

City of Keene
New Hampshire

COLLEGE CITY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 23, 2016

4:00 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present:

Co-Chair Chris Cusack
Paula Jessup
Chris Hrynowski
Marcia Kayser
Dottie Morris (arrived 4:36 p.m.)
Darryl Masterson
Robin Picard
Kelly Ricaurte
Hannah Elliott

Members Not Present:

Dick Berry
Co-Chair Dean Eaton
Atticus Rollins
Bettina Chadbourne, Councilor
Phil Jones, Councilor

Staff Present:

Andy Robinson, KSC Liaison
Tara Kessler, Planner

1. Call to Order

Co-Chair Cusack called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. and introductions were made. He introduced the newest member of the Commission, Hannah Elliott. Ms. Elliott is a geography major and senior at Keene State College.

2. Minutes of April 25, 2016

Marcia Kayser made a motion to approve the minutes of April 25, 2016. Darryl Masterson seconded this motion and Commission members offered the following amendments to these minutes.

Chris Hrynowski noted that on the top of page 3, the reference to having more Wednesday classes should be changed to say, “moving to having more classes on a Wednesday/Friday schedule.”

Co-Chair Cusack noted that he was surprised by a comment made by the Police Chief in a report shared at the last meeting that he feels the lack of a Pumpkinfest in 2015 was not the primary contributor to the significant decrease in noise complaints in the fall semester of 2015 compared to previous year.

The motion to approve the minutes of April 25, 2016, including the changes discussed, was approved by a unanimous vote.

3. Discussion of the Draft Commission Report

Co-Chair Cusack noted that the Foreword section is the newest addition to the Report and asked the Commission to review and discuss this section and other changes or edits they might have.

Ms. Hrynowski noted that the idea to form the College City Commission preceded the 2014 Pumpkin Festival and that this might be important to note. Ms. Ricaurte suggested including language similar to the following: “In the months leading to the fall of 2014, the Mayor and the President of KSC met to discuss the formation of and develop a charge for a College-City Commission.” Ms. Kessler noted that she would incorporate this language into the Foreword.

Co-Chair Cusack suggested that the statistics provided on page 4 of the Report related to noise and alcohol violations be converted to percentages. Ms. Kessler confirmed that she would make this change.

Mr. Masterson made a comment regarding actions that have been taken to improve student/community relationships. He noted that prior to the College’s Commencement, neighboring students left a note at his residence stating they would be hosting a registered party and if any issues arise to contact Officer Kyle Macie. Commission members explained that there is a registration process for students to inform the College and the Police Department that a party will take place. If the students hosting the registered party encounter any issues they can contact the Police and will not be held responsible. If the party is not registered, then all students involved are subject to enforcement. Robin Picard noted that this is helpful for both the students and the Police, who can become informed of a party in advance. She noted that Officer Macie is no longer in the position of Campus Liaison Officer and a new Officer will be filling this position. Ms. Elliott noted that many students register their parties and that this information was shared at the off-campus orientation. Ms. Picard suggested that the act of registering a party could be referred to as responsible hosting and that there should be a note in the Report about the College working closely with the City to encourage responsible hosting of social gatherings. Ms. Kessler noted that she would add this statement in the section of the Foreword discussing the Campus Liaison Officer.

Co-Chair Cusack noted that he thinks the draft is in a format that is ready to be shared with the Mayor and Dr. Huot for their input.

Ms. Kayser made a motion to approve that staff submit a draft of the College City Commission Report to the Mayor and Dr. Huot for their review. Ms. Jessup seconded this motion, which was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Ricaurte noted that once the Report is finalized the Commission should plan an Editorial Board meeting the Keene Sentinel, President Huot, and Mayor Lane. Ms. Kessler noted that she has been acquiring photos to include in the Report to make it more consumable of a document.

4. Discussion of the Proposed Commission Structure / Rules of Procedure

Ms. Kessler stated that the Commission has discussed and agreed at previous meetings to become a long-standing committee of the City of Keene. At the last meeting, the Commission discussed its thoughts on a governance structure, membership terms, and the Commission charge. Ms. Kessler shared a draft charter in advance of the meeting and asked members for input on this draft.

Ms. Kayser noted that the current language is not clear as to whether the two student positions are included in the total of seven College members. Mr. Robinson questioned whether there should be special considerations for term limits for certain positions, such as the Coordinator of Student and Community Relations and the Media Relations Manager. He stated that these are important positions to have represented on the Commission. Ms. Ricaurte, the current Media Relations Manager at the College, noted that she thinks it is important to have other people circulate on and off the Commission; however, she does feel it is important for her position to be involved with the Commission, whether as a voting member or another function. Ms. Picard noted that she thinks it is important to have these positions represented. While Ms. Ricaurte offered agreement with Ms. Picard, she noted her concern that this would limit participation from other staff at the College. The group discussed the idea of making these positions ex-officio, non-voting members. Ms. Jessup noted that if they are non-voting members it might not have an impact. Ms. Kayser suggested that the College have seven members, not including the two student members. She explained that there are times when the student members may not be able to attend. