof of income (Social Security Statements, pension documents, receipts) and any other documentation that the Assessing Office asks for. Compiling all this information is time-consuming and often a challenging task which can discourage residents who qualify, from even trying to apply for the exemption. She completed the application, compiled the documentation, and met the requirements of the income and assets cap and she was denied the exemption and further explained her detailed reasoning as to why she was denied. (Information from her included financial information was not added to minutes due to confidentiality issues.)

Council/Staff Comments:

The Council, City Staff (Assessor Pelletier and Finance Director Alesia Williams) had lengthy discussions about the following: RSA 72:39-b which excludes the value of the persons actual residents and land upon which it is located (this includes the mobile home, which is rented out to a relative, and is not the primary residents); how asset limits have not increased; revised income limits; Fair Market value of properties; the process of evaluating a property’s value; what the assessment vs. sale ratio is (examples given); NH SB 440; how/why is Ms. Davis’s property being assessed when the State Law RSA only uses Assessed Value; the three (3) approaches approved for assessing (i.e., 1. Sales-base. 2. Income based. 3. Replacement costs.); questions around how the City is actually assessing properties; how Market Value vs. Assessment Value is used; whether or not the Elderly Tax Exemption (Veteran’s Tax Exemption) is being communicated correctly to the public; how to make applicants aware of the appeals process (i.e., file tax appeals before the State Board of Land Tax Appeals); whether or not Ms. Davis’s rental assets vs. income is being listed twice in her application; what determines what the rental Market Value of a property is; whether or not the City is being clear about what the Market Value vs. the Assessed Value of a property is and how this should be made very clear to the public.

Deputy City Manager Brooks noted that the City’s Webpage includes the criteria for the Elderly Tax Exemption and under the net assets criteria it does speak to the fact that that person can only exclude up to two (2) acres or the minimum zoning lot size for a residents in Ms. Davis’s district noting that the remainder of her land or property is included in the \$100K limit at the “Fair Market Value” and not “the Assessed Value”.

Mayor Whittlesey has read through this process, and he thought that some of this is a process issue and needs to be made clearer.

Councilor Stavis noted she did not see anything in Statute about Fair Market Value.

Assistant Mayor Wilkie noted it was important to try to understand how the City is applying this policy. He pointed out that regardless of how this is being interpreted, it is being interpreted using an asset limit that was set 25 years ago. He felt this is something that needs to be addressed and needs a change in approach that is being used by our Assessing Department to value real estate and further spoke about his reasoning. His primary concern is that we really need to revisit the criteria being used to determine an asset.

More detailed Council discussions ensued regarding trying to make the application process simpler; using a percentage of income approach; raising the asset limits to \$150K-\$220K; potentially raising the asset limits by \$100K from the 2021 asset amount; what should be done now vs. what should be done in the long term; looking at the income limits (the hourly wage required in Lebanon now to afford a 2-bedroom apartment is \$49/hour – that’s \$100K/year); how the process needs to be changed because it is way too difficult, time consuming and burdensome for these folks (elderly).

Mayor Whittlesey suggested looking at the Asset limits right now and what we would want it to look like for data purposes.

Finance Director Williams wanted to be clear about the Asset limits noting that what is excluded from this is a person’s primary dwelling plus up to 2 acres. The reason this is complicated is because there is a second dwelling (mobile home on Ms. Davis’s property) that we have to include as an asset. When we look at Fair Market Value, we do the same thing with vehicles, noting there was a spike in vehicle values during COVID and the trend correlates to the housing. The second piece is that assessing cannot provide any sort of speculation on who will or will not qualify or what those changes will be. Also, because people are not required to apply for this (Elderly Exemption), we do not know who would qualify unless someone has previously submitted an application. She also spoke about the redistribution of tax exemptions and how that would affect Lebanon’s taxpayers.

The Council continued their discussions on the Elderly Tax Exemption and what should be done now to expedite it. Deputy City Manager Brooks spoke about the requirements of holding a Public Hearing according to the Statute noting the last day to file for the Elderly Tax program is April 15th at 5:00PM, which is two hours before the Public Hearing. He was uncertain the Council could take any immediate action to address (this issue) this year. While this may not be good news, it does give the Council time to study this issue properly, time to evaluate what the thresholds ought to be, and make those changes in the appropriate timeframe for next year’s (2027) deadlines.

For the next step, Deputy City Manager Brooks suggested that he and City Manager Hosmer work with the Finance and Assessing Departments to bring more information, numbers/costs, and analysis so the Council can continue this conversation at a future meeting and then schedule a Public Hearing.

City Manager Hosmer stated that based on what he has heard tonight he felt this was pragmatic and is unsatisfactory to people who are struggling to make payments now. He loathed to rush something like this as it does take a lot of thought due to the budget impacts that the City will be faced with. He questioned if

there was any way to accelerate a Public Hearing on this before April 15, 2026 and suggested the possibility of having a Special Council Meeting to address just this issue.

Deputy City Manager noted that in order to hold a Public Hearing, the Charter requires that a Public Hearing Notice be published 10 days in advance (of a meeting) so for the normal Council meeting on Wednesday, April 15th, the ad went out to the publishers on Monday in order to be published on Saturday. If we send something in tomorrow, he was uncertain if it could be advertised by Friday. The notice would have to be published on Friday to even hold the Public Hearing one day earlier (Tuesday, April 14, 2026) but this does not allow the staff much time at all to properly analyze the data needed, let alone the downstream impact on everyone else.

City Assessor Pelletier added that we are also in the dark here because we do not know how many potential applicants would financially qualify. Even if we waited, we could only assume how many applicants there might be on a yearly basis.

Councilor Cole questioned if the City could offer an abatement period of time. Finance Director Williams spoke about how an abatement would muddy the waters because it depends on how many applicants are going to qualify for a set of abatements or how we are going to determine whether or not they qualify. If this is not clear and consistent it opens up other issues. City Assessor Pelletier also spoke about more reasons why giving abatements this year would not work, noting they (Assessing Department) have to get their data to the Tax Clerk by May 15th.

Councilor Key noted it was important to provide the public with information about the current schedule for exemptions.

City Manager Hosmer noted he was also looking at making the process simpler but there is a tipping point where the system could lose its integrity if documents become too simple to fill in. Taxes are tough enough and we want them to be fair and equitable for everybody.

Mayor Whittlesey said this discussion needs to continue. We are potentially looking at the 1st or 2nd meetings in June. He requested an outline of the overall process (i.e., Starting with the City's Website by providing information/forms on how to apply for exemptions and the information that applicants will need in order to apply for an exemption, etc.).

The Council held discussions on starting an Elderly (Veteran's) Exemption Task Force that could collect information/data and bring back to the Council for their review.

City Manager Hosmer agreed with having a Task Force noting this issue is worth some extra effort and better understanding from all of us. While he felt there was an urgent need to get this issue resolved, he was disappointed that we cannot do it at this time. He also directly addressed Ms. Mary Davis and told her he was afraid that she had provided too much information on the documents she handed out to the Council and was afraid this information would become part of a public record. He requested that whatever was turned over to the recording secretary should be sanitized without account numbers and personal identification information. He also requested the Council turn in all the information they received from Ms. Davis back to him (and not keep it) so this information does not fall in the wrong hands.

Mayor Whittlesey confirmed he would collect all the information provided by Ms. Davis and this information will be shredded. The information provided to the Council by Ms. Davis will not be included in the minutes for confidentiality reasons.

ACTION: NONE

- B.** Discussion and Set Public Hearing for April 15, 2026: Supplemental Appropriation of up to \$41,999.26 for Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 Improvements Capital Project; Rescission and Transfer of Prior Appropriations and Prior Authorizations for Issuance of Bonds or Notes for Capital Projects; Transfer of Prior Appropriations and Remaining Unspent Funds for Capital Projects; and Transfer of Prior Appropriations from DPW Operating Budget to Capital Projects

Included in the agenda packet: [\(All supportive documents and information can be found on pages 49- 53, Council agenda packet. Minutes do not include screenshots, maps, graphs, or images.\)](#)

1. Project Budget Spreadsheet, dated January 29, 2026
2. Mechanic Street Proposed Sidewalk – Conceptual Plan of Segments 1-3, dated March 30, 2021

Mayor Whittlesey clarified that the Council will just be discussing and setting a Public Hearing for this supplemental appropriation. Tonight the Council will not be taking any action to approve the supplemental appropriation.

Deputy City Manager Brooks reviewed the background behind this Supplemental Appropriation. He highlighted that overall, we are reducing the City’s outstanding debt loan by transferring the General Fund portions of Mack Ave and Forest Ave to the Mechanic Street sidewalk. We are also rescinding entirely, and not replacing or transferring, the bonding authorizations for the water and sewer aspects of Mack Ave. and Forest Ave. Overall, there will be a reduction of \$210K in the debt obligation.

BACKGROUND

The Mechanic Street Sidewalk project (Segment 2 of the attached map) is a subcomponent of a larger 1.3-mile corridor project along Mechanic Street from the intersection of High and Mascoma Streets to Exit 19 off Interstate 89. The overall Mechanic Street corridor project was first added to the NHDOT’s Ten Year Plan list in 1998. The scope of the project was later scaled down to individual intersections and road segments.

In the Spring of 2021, the City applied for a Community Project Funding (CPF) grant through Congresswoman Kuster’s Office to help fund Sidewalk Segment 2, which runs from Slayton Hill Road to the American Legion property. In Spring 2022, the City was notified of a \$290,250 CPF grant award. Subsequently, the City Council voted on June 1, 2022 to approve a supplemental appropriation of \$134,750 to fund the balance of the sidewalk improvement project, which was then estimated to cost approximately \$425,000. The supplemental appropriation was approved from the Unassigned Fund Balance in order to have no impact on the City’s tax rate.

Since the appropriations were approved, Public Works and the City’s consultant have worked on the final design plans and other preparatory work. The construction project was originally bid in the Summer of 2025, but the results came in far above the engineer’s estimate and the appropriated dollar amount. As a result, the City decided to wait for the next construction season and rebid the project in January 2026.

The latest bid results are lower than those received in the Summer of 2025 but still exceed the previously appropriated amount by approximately \$250,000. As a result, the Administration is requesting the transfer

of prior appropriations totaling \$208,000.74 and a supplemental appropriation for up to \$41,999.26 to enable the construction and completion of the sidewalk improvements in 2026 to take advantage of the CPF grant.

The Administration proposes to fund the additional project costs by rescinding prior appropriations and bonding authorizations for certain capital projects, transferring prior appropriations, bonding authorization, and remaining unspent funds from other capital projects, and transferring FY2026 DPW Operating Budget funds.

In particular, the Administration proposes to rescind prior Water Fund and Sewer Fund appropriations and bonding authorizations from the 2022 Mack Avenue Infrastructure Improvements project and the 2022 Forest Avenue Reconstruction project. The General Fund appropriations and bonding authorizations are proposed to be transferred from the Mack Avenue and Forest Avenue projects to the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 capital project. In addition, the administration proposes to transfer the appropriation and remaining unspent funds from the 2019 Altaria-Route 120 Pedestrian and Bike Improvements project, which is complete, to the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 capital project [as depicted on page 50, agenda packet](#).

Finally, the remaining funds necessary for the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 project would be funded through a transfer from the FY2026 DPW Operating budget.

Mr. Jay Cairelli (DPW Director) and Mr. Rod Finley (City Engineer) were present and spoke about the details of the sidewalk projects, the bids that they have, and the urgency of using grant funding this summer before the City loses it.

Council/Staff Comments:

Councilor Key spoke about how the cost for this project has increased by 59% since it was originally presented noting that Phase I is only one component out of a III Phase project and questioned if the other two phases would be increasing by 59% as well. She did not feel this was ready for a Public Hearing unless it was within the context of all three (3) phases and further spoke about her reasoning regarding the need for these sidewalks and the costs involved.

Assistant Mayor Wilkie spoke about how we could easily walk around Phase I and III without needing to worry about dangerous, sidewalk-less areas. From his experience segment II is still something that would be worthwhile on its own.

