

Town of Keene – Regular Town Board Meeting

9.29.26 #18

5:30 PM – Town Hall

Vouchers: 785-818

Resolutions: 228-244

Abstract #17

Board Members Present:

Joe Pete Wilson, Supervisor; Robert Biesemeyer, Christopher Daly, Teresa Cheetham-Palen; Ms. Hough

Town Officials Present:

Robyn Shumer (Town Clerk), Ryan Hall (Superintendent of Roads), Savana Li (Water Superintendent)

Call to Order

Resolution 228 Supervisor Wilson called the meeting to order at 5:32 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Hough made a motion to approve the Board approved the September 9, 2026 Budget Workshop and Town Board meeting minutes as submitted, seconded by Ms. Palen, the motion carried unanimously. **Resolution 229.**

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

No comments were offered regarding matters not on the agenda.

TOWN OPERATIONS

Cemetery Requests

Motion to approve made by Ms. Hough, seconded by Ms. Palen, the motion carried unanimously, **resolution 230.**

The Board also considered a request from former Keene Allison Eddy and Patrick Gordon residents seeking eligibility for burial at Norton Cemetery. The Board discussed the Town's cemetery guidelines, the applicants' prior residence in Keene, and the availability of burial space, **Resolution 231.**

Highway Department

The Highway Department reported on a partnership with the Northern Forest Center and Essex County Soil and Water Conservation District to develop natural-material

sediment catch basins for use on the Town's steep dirt roads. The organizations have reviewed an earlier Town design and are working to develop improved methods that can be used throughout the Town. The Northern Forest Center is providing \$15,000 for pilot sites and development of a handbook for other communities.

The Highway Department is also preparing equipment for the upcoming snow season.

Water Department

The Board received an update regarding the ongoing testing of the water system following installation of the new screen. A 60-hour test was underway, with a 72-hour test anticipated as the next step if the current testing is successful.

OLD BUSINESS

2027 Tentative Budget

The Board discussed the proposed 2027 tentative budget. The Supervisor explained that the budget process is still in its early stages and that additional public discussion and review will occur before the budget is finalized.

The Board discussed increasing energy costs, diesel fuel, health insurance costs, declining transfer station revenue, court diversion revenue, recycling and composting costs, and other factors affecting the Town's finances.

The proposed tentative budget totals **\$2,492,211**, compared with a tax-cap amount of approximately **\$2,219,331**, resulting in an initial difference of approximately **\$272,880**. The Board discussed the potential use of fund balance, possible reductions or restructuring of services, and opportunities to increase revenues and reduce expenses.

A substantial portion of the discussion concerned the proposed elimination of Town funding for the Keene Public Library in the tentative budget. Members of the Library Board and members of the public spoke regarding the library's services, history, community use, interlibrary loan participation, grants, operating costs, and the potential consequences of reducing or eliminating Town funding. The Board also discussed the Town's relationship with the Keene Valley Library and the possibility of identifying other areas for savings.

The Board agreed that additional review of the budget is necessary, including examination of individual accounts, transfer station revenues and expenses, court diversion revenues, and other potential savings and revenue opportunities.

The Board then voted to approve the **2027 tentative budget** for submission, with the understanding that it remains subject to further review and revision during the budget process. The motion carried 4–1 via roll-call. Aye: Ms. Palen, Ms. Hough, Mr. Daly, Mr. Wilson. Nay: Mr. Biesemeyer, **resolution 232**.

TRANSFER STATION ELECTRICAL UPGRADES

The Board discussed the previously awarded contract for improvements at the transfer station, including building compliance work and an electrical upgrade involving a transformer. The contractor had raised concerns regarding the availability and cost of the transformer. The Board clarified that the existing contract remains in place and includes the option for the transformer upgrade. No change to the contract was made.

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND AWARDS

The Board reviewed applications for Community Enhancement Fund awards. The Board discussed eligibility requirements, including tourism and recreation purposes, community and visitor benefit, and the exclusion of ordinary operating expenses.

The Board agreed to approve the applications identified for funding, subject to verification of the final amounts. The total of the approved awards was approximately \$18931.28. CEF applications that were awarded are:

Little Peaks (\$12,190.00), Keene Arts (\$1,200), Keene Youth Commission (\$3,500), Judy Murthy's and Peg Wilson's request for community pickleball equipment (\$541.28), and a partial award to ATIS (1,500).

The motion was made by Ms. Hough, seconded by Mr. Biesemeyer, approved by all, the motion carried, **resolution 233**.

The Board also discussed the need to further clarify the goals and application criteria for future Community Enhancement Fund rounds and to consider establishing additional guidelines for repeat applicants.

