

**CITY OF KEENE
NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**JOINT PLANNING BOARD/
PLANNING, LICENSES, AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, January 11, 2016

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Planning Board Members Present

Gary Spykman, Chairman
Nathaniel Stout, Vice-Chair
Christine Weeks
Andrew Bohannon
Tammy Adams, Alternate

**Planning, Licenses and Development
Committee Members Present**

David Richards, Chairman
Councilor George Hansel
Councilor Bettina Chadbourne
Councilor Robert Sutherland

Planning Board Members Not Present

Mayor Kendall Lane
Douglas Barrett
Pamela Russell Slack

**Planning, Licenses and Development
Committee Members Not Present**

Councilor Philip Jones

Staff Present

Rhett Lamb, Planning Director
Michele Chalice, Planner
Tara Kessler, Planner

1. Roll Call

Chair Richards called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and a roll call was taken.

2. Approval of meeting minutes - November 9, 2015

A motion was made by Bettina Chadbourne to approve the November 9, 2015 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by George Hansel.

Ms. Weeks noted the minutes included in the Committee's packet were from September 2015. Chair Spykman stated that there was a subsequent email from staff with the correct set attached to them. It was decided that approval of minutes would not happen until next month.

Councilor Chadbourne withdrew her motion. Councilor Hansel withdrew his second.

3. CMP Implementation Tasks

Planning Director, Rhett Lamb began by saying that the Joint Committee is the body in the city with a specific role to hold the preliminary public workshop process for changes to zoning ordinances that are submitted. Over the years, this body has also served to evaluate and provide oversight for the Comprehensive Master Plan process, which is the task before the Joint Committee this evening. In 2010, when the Master Plan was adopted the City Council agreed to assign the oversight of the Master Plan to the Joint Committee. In the past there have been presentations from outside agencies providing the Joint Committee with updates as to their work pertaining to implementing sections of the Master Plan.

Last year, former Councilors Hague and Duffy sent in a letter asking for a more formal look at the implementation of the Master Plan and the adoption of an implementation strategy. Now that the City is five years into the Plan, it is an important time to consider the next steps for its implementation. Mr. Lamb noted that some of the priority strategies included in the Plan are already underway, such as the land use code update.

Planner, Tara Kessler was the next speaker. Ms. Kessler noted the Committee's packet had a document that is organized around six focus areas, which relate to broader goals contained in the Master Plan. These focus areas were used to consolidate and organize the many strategies included in the Master Plan. Ms. Kessler reviewed the information contained in the handout with the Committee.

First Goal – Provide Quality Housing.

Strategies: Develop housing strategy; Offer diverse options; Improve quality and design; Support adaptive reuse and redevelopment; Focus on neighborhood planning; Increase affordability; Establish incentives; Offer educational workshops.

Ms. Kessler stated the master plan addresses the need for diverse housing, not just owner occupied housing, but also two and three-bedroom homes, which can meet diverse needs and preferences. As far as improving quality and design, she stated much of Keene's housing stock was built prior to 1930, and there is opportunity to redevelop existing buildings to support adaptive reuse. The Master Plan contains a strategy to improve neighborhood planning, and to encourage the development of service centers in core neighborhood center areas. There is also an emphasis on the affordability of housing as well as offering educational workshops to homeowners on a variety of issues.

Ms. Kessler then reviewed projects undertaken and key trends experienced by the city since the plan was developed. She referenced the Sustainable Energy Efficiency (SEED) District, which was developed in 2010 to incentivize more green and energy-efficient buildings. The Mills student housing development was built using green building standards in exchange for flexibility in density and dimensional zoning requirements. Ms. Kessler stated that since the development of the Mills and Arcadia Hall, there has been a noticeable transition of students living in rental housing in residential neighborhoods to these student-focused complexes. Neighborhoods are now navigating a transition from student rentals to units that could become owner-occupied or housing for young professionals. Ms. Chalice noted that while the SEED District offers incentives for meeting green building standards, they are optional. She noted that Arcadia Hall, which is located in the SEED District, did not take advantage of the incentives offered; however, the Mills did.

Ms. Kessler stated that a trend facing the region is the aging of our population. She noted that this trend might have implications on our housing stock, and whether it can meet the needs of an aging population, including those who wish to age in place. Conversely, there is a need to examine whether the housing stock is attractive to young professionals, who are needed to help support this aging population.

Ms. Kessler noted that when the Master Plan was adopted there were two vacant positions in the Code Enforcement Department. These positions were recently filled. This additional staff is helping the city enhance its efforts to enforce the building codes and standards.