The Council, Deputy City Manager Brooks, Director Cairelli and City Engineer Finley discussed the Phase I, II, and III project; the dangerous walking conditions at the bus stop in Phase II and how pedestrians/bikes would need to walk/bike on the east side of or on the roadway during the winter, and at dusk, in order to reach the emergency shelter; how the TAP Grant funding has been updated; and Congresswoman Goodlander’s Grant, which could be used for this project.

Councilor Appleton noted that sidewalk segment II connects a piece of existing sidewalk on Mechanic Street, which is currently, or relatively, orphaned from the emergency shelter as well as the Greenway and APD (Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital). If we were to pick one of these sidewalk segments to prioritize, segment II would be the one and further explained her reasoning.

In response to Councilor Cole’s question regarding whether or not a traffic study has been done for this project, Deputy City Manager Brooks said he could not recall any referenced type of survey, but he felt

there was evidence that shows a pathway through all seasons of the year. He also noted this has been one of the key aspects of the City’s Master Plan for the last 15 years for connectivity and mobility because not everyone has a personal vehicle.

Councilor Cole concurred with Councilor Key and spoke about his reason why this whole project needs to be looked at as a whole (project) and not as segments.

Deputy City Manager Brooks spoke about how the Downtown TIF funds could possibly be used to fund segment III because this segment falls within the Downtown TIF District, but segments I and II do not.

Councilor Key spoke about the maintenance repairs that need to be done throughout the City and how these funds could be prioritized to fund other sidewalk projects.

Councilor Stavis was fully in support of the project and explained her reasons why.

ACTION:

Councilor Stavis MOVED, that the Lebanon City Council hereby schedules a public hearing for Wednesday, April 15, 2026, beginning at 7:00pm in Council Chambers, City Hall, and Remote via the City’s Virtual Platform, for the purpose of receiving public input and taking action to:

- 1. Rescind prior appropriations and authorizations to issue bonds or notes in the amount of \$60,000 from both the Water Fund and Sewer Fund for their portions of the 2022 Mack Avenue Infrastructure Improvements Project and \$45,000 from both the Water Fund and Sewer Fund for their portions of the 2022 Forest Avenue Reconstruction Project; and***
- 2. Transfer prior appropriations and authorizations to issue bonds or notes in the amount of \$80,000 for the General Fund portion of the 2022 Mack Avenue Infrastructure Improvements Project and \$60,000 for the General Fund portion of the 2022 Forest Avenue Reconstruction Project to the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 Improvements Capital project; and***
- 3. Transfer prior appropriations and remaining unspent funds in the amount of \$68,000.74 from the 2019 Altaria-Route 120 Pedestrian and Bike Improvements Project to the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 Improvements Capital Project; and***
- 4. Appropriate up to \$41,999.26 to supplement current funding for the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 Improvements Capital Project; and authorize the transfer of up to said amount from the FY2026 DPW Operating Budget to the Mechanic Street Sidewalk Segment 2 Improvements Capital Project.***

Seconded by Councilor N. Ford Burley.

****The Vote on the Motion was approved among the members present (7-1-0). Councilor Cole opposed.***

DPW Director Cairelli and Mayor Whittlesey spoke about the raw material construction cost increases (i.e., steel, asphalt, sand, gravel and granite) for this project and the increase in cost for wages. This information will be made available for the Public Hearing.

- C.** Discussion and Set Public Hearing for May 6, 2026: Supplemental Appropriation of up to \$724,000 for Solid Waste Fleet Replacement Capital Project; Authorization to Transfer up to \$724,000 from the Solid Waste Unassigned Fund Balance to the Solid Waste Fleet Replacement Capital Project

Included in the agenda packet: (All supportive documents and information can be found on pages 54-55, Council agenda packet) Minutes do not include screenshots, maps, graphs, or images.)

Mr. Jay Cairelli (DPW Director) reviewed the background of the proposed request and explained why they were looking into this noting that the laws that govern this program were being addressed at the Federal level at the time of last year's budget. This was somewhat anticipated but not reflected in the DPW budget.

