

CITY OF LACONIA - CITY COUNCIL MEETING
City Hall - Armand A. Bolduc City Council Chamber
7:00 P.M.

1/26/2026 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Bordes called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Councilor Bogert led the salute to the flag.

3. RECORDING SECRETARY

Katie Gargano, City Clerk

4. ROLL CALL

Clerk Gargano called the roll of the following City Councilors: Councilor Hildreth, Councilor Soucy, Councilor Hoffman, Councilor Haynes, Councilor Bogert and Councilor Conant.

Mayor Bordes confirmed that all 6 councilors were in attendance and a quorum was established.

5. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Kirk Beattie, City Manager; Glenn Smith, Finance Director

6. COUNCIL PROCLAMATION

7. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

7.A. City Council regular meeting minutes of January 12, 2026

Minutes of the Laconia City Council meeting of January 12, 2026, were distributed to members of the City Council on January 15, 2026.

With no corrections or changes submitted to the Clerk, the minutes were accepted as distributed.

Councilor Conant made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as distributed, seconded by Councilor Bogert **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

8. CONSENT & ACTION ITEMS

9. CITIZEN COMMENTS FOR MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

No one from the public wished to speak.

10. INTERVIEWS

11. **NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS & ELECTIONS**

12. **COMMUNICATIONS**

13. **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

13.A. **Public Hearing - Resolution 2026-1 - Relative to acceptance of an award in the amount of \$26,405 from the Department of Safety Homeland Security Grant Program for the purchase of SWAT/SOU equipment for the Laconia Police Department**

Notice of this Public Hearing was made available in the January 14, 2026 edition of the Laconia Daily Sun and posted at Laconia City Hall, Laconia Community Center, Laconia Public Library and the offices of the SAU.

Mayor Bordes opened the Public Hearing at 7:03 PM.

Lisa Morin, ward 2. Had comments at the last meeting about her concern with the City's involvement with ICE and she wondered if accepting this grant would put the City on the hook for something in the future that would include more serious involvement with ICE.

Councilor Bogert asked if it did, would she not support it then?

Councilor Soucy explained that this grant was applied for by the Laconia Police Department on behalf of the county, there is no obligations tied to the acceptance of the grant. They are just buying supplies with the funds.

Councilor Hoffman stated that at the last meeting they handed out a sheet that showed the items approved for purchase, the items are binoculars and flashlights. The two have nothing to do with each other.

Mayor Bordes closed the Public Hearing at 7:07 PM.

14. **PRESENTATIONS**

15. **MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Bordes noted he had a 3rd party send out a random text to 500 residents. The text was nonpartisan and he was seeking the concerns of the residents. The top three responses:

1. Homelessness & drugs
2. Rising property taxes
3. Affordable housing shortage.

He wanted the residents to know that he would be doing this from time to time.

16. **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilor Hildreth stated he attended the Laconia Motorcycle Week Association meeting, and the Parks & Recreation meeting. One conflict was noted at the Parks meeting with the about the farmers market that was a little contentious.

Councilor Soucy asked what the status is for Rollercoaster Rd, Manager Beattie stated they had a court order to be allowed on the property, they were refused to be allowed on the property to assess the items to be removed so they had to file back with the court.

Councilor Conant asked Manager Beattie if he knew if we had any visitors to our warming center? Manager Beattie stated that when he spoke with the Fire Chief, there was only 1 person who had come to the building. The building was open from Saturday afternoon, through today. There was transportation available. He thinks that because there were no power outages that is why it was underutilized. Councilor Conant stated he was glad to see the city have this option available to the residents.

Councilor Hildreth questioned if the location of the warming center could have been a problem as to why it was underutilized. Manager Beattie confirmed that there was transportation available to those who needed it, so he wasn't able to confirm.