Second Goal - Develop a Complete transportation system

Strategies: Improve existing condition; Support and promote alternative transportation; Enhance transportation options; Implement complete streets; Participate in regional planning; Address downtown parking; Update land use regulations; Enhance use of regional airport

Ms. Kessler stated the strategies grouped under this goal are quite comprehensive. The Plan includes strategies that address maintaining the condition of the existing transportation system, including roads, bridges, and sidewalks, as well as strategies that seek to develop and support alternative transportation, and Complete Streets. Complete Streets are roadways that are safe for all types of users. Ms. Kessler noted there is also a strategy encouraging participation in regional transportation planning, as our roadways do not end at city boundaries.

Ms. Kessler then highlighted some of the relevant projects that have been undertaken in the city since the Plan was adopted. She reiterated this was not a comprehensive list.

Ms. Kessler noted over the past five years there have been number of projects not only to support the use of trails but also to enhance use of the trail system. For example, the North Bridge and Roundhouse T Phase II projects have been completed, and the South Bridge is scheduled to be completed in Fiscal Year 2017.

Ms. Kessler noted in the last year much has been accomplished around the concept of Complete Streets. In 2015, a resolution was adopted that underscored the city's commitment to Complete Streets, and design guidelines were drafted for use by city staff when working in the public right of way to ensure Complete Streets elements are considered. The city has also been working on a number of Safe Routes to School projects, many of which support the Complete Streets concepts.

Ms. Kessler noted the Planning Board's development standards were updated to better promote the concept of comprehensive access management and the city has been moving forward to support alternative fuel infrastructure. There is a new electric vehicle charging system off the Cheshire Rail Trail on Gilbo Avenue and another one at Antioch University.

Third Goal – Protect and Care for our Natural Environment

Promote green buildings; Identify ways to reduce waste; Improve energy efficiency and conservation; Implement a climate action plan; Develop plans for parks, open space conservation; Update regulations; Preserve land use change tax; Establish urban forestry programs

Ms. Kessler noted since 2010, the city has adopted the Hillside Protection Ordinance and the Surface Water Protection Ordinance. In 2013, the city completed the Greenhouse Gas Inventory for the period from 2006 to 2008. Another update is scheduled for this year using 2015 data. In 2012, the Parks and Recreation Active/Passive Recreation Master Plan was completed. A number of renewable energy efforts have also been undertaken. These include entering into a contract with Honeywell (an energy services company), and installing a solar array on City Hall. In addition, a number of businesses in the community are also installing solar arrays, including the Monadnock Food Coop, who is partnering with the Monadnock Sustainability Network to install Keene's first community solar project.

Fourth Goal - Provide for a balanced local economy

Strategies - Attract and recruit living wage jobs; Establish a coordinated approach to economic development; Support local business retention and growth; Identify incentives

Consider expanding TIF District; Foster creative economy; Establish experiential learning opportunities

Ms. Kessler stated the strategies contained in the Plan emphasize the the need to establish a coordinated effort to attract businesses to the community. Some strategies suggest collaborating with organizations such as the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce. Other strategies refer to the importance of staying informed and connected with regional economic development ideas. There is also a need to expand experiential learning opportunities and connecting high school and college-age students with learning opportunities in the community.

There has been support for retaining and growing local businesses through the Hannah Grimes Center and Monadnock Buy Local's programs. Ms. Kessler noted the community and region weathered the recession of 2009 fairly well in comparison to the rest of the nation. She noted this resiliency is attributed to the diverse industry base that exists in this area.

Ms. Kessler noted a study was completed in 2008 for the Monadnock region which indicated the creative economy sector contributes \$16 million dollars each year to the local economy. She noted that Monadnock Arts Alive was created to help coordinate and support the various arts/culture organizations in the region. She noted that Monadnock Arts Alive is seeking to update the 2008 study to provide more current information about the economic impact of the arts.

Ms. Kessler stated since the adoption of the Master Plan, the city has undertaken a number of rezoning initiatives in an effort to encourage and promote many of the Plan's objectives, including economic development. The SEED District, which was described earlier in the meeting, incentivizes green building and redevelopment in the downtown. The Gilbo Ave Overlay District was adopted to encourage streetscape improvements, architecture and building development patterns similar to the city's Main Street. More recently, the city has been working on the Marlboro Street Rezoning Initiative. This project seeks to reinvigorate mixed land uses in formerly single-use areas and encourage neighborhood scale businesses.

Fifth Goal - Balance growth and the Provision of Infrastructure

Strategies - Enhance broadband; Improve and maintain transportation infrastructure; Develop water conservation program; Actively manage stormwater and prevent large scale flooding; Establish long-term energy security strategy; Support dig-once policy

Ms. Kessler noted that many of the infrastructure strategies included in the Plan are focused on stormwater management and increasing flood storage. The Woodland Cemetery wetland restoration project, which is scheduled for construction this spring, aims to increase flood storage. The purpose of this project is to restore one acre of a historically filled wetland. In 2014, the city worked with a contractor to significantly improve areas of the Beaver Brook channel. In addition, the City of Keene undertook nearly \$16 million dollars of infrastructure projects this past construction season, including an update to the Waste Water Treatment Facility, complete streets projects, and improvements to surface parking lots.