BACKGROUND

In late 2025, the City received a direct pay refund of \$1,228,037.25 in connection with investment tax credits for the Landfill Gas-to-Energy Plant. Approximately 10% of this amount is payable to the accounting firm that managed the IRS submission on the City's behalf, resulting in a net refund of \$1,106,452.25, which was placed in the Solid Waste Fund's Unassigned Fund Balance.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) respectfully requests authorization to allocate a portion of the funds from the Solid Waste Unassigned Fund Balance toward the acquisition of a haul truck by transferring the needed funds into the Solid Waste Fleet Replacement capital project. The four (4) big reasons why they need the funds are for staff efficiency, staff safety, landfill space and NH DES compliance.. The total funds needed are \$724,000 and would be used for the acquisition of a 2026 Caterpillar 735 Articulated truck.

A comparable Volvo haul truck was also evaluated in preparation for this request. Both the Caterpillar and Volvo units were competitively bid through Sourcewell. The quoted price for the Volvo would be \$782,290. The cost difference, combined with the City's existing fleet of Caterpillar equipment, forms the basis for recommending the Caterpillar unit.

The proposed articulated haul truck is specifically engineered for operation on sloped terrain, significantly enhancing access to critical areas of the landfill. This capability will support the consistent placement of cover material necessary to maintain compliance with DES requirements. Additionally, it will reduce reliance on bulldozers to push cover material across extended slope distances. Minimizing this practice will preserve valuable airspace during the interim period while landfill expansion efforts are permitted and constructed.

Furthermore, advancing this purchase at this time will eliminate the need for future CIP expenditures associated with replacing a 10-wheel dump truck in 2027 (\$275K) and 2030 (\$300K), as currently identified in the fleet replacement schedule.

Council/Staff Comments:

The Council and Director Cairelli held discussions regarding the number of years the current landfill has left; Phases I, II, III and IV of the landfills; the yearly rental costs per year of the haul trucks (\$14K/mo. for the current truck, usually only need one (1) month but will increase in the future); reason why this expenditure was not in the budget; the quote for the new haul truck was received two weeks ago so the price is locked in at this point; and, equipment that could be auctioned off or sold (none left at this point).

Assistant Mayor Wilkie requested all the information discussed be included in the Council agenda for the Public Hearing. The information should also include any of the hard costs that will be spent or that will be saved with those two truck replacements.

ACTION:

***Councilor N. Ford Burley MOVED, that the Lebanon City Council hereby schedules a public hearing for Wednesday, May 6, 2026, beginning at 7:00pm in Council Chambers, City Hall, and Remote via the City’s Virtual Platform, for the purpose of receiving public input and taking action to appropriate up to \$724,000 to supplement the Solid Waste Fleet Replacement capital project; and to authorize the transfer of up to \$724,000 from the Solid Waste Fund Unassigned Fund Balance to the Solid Waste Fleet Replacement capital project.
Seconded by Councilor Stavis.***

****The Vote on the Motion was approved by members present (8-0).***

D. Review and Discussion of Proposed Amendments to City Council Rules

Included in the agenda packet: (All supportive documents and information can be found on pages 56-66, Council agenda packet. Minutes do not include screenshots, maps, graphs, or images.)

1. Proposed amendments to City Council Rules
2. City Council Rules as adopted on April 16, 2025

Deputy City Manager Brooks reviewed the background changes to the Council’s Order of Business and expressed his concerns regarding the backlog on approving appointments to Boards, Committees, Commissions and how to try to break that log jam to get applications in front of the Council. After reading the appointment rules to the Council, he felt the best was for the Council to handle this was for Council members to commit to doing the interviews as their rules call for. If there is a feeling that you just do not have the time for something, he would rather see this requirement taken out of the rules rather than putting in some kind of loophole that allows you not to do it. However, this is up to the Council and there is an issue of getting applicants nominated and appointed. The City is going through a transition process, and he spoke about how the new software will be tracking the Boards/Committees, how it will do minutes, how it will track members, and appointments beginning and ending dates. We will have the ability to broaden the questions that each applicant answers based on the Board/Committee they are applying for. However, we are not there yet so we need to address this interview requirement as best we can until we get to the point where the application itself provides the kind of interview questions that would normally be asked in an interview.

BACKGROUND

During the annual Organizational Meeting on March 25, 2026, the newly seated City Council voted to adopt the Council Rules as set forth in Chapter A191 of the City Code.