17. COMMITTEE REPORTS

17.A. FINANCE (Councilors Soucy, Bogert and Hoffman)

17.A.i. WOW Trail Funding

17.A.ii. Downtown TIF Financing

17.B. PUBLIC SAFETY (Councilors Soucy, Haynes and Conant)

17.C. GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ORDINANCES (Councilors Hoffman, Bogert and Conant)

17.C.i. Regulation of Short Term Residential Rental Businesses

17.C.ii. Proposed Historic Overlay District

17.C.iii. Performance Zoning

17.C.iv. Time frame for demolition permits

17.D. LAND & BUILDINGS (Councilors Bogert, Hildreth and Conant)

17.D.i. Downtown parking garage

17.D.ii. Repair & maintenance of City buildings

17.D.iii. Plan for the DPW Compound

17.E. PUBLIC WORKS (Haynes, Soucy, Bogert)

17.E.i. Retaining Wall Policy

17.E.ii. Discussion for converting from a manual to an automated solid waste curbside collection service

17.F. APPOINTMENTS (Councilors Soucy, Hildreth and Conant)

18. LIAISON REPORTS

19. CITIZENS REQUESTS TO COMMENT ON CURRENT AGENDA ITEMS

Charlie St. Clair had a comment about the social districting. He would like to see the city council not make it more complicated. He doesn't want to see wrist bands or special cups. He only knows what he has experienced in other parts of the country. In Daytona Beach, they started with a designated cup. But it has not worked. He hopes to see not just Canal St, it should encompass the downtown area, and he'd like to see the weirs in a larger picture like all of Lakeside Ave included.

Councilor Soucy would like to see the mayor create a special committee to look into the social districts and to include some councilors, Charlie St. Clair, a member of the police department.

20. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Beattie gave an update to the City Council about the winter storm that we are currently experiencing. It is typically a 48 hour turn around for downtown snow clean up, but he thinks given the length of this storm it will take a little longer than normal.

Last year the City Council approved an energy plan with Freedom Energy to help residents on delivery charges. They have been waiting and evaluating the energy rates and they feel they are now at the point of being able to offer a rate lower, a video will be created about the program to go on the city website, there are postcards that will be going out to all residents giving them the opportunity to opt out mid to late February. On February 23rd Freedom Energy will be here at the council meeting to do a presentation, and then they will come to the first meeting in March to answer any questions from the residents. They are looking to start the program in April.

20.A. Project Updates Report

Manager Beattie presented the monthly project updates report to the Council.

1/29/26 Council Chambers, Master Plan Update meeting.

State School update: no closing date set yet, probably end of summer early fall. The Pillsbury group will be coming to the City Council to make a presentation to let them know where they stand publicly. They are looking at late February, early march.

Councilor Hildreth asked about the Weirs Beach Restoration. Manager Beattie mentioned this has probably been going on for way to long, it has to do with the sand migration. The State, the Parks & Rec Director and Manager Beattie have been trying to come up with a plan on how to get the sand back on the beach. He had a constituent contact him about how the beach used to go all the way over to the docks and now it is shortened. Councilor Hildreth asked if this would help expand the beach? Manager Beattie stated no.

20.B. Monthly Economic Development Report - CPI-U

Manager Beattie presented the Monthly Economic Development Report to the Council. The annualized year to date rate is 2.69%. There is no data for the month of October because of the Government shut down.

21. NEW BUSINESS

21.A. Proposed amendments to the Wage and Compensation Plan

In accordance with the authority outlined in Section 6:02 of the Laconia City Charter and Section 1.4 of the City's Classification and Compensation Plan, Manager Beattie submitted the following amendment to the City's Wage and Compensation Plan. The amendments will automatically take effect unless vetoed by a majority vote of the City Council within thirty (30) days of January 26, 2026. The amendment is as follows:

WAGE AMENDMENTS:

1. Eliminating the position of HR Administrator from grade 18
2. Modifying the position of Assistant Finance Director to Assistant Finance Director/HR Administrator.
3. Adding the position of Finance Clerk II to grade 16H
4. Changing Payroll/Personnel Assistant to Payroll/Benefit Specialist and moving from grade 12H to 15H

Fiscal Impact: Decrease of \$30,000

Staff Recommendation: City Manager recommends approving the proposed amendment to the Wage and Compensation Plan as presented.

Councilor Conant made a motion to approve the proposed amendment to the Wage and Compensation Plan as presented, which will take effect February 26, 2026. Seconded by Councilor Hildreth **Discussion:** Councilor Bogert asked if these were union positions? No.

The motion *passed with all in favor.* 6-0

21.B. Request support for the expansion of natural gas supply in the City of Laconia and the greater Lakes Region

Liberty Utilities has issued a moratorium on adding any new addresses for natural gas service in the City of Laconia and surrounding communities due to a lack of capacity. Currently, only portions of the greater Downtown and Lakeport areas are serviced by natural gas. However, even though a property may abut a natural gas line, the property may not be permitted to connect to the line due to a lack of pressure and capacity.

Representatives from Liberty Utilities, Senator Tim Lang, and Executive Councilor Kenney met with the Tilton Selectboard at their December 4, 2025, meeting. During that meeting, Liberty Utilities mentioned the original pipeline built from Concord to Tilton was built in the 60s and did not anticipate the growth the Lakes Region experienced in the 70s and 80s. Rather than upgrade the line, Liberty constructed a plant in Tilton to supplement the line with truck deliveries of LNG to offset costs in the winter. However, the continued growth in the region has led to this supplemental plant to run continuously in the winter which it was not designed to do. Both the line and the supplemental plant are only capable of serving the current demand in the early 2000s. Liberty examined the possibility of increasing the original 6-inch line with a 12-inch line in the early 2000s. In 2016, Liberty added an additional 5½ miles of pipeline to Loudon which increased capacity slightly. However, this pipeline is not suitable to meet current and future demand needs for the area. Liberty claims at least another 10 miles of pipeline needs to be added or upgraded in order to meet current and future demand in the area. They have enough funding to begin preliminary engineering over a two-year period, but they anticipate another two to three years to construct the pipeline expansion. Liberty does not believe the current load justifies the cost of expanding the pipeline. Instead, Liberty has focused on replacing older pipes in Southern New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

The State's position is this issue is solely the responsibility of a private entity and not the State. However, the State tasked the Department of Energy with creating a 10-Year State Energy Strategy. The 2018, 2022, and 2025 Strategies acknowledge that Natural Gas is the most plentiful and cost-effective energy resource currently available and that the State has not developed adequate infrastructure to supply it. The State cannot on one hand assume the responsibility for strategically planning the development and expansion of natural gas infrastructure and then claim no

responsibility for its implementation on the other. At the same time, the State has been promoting economic and housing development at record levels without any regard to the infrastructure currently available to support it. Laconia and the Lakes Region have seen record levels of growth in recent years, making this a regional issue that can only be addressed by the affected municipalities working with the State and Liberty Utilities to address it.

Currently, the Planning Department has been in communication with their counterparts in Franklin, Tilton, Gilford, Belmont, and Meredith to discuss this issue. As the largest and fastest-growing municipality in the Lakes Region, it is imperative that Laconia supports the efforts to reduce heating costs and lay the groundwork for future economic development in the region. The Planning Department is now coming before the City Council to raise awareness of the lack of natural gas capacity and infrastructure to adequately support current and future demand and formally request the Council's support to work with the State, Liberty Utilities, and our neighboring communities to pursue meaningful solutions that support our economic growth and affordability needs.

Fiscal Impact: Natural gas is the cheapest heating fuel source. As of January 12, it is 33% cheaper than Electric Heat Pumps, 62% cheaper than Oil, and 156% cheaper than Propane.

Staff Recommendation: The Planning Department recommends the City Council support its endeavor to secure expanded infrastructure and natural gas for the City and the Lakes Region.

Councilor made a Soucy motion to support the Planning Department to work with the State, Liberty Utilities, and neighboring communities to expand natural gas infrastructure and increase capacity to reduce heating costs for businesses and residents and support future economic development in the City and Lakes Region. Seconded by Councilor Bogert **Discussion:** Councilor Bogert asked if this will create a letter that the City Council can send to the Governors Office? Manager Beattie stated yes most likely. Councilor Soucy stated he remembered when they brought the pipe up and stopped it just before the Race Track in Loudon.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

21.C. **Resolution 2026-02 - Request for funding for milfoil treatment of Paugus Bay and Lake Opechee**

The NHDES Exotic Species Program has awarded the City of Laconia a grant to fund up to 50% of project costs for aquatic plant control remediation in Paugus Bay and Lake Opechee. This is an annual project that removes invasive species currently present in Paugus Bay and Lake Opechee and mitigates their recurrence. NHDES works with the Planning Department to identify locations for plant control to be completed, hires contractors to complete work, and returns for post remediation testing.

The City's share of the grant is \$57,100 which is 50% of the total cost of the project. The Lake Opechee Preservation Association (LOPA) has offered to reimburse the City for 50% of its share for remediation work in Lake Opechee. This effectively makes the total cost to the City \$52,407.81 which is a \$7,407.81 increase from last year's appropriation of \$45,000. The breakdown of cost is as follows:

Project Cost: \$114,200.00

NHDES Grant: (\$57,100.00)

City Share: \$57,100.00

LOPA Reimbursement: (\$4,692.19)

Total Cost to City: \$52,407.81

Fiscal Impact: The total cost to the City is \$52,407.81. The City's share will be expended from the FY27 Administration Non-Departmental budget.

Staff Recommendation: The Planning Department recommends moving this grant acceptance and appropriation request to a Public Hearing on February 9, 2026.

Councilor Haynes made a motion to waive a reading of Resolution 2026-02 in its entirety and to read by title only. Seconded by Councilor Hoffman **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

Councilor Soucy made a motion to move a first reading of Resolution 2026-02, relative to the acceptance of a 2026 NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Exotic Aquatic Plant Control Grant in the amount of \$57,100.00 and appropriate \$57,100.00 to the Administration Non-Departmental account. Seconded by Councilor Bogert **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

Councilor Hildreth made a motion to schedule a Public Hearing on February 9, 2026 during the regular Council meeting to gather public input prior to adoption of Resolution 2026-02. Seconded by Councilor Hoffman **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

21.D. **Review and discussion of the 2026 East Coast Watercross Race on Lake Opechee**

East Coast Watercross is looking to hold their second annual race in Laconia from June 5 to June 7, 2026. They held their first annual race in Laconia on May 30th to June 1, 2025, which was well-attended. City staff were heavily involved in the review and approval of the event, and they had no issues with the preparation leading up to or the clean-up after the event. In addition to bringing racers and fans to contribute to the local economy, this was also a great opportunity for the Laconia Little League to earn money for the program by operating the concession stand for the event.

As of tonight's meeting, the event has been reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission for use of Opechee Park, NHDES for use of the shoreline and Lake Opechee, and has been reviewed by the Conservation Commission. It is currently being reviewed by Marine Patrol for their approval and conditions, and an application has been submitted to the Special Events Review Committee for their review and approval at their next meeting on February 4, 2026. City staff wanted to provide the City Council with an opportunity to review the proposed event and ask questions prior to final review and approval by the Special Events Review Committee.

Fiscal Impact: There is no request for funding for this event. The event brought several dozen racers and fans to the City last year which contributed to the local economy and greatly supported the Laconia Little League.

Staff Recommendation: The Planning Department recommends the City Council review the proposed event and ask questions to address any concerns they may have.

Council Discussion: The Council met the event organizers; they learned about the event and how it went last year and what the plans are for this year. The council was satisfied with how the event is planned and they wished the organizer good weather and good luck.

21.E. **Discussion regarding Social Districts**

Manager Beattie presented some talking points to the city council regarding a Social District plan for

the City of Laconia. He handed out the existing NH RSA and a map with an area he drew out on a map of the downtown. The district will only be on public property, not private property.

Manager Beattie stated that they would look to do one area as a trial basis before looking to make another district in another part of the city.

Councilor Conant wants to know how the Police department will be able to enforce this, what the extra cost will be to make sure it is enforced.