MARCY FIELD ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT

The Board discussed the Marcy Field Accessibility Project. The Town received a \$3,000 grant from the Cloudsplitter Foundation and had agreed to provide additional funding for planning work. After soliciting proposals, the Town received one response from Tahawus Trails, **resolution 234**.

The Board discussed a proposed Phase 1 design contract, including site assessment, data gathering, conceptual site planning, and design development, at a cost of **\$4,700**. The Board approved the contract.

FISCAL STRESS SCORE

The Board reviewed the Town's 2025 fiscal stress score from the New York State Comptroller. The Town received no fiscal stress designation and had a score of **3.3 out of 100 (very good, low score!)**. The Board discussed the Town's fund balance, tax

rate, spending practices, and the importance of maintaining adequate reserves while addressing the challenges presented by the current budget.

The Board also discussed ongoing efforts to improve energy efficiency in Town buildings, including replacement of inefficient windows and doors.

EAST BRANCH COMMUNITY TRAILS PARKING AREA

The Board considered repairs to the parking area at the East Branch Community Trails campground. The proposed work, estimated at approximately **\$12,000**, would address potholes and improve winter plowing and safety at the Route 73 entrance. The Board discussed the use of Community Enhancement Fund funds for the project and was approved via roll call. Aye: Ms. Palen, Ms. Hough, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Daly. Nay: Mr. Biesemeyer, **resolution 235**.

The Board approved the expenditure for the repairs by roll-call vote.

FLOOD PLAIN LOCAL LAW

The Board returned to the proposed local law updating the Town's floodplain regulations.

The Board approved a resolution declaring the Town of Keene lead agency under SEQR, **resolution 236**.

The Board approved a resolution issuing a negative declaration under SEQR, motion made by Mr. Daly, seconded by Ms. Palen, approved by all, **resolution 237**.

The Board then approved the local law updating the Town's floodplain regulations. The resolution carried. Motion made by Ms. Palen, seconded by Mr. Biesemeyer, all approved **resolution 238**.

The Board noted that the local law will now proceed through the required filing and registration process with the appropriate state and federal agencies.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Palen made a motion to enter executive session at 7:07 PM, seconded by Mr. Daly, approved, **resolution 239**.

The Board entered executive session. Ms. Palen made a motion to return to public session at approximately 7:20 p.m., seconded by Mr. Biesemeyer, all approved, the Board reported that no decisions were made during executive session, **resolution 240**.

RESOLUTION – ESCROW ACCOUNT

The Board approved a resolution authorizing the Town Clerk to establish an escrow account for surplus tax payments. Motion made by Mr. Biesemeyer, seconded by Ms. Hough, approved by all, **resolution 241.**

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

The Board discussed the August bank statement and Supervisor's report. The reports were tabled until the October 13, 2026 meeting to allow Board members additional time for review.

ABSTRACTS AND BILLS

The Board approved the payment of online bills, motion made by Mr. Biesemeyer, seconded by Ms. Hough, all approved, **resolution 242.**

The Board also approved the audit and payment of monthly invoices, motion made by Ms. Palen, seconded by Mr. Biesemeyer, all approved, **resolution 243.**

COMMUNITY CENTER

The Board discussed a request to obtain an estimate for re-shingling the Community Center. A resident indicated a willingness to pay for the work if the estimate is reasonable. The Board agreed to place the matter on the agenda for the October 13, 2026 meeting for further discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Daly and seconded by Ms. Palen to adjourn. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 p.m. **resolution 244.**

Respectfully submitted,

Robyn Shumer
Town Clerk

B	C	D	E	F
	Abstract of Claims			
	9.29.2026			
Abstract #17, 2026	Town Board Meeting		Voucher #'s 785-818 Res. No.228-244	
Department	Prepaid Vouchers	Unpaid Vouchers	Total	
General	\$43,692.55	\$31,169.76		
Highway	\$158,827.54	\$140,927.34		
Library	\$114.63	\$114.63		
Water District #1	\$4,991.63	\$4,737.70		
Water District #2	\$173,829.70	\$173,314.13		
Roost Enhancement Tax	\$20,950.00	\$20,950.00		
Trust & Agency Fund				
Total:			\$0.00	
	\$402,406.05	\$371,213.56		
To the Supervisor,				
I certify that the vouchers listed above were audited by the Keene Town Board on	September 29, 2026			
and allowed in the amounts shown.				
You are hereby authorized and directed to pay the claimant the amount opposite his name.				
	9.29.2026			
Robyn Shumer, Town Clerk	Date			