Once formally adopted, the City Council may amend the Rules. The amendment process is outlined in §A191-13.B, which states, “These rules may be amended or new rules adopted by a two-thirds vote of all members of the Council. Any such alterations or amendments shall be submitted in writing at the preceding regular meeting and shall be placed on the calendar under the order of new business.”

Attached are proposed amendments to the Council Rules, which have been suggested at recent Council meetings. The amendments include changes to the Order of Business (§A191-8), Permission required to address Council (§A191-12), and Council Appointments to City Boards, Committees, Commissions (§A191-15).

In accordance with Chapter A191-13 of the Council’s Rules, amendments must be presented in writing at the preceding regular meeting prior to adoption. As such, if there is support among the City Council for the

proposed changes, these amendments will be presented for adoption at the April 15th meeting. Adoption requires a 2/3 vote of all members of the Council.

Proposed Changes to the Order of the City Council’s Agenda Items

1. Call to Order.
2. Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Announcement by Mayor. Public forum. “Any member of the public who desires to speak on any agenda item may do so when the item is taken up by the Council and will be allowed to speak on the subject for not more than three minutes. (Note: Speakers are asked to state their name, ward of residence and to use the microphone provided.)”
4. City Manager Report
- ~~4.5.~~ Open Council Discussion
- ~~5.6.~~ Open to Public. (Limited to 10 Minutes)
- ~~6.7.~~ Recognitions.
- ~~7.8.~~ Acceptance of Minutes:
- ~~8.9.~~ Appointments.
- ~~9.10.~~ Public Hearings
 - i. Presentation
 - ii. Mayor Opens Public Hearing
 - iii. Questions and Comments by the Public
 - iv. Mayor Closes Public Hearing
 - v. Council Deliberation & Action
- ~~10.11.~~ Old Business.
- ~~11.12.~~ New Business.
- ~~12.1.~~ City Manager Report
13. Nonpublic sessions.
14. Adjourn.

Council/Staff Comments:

The Council discussed reaching out to other Councilors if they felt they did not have the time to do an interview; how Councilors may not know what a particular Board does when doing an interview; having the Mayor appoint a Council member to do an interview if the original Councilor is unable to do an interview; potentially having the Mayor provide a list of Councilors to the City Clerk and have them go through the process of selecting a Councilor to do an interview; how there are more than 65 vacancies out of 202 seats across all Board/Committee that need to be filled with only +/- 20 applicants; how the pause in getting the applicants in front the Council is due to the interview process; how communication improvements can be resolved; making interviews optional by opening up a window of 14 days so that Councilors know there is an applicant waiting for an interview or having one (1) member of the City Council accept (application) within seven (7) days and interview applicants within 30 days; potentially having the Chairs of Boards/Committees do the applicant(s) interview and report their findings back to the Council/Mayor; having a City Staff person reach out to applicant(s) for an interview; the reasons why interviews can often take weeks to schedule (i.e., back and forth between Councilor and applicants and their schedules); whether or not Govinity.Gov has the ability to schedule interview appointments; sending out (via email) the applicant questionnaire, except for the Land Use Board(s); and/or having language added to the Council Rules that states: a member of the City Council can request that the Mayor can appoint the Committee Chair(s) to do an interview(s).

In response to City Manager Hosmer’s question, Mayor Whittlesey noted he has not appointed any Councilor to Boards/Committees yet because he was leaving this open for Councilors to choose what Board/Committee they would like to be on.

ACTION: *No action is required at this time. Action on the amendments will be scheduled for April 15, 2026.*

E. Update on Status and Next Steps for Strategic Plan Process

BACKGROUND

City Manager Hosmer provided a brief update on the administration’s work on the Strategic Plan that included a summarization of: What a Strategic Plan is (definition and why it matters); How the Planning Hierarchy should Connect (Key point is that the strategic plan should not try to be the Master Plan and the operations manual at the same time; What a stronger next-generation plan includes (i.e., .Fewer top priorities, clear outcomes, named ownership, Resource implications, budget alignment, and an annual refresh); making the correction to the common question about cost: A strategic plan should speak to expected resource implications and have the detailed numbers be in the budget and CIP; Recommendations: Creating a Strategic Plan Task Force that includes its composition, it’s mission and the immediate deliverables); What the Task Force might consider during their deliberations; and, having an illustrative timeline for a new plan in place (completed) by July 1, 2027.