There was a discussion between Councilor Soucy and Councilor Bogert about expanding the area on the map given and having other parameters for only specific events. Manager Beattie reminded the council that we already do this for specific events through the fire department.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that this matter be referred to the Public Safety Subcommittee for further review.

Councilor Conant made a motion to refer the matter of Social Districts to the Public Safety Subcommittee for further review. Seconded by Councilor Soucy **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

22. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

22.A. Resolution 2026-01 - Relative to acceptance of an award in the amount of \$26,405.00 from the Department of Safety Homeland Security Grant Program for the purchase of SWAT/SOU equipment for the Laconia Police Department

The City has applied to the New Hampshire Department of Safety for grant funding in the amount of \$26,405.00 to purchase SWAT/SOU equipment through the Homeland Security Grant Program.

At the January 12, 2026 City Council meeting a motion was approved to schedule a Public Hearing on this matter; that Public Hearing was held earlier this evening.

Fiscal Impact: None- The entire cost of this equipment is covered by the Homeland Security Grant, there is no local match requirement.

Items approved for purchase:

Binoculars, Quantity 15, Cost \$13,500.00

Flashlights, Quantity 20, Cost \$4,000.00

Eye Protection, Quantity 20, Cost \$3,000.00

Radio Mic Assembly (for gas mask) Quantity 20, Cost \$5,905.00

Total \$26,405.00

Councilor Soucy made a motion to waive a reading of Resolution 2026-01 in its entirety and to read by title only. Seconded by Councilor Conant **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

Councilor Hildreth made a motion to move a second reading of Resolution 2026-01 relative to acceptance of an award in the amount of \$26,405.00 from the Department of Homeland Security

Grant Program for the purchase of SWAT/SOU equipment for the Laconia Police Department. Seconded by Councilor Soucy **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

Councilor Conant made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-01 relative to acceptance of an award in the amount of \$26,405.00 from the Department of Homeland Security Grant Program for the purchase of SWAT/SOU equipment for the Laconia Police Department, and to authorize the City Manager to sign any documents in relation to this matter. Seconded by Councilor Hildreth **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

23. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

23.A. **Master Plan**

23.B. **Milfoil Treatment funding requests**

23.C. **Sewer & Water Master Plan**

23.D. **Single Stream Recycling/Concord Co-op/Solid Waste disposal cost reductions**

23.E. **Strategic Planning/Goal Setting**

23.F. **WOW Trail**

23.G. **Weirs Beach Restoration Project**

23.H. **Fair St/Court St traffic problems and accidents**

24. **Any other business that may come before the Council**

25. **NON-PUBLIC SESSION (According to RSA 91-A:3, II)**

Councilor Hildreth made a motion to go into nonpublic session according to RSA 91-A:3, II. (d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. Seconded by Councilor Soucy **Discussion:** None.

By Roll Call Vote:

Councilor Hildreth- Yes

Councilor Soucy- Yes

Councilor Hoffman-Yes

Councilor Haynes- Yes

Councilor Bogert- Yes

Councilor Conant- Yes

The ***motion passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

The nonpublic session began at 8:13 PM.

Councilor Soucy made a motion to return to public session. Seconded by Councilor Bogert. **Discussion:** None.

By Roll Call Vote:

Councilor Hildreth- Yes

Councilor Soucy- Yes

Councilor Hoffman- Yes

Councilor Haynes- Yes

Councilor Bogert- Yes

Councilor Conant- Yes

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

The public session was reconvened at 8:21 PM.

Councilor Soucy made a motion not to seal the minutes for 6 months. Seconded by Councilor Bogert.
Discussion: None.

By Roll Call Vote:

Councilor Hildreth- Yes

Councilor Soucy- Yes

Councilor Hoffman- Yes

Councilor Haynes- Yes

Councilor Bogert- Yes

Councilor Conant- Yes

The ***motion passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

26. **ADJOURNMENT**

Councilor Conant made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilor Bogert. **Discussion:** None.

The motion ***passed with all in favor.*** 6-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Gargano, City Clerk