Sixth Goal - Support and Strengthen Community Vitality

Strategies - Support and expand skill buildings resource and programs; Encourage festivals and events; Encourage civic engagement; Support and enhance access to fresh local foods; Improve overall community health and well-being; Preserve and promote heritage and culture; Increase presence of arts and culture within public spaces

Ms. Kessler noted that strategies related to this goal area are broad and varied. They include ensuring the availability of a wide range of community-based education programs and resources; encouraging festivals and events to promote diversity and our heritage; enhancing access to fresh local foods; and, improve overall community health and well-being.

Ms. Kessler noted since the Plan was adopted, the Mayor and Dr. Huot, President of Keene State College, partnered to form a joint commission that would address areas of mutual concerns and issues between the city and the college. This group has been meeting since early 2015 and has produced a report. They focused on issues such as housing, civic engagement and are now focusing on parking and the tax base.

With respect to preserving our heritage, Ms. Kessler noted the city recently completed drainage improvements to preserve the Stone Arch Bridge, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. She also noted there have been numerous projects to support increased access to local food. For instance, the Monadnock Food Coop was constructed in 2013, and Monadnock Menus, which is a program run by the Cheshire County Conservation District, has been creating opportunities to enhance availability of local foods in restaurants and cafeterias across the region.

Ms. Kessler concluded her presentation and stated the goal of reviewing the strategies is to set the stage for a future discussion on prioritization on these action items.

Planner, Michele Chalice, referred to page 131 of the Comprehensive Master Plan, which refers to the following 2010 Priority Implementation Strategies:

- *Review and update City's land use and zoning regulations*
Ms. Chalice noted the city is in the process of beginning this project, which is deemed the top implementation strategy for the city.
- *Adopt low impact development standards*
Ms. Chalice noted the Planning Board updated the Development Standards in 2013 to address LID and to include drainage, sedimentation and erosion control standards.
- *Provide city leadership to the Healthy Monadnock 2020*
Ms. Chalice noted the Mayor declared May 16, 2014 to be Healthy Monadnock 2020 Champion Day and acknowledged the efforts of a group of 12 organizations, including the city, at implementing policy changes to make healthy choices the easy choice for all employees.
- *Continue to manage and improve the transportation network*
Ms. Chalice noted the city has undertaken a number of efforts to implement complete streets as well as examining regional transportation issues.
- *Continue to update and implement Keene's climate change plan and adaptation action plan*
Ms. Chalice noted that aspects of the Climate Change Plan and Adaptation Action Plan have been implemented or are being addressed. For example, the solar array on the City Hall roof and the Honeywell contract are projects that relate to the many strategies and goals included in this Plan.

- *Pursue the development of a community wide weatherization program*
Ms. Chalice mentioned that the city is not yet ready to develop a community wide weatherization program.
- *Promote use of the city's trail and sidewalk networks*
Ms. Chalice noted the city is fortunate to have the City Manager's support to pursue funding for projects that would further develop and improve the trail and sidewalk network. Recent projects include the South Bridge multiuse trail bridge, and the Cheshire Rail Trail loop.
- *Establish neighborhood plans for each of Keene's neighborhoods*
Ms. Chalice noted that City has more work to do on this item. The city is working on promoting neighborhood nodes. She used Court Street as an example of where there is a service center forming adjacent to residential development. She noted there is a Dunkin Donuts, roundabout, dentist office and soon there will be a bank in this same location. The hope is to address each of the neighborhoods in the future.

Ms. Chalice stated that staff intend to have a discussion with the Joint Committee at its next meeting to begin setting project priorities for the next five or more years.

Ms. Weeks stated that she is impressed with this document and with the amount of work that has gone into it. She commended staff for their work. Mr. Stout reiterated Ms. Weeks' comments and asked if the Committee is limited to commenting on what is before them today. He referred to a recent air quality incident involving smoke from wood stoves. He noted the issue of wood smoke impacting air quality is a health hazard and this item is not referenced in the document. He hoped at the next meeting there could be time to address and discuss items that are not mentioned in the Plan. Mr. Stout stressed he was not being critical of the document in front of the Committee and commended the work that has gone into it. He also asked about the issue of elderly living facilities, which is another item not discussed in the Master Plan.

Planning, Licenses and Development (PLD) Committee Chair Richards asked the Planning Director whether the categories presented today should be addressed separately, and whether there is an opportunity to address items that are not included in this Plan. Mr. Lamb stated that staff had envisioned facilitating an informal discussion/exercise at the next meeting. However, he noted staff is open to anything this group wants to do. It was decided the items discussed in staff's presentation as well as the items brought forward by Committee members would be considered at next month's meeting.