City Manager Hosmer wanted to make it clear that the Task Force helps identify the process that will be followed to achieve a Strategic Plan but does not define the outcome. The outcome is the collaborative effort post January 1st where the public/private and others from the City will be brought into the discussion. He requested the Council create a Strategic Plan Task Force (SPTF) with a clear mission, composition and timeline. He also requested that the SPTF return with a recommended scope, process and consultant recommendation by the end of the year (2026) and set the expectation that a new Strategic Plan will be adopted July 1, 2027 to guide the 2028 budget cycle.

Council/Staff Comments:

Mayor Whittlesey felt that Council’s final decision should be pushed off until the Council’s next meeting on April 15, 2026 and reminded the Council that we are talking about the 2028 budget cycle. He also spoke about his reasons why he did not want to exclude everything from the original Strategic Plan or Vision Statements for now. He underscored what City Manager Hosmer said noting there is a difference between a Strategic Plan and an Operating Plan and explained the differences between the two.

The Council discussed their reasons for either supporting or not supporting the current Strategic Plan; having a working operational plan that is closely tied to the Master Plan and closely tied to dollars and cents at the end of the budget cycle; taking this topic up earlier in the evening on April 15, 2026; cutting down the Task Force members to nine (9) people and having two of those being alternates to allow for smaller decision making; how strategy is very import because it helps to define how things interconnect, it has to be goal directed and display and articulate what the values are and what we want Lebanon to be (i.e., does it make Lebanon more affordable, does it strengthen our community and does it protect our most vulnerable); how the Operational Plan helps the Strategy Plan come to life; why the 18 year old Strategic Plan is too old and this should be consideration as we head into next year; how the Master Plan, at its legislative requirement core, is a document of the Planning Board and is not in the Council’s purview; how Master Plans are not mandatory but for those that do have a required Master Plan the only thing required is that the PB must have an adopted Master Plan and their Master Plan must include the

Land Use and Vision Chapters; and, in order to have a Capital Improvement Program, the City must have a Master Plan.

Mayor Whittlesey requested that City Manager Hosmer email his presentation to Councilors so this can be reviewed again at their April 15, 2026 Council meeting. He also requested that a proposed Motion for the Strategic Plan Task Force be included in the agenda items. The Council should consider the make-up on what they would like to see from the Task Force so these could be considered at the April 15, 2026 meeting. This should be the first item under Old Business.

ACTION: NONE TAKEN. Email presentation will be sent to Councilors for further review and will be discussed again at the Councils next meeting on April 15.

13. City Manager Report:

City Manager Hosmer updated the Council on the following:

- DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and NH Department of Justice (NH DOJ): They had asked the City to review all contracts, training in the City, etc. before their deadline of March 30, 2026 per RSA 21(I) 116. There is Federal Lawsuit and a Preliminary Injunction that was issued. His response to the NH DOJ was: “At this time, the City will not be submitting the certification form that was requested by the NH DOJ. The City currently has a consulting contract in place with Dr. Dottie Morris, who is the named plaintiff in the NEA of NH et.al vs. NH Attorney General in the United States District Court.” Based on the October 2, 2025 Injunction Order, the City understands that it is “a covered entity for purposes of that Order because it is a political subdivision that contracts with named Plaintiff.” He has notified the NH DOJ as of last week.

Mayor Whittlesey noted that this situation is fluid because of pending Legislation in the State Legislature so there may be updates in the coming weeks.

- Deputy City Manager Brooks updated the Council on the 20 Spencer Street Project noting that NH Housing has made a reservation for a Capital Subsidy fund for this project. In addition, the Invest NH 2.0 Program has awarded some funds to this project subject to the Governor/Council approval. The developer is prepared to move forward with the 20 Spencer Street Project.

14. NON-PUBLIC SESSION: NONE

15. ADJOURNMENT:

N. Ford Burley MOVED for adjournment.

Seconded by Assistant Mayor Wilkie.

**The Vote on the MOTION was unanimously approved (8-0)*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Dona E. Gibson
Recording Secretary