Councilor Chadbourne with reference to the new student apartment complexes asked whether there has been an impact on existing multi-family properties and how many student rentals might be vacant as a result of this transition. Ms. Kessler stated that staff does not have data readily available on this question but stated this is something that could be looked at as part of a larger housing strategy or plan.

Ms. Weeks stated that broadband is something she is interested in and feels it is important if the city wants to attract businesses to this area. Ms. Weeks mentioned that a recent presentation indicated that although city government has made an effort to reduce its carbon footprint, the community at large has not been as successful. She asked whether improving weatherization would cut down on the carbon footprint. She feels different options should be considered to

encourage homeowners to invest in weatherization plans. She suggested the city offer energy audits with respect to weatherization at a reduced cost to homeowners.

Ms. Weeks stated that the aging population is another issue she is interested in and is glad the city approved adding the Continuing Care Retirement Community to the Institutional Zone. Ms. Weeks also addressed healthy living and options the city could take to help encourage physical activity. For instance, the city could install signs that indicate how many steps it takes to walk from point A to point B and make it some type of community activity.

Councilor Hansel stated that Eversource has programs available for performing energy audits and offering discounts for weatherization options through their vendors.

Councilor Sutherland felt it would be interesting to examine the housing stock beyond Keene as there are individuals who seek less expensive alternatives outside the city. This might help the City as it plans for housing and making zoning decisions.

Chair Spykman thanked Ms. Kessler and Ms. Chalice for their work. Chair Spykman stated that since the Master Plan was adopted the items that appear to have received the most attention are those embraced by interest groups such as Pathways for Keene. He felt it would be useful as a community to identify and examine the areas that do not have interest groups to promote them. He felt the Joint Committee should give some thought to these items and asked the Committee to think of such areas for their next meeting.

Councilor Kahn referred to economic development and asked that this item be looked at in three ways: what would attract people to this region; what would attract businesses to this region; and, in the event people need resources to relocate to this region, how they obtain these resources. Councilor Kahn stated that he feels the city does not have a growth strategy and this should be the number one issue.

Mr. Stout asked the Councilor to define growth and noted that he feels age has to be considered here as well. Councilor Kahn stated this region is attracting a lot of seniors but are also losing a lot of seniors, and there could be many aspects that could be highlighted to attract this population. Mr. Stout noted that younger age groups are leaving Keene as well. Councilor Kahn stated without a good workforce it is difficult to attract the types of businesses that attract younger age groups. Ms. Weeks asked Councilor Kahn whether he was referring to a central location people can go to when they are ready to relocate to this area. Councilor Kahn replied in the affirmative and stated this region has a lot of potential which needs to be used. Ms. Weeks added the city website needs a lot of work as well.

Mr. Lamb indicated that while the way in which the city does economic development needs to be examined, the Joint Committee might not be the ones identifying the solution(s). However, by choosing this item as a priority strategy, the Committee is choosing to work on it. Ultimately, it will need to be a city-wide initiative.

Councilor Sutherland felt it was also important figure out why businesses are leaving this area. He questioned what the city can do to better encourage investment in Keene. He asked, 'why are businesses, such as Smiths Medical and Timken, shrinking?'

Councilor Chadbourne stated the Chamber of Commerce has a group that is talking about branding this region and suggested that they make a presentation on this issue to the city and encourage the city to be involved in this discussion. Councilor Chadbourne noted that during a

conversation in her neighborhood the issue came up about two things the neighborhoods are losing – schools and convenience stores.

Councilor Hansel stated that he would like to support the Planning Director in the next step of this process to identify priority strategies.

Mr. Bohannon reiterated what was mentioned earlier about attracting and retaining young professionals and felt broadband is an issue that needs to be looked at closely.

Ms. Chalice stated that even though staff has streamlined this process it is not staff's intention to preclude discussion on other items.

Mr. Stout noted he feels there might be different types of implementation they could consider and some might be easier to implement than others.

Chair Richards referred to the discussion about Code Enforcement and stated he was under the impression the city was going to move away from a complaint driven system and asked whether someone from Code Enforcement could update this Committee on this issue. Councilor Chadbourne stated that some of the complaints were regarding rental units and most of them were valid. She added that the College now has a policy that requires landlords who want to post or advertise their rental on the College's website to undergo a voluntary inspection by the City.

With that, Mr. Lamb asked the Committee to come back with a list of items to discuss at next month's meeting related to the prioritization of Master Plan strategies.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Krishni Pahl,
Minute Taker

Respectfully edited by,
Tara Kessler,
Planner
January 29, 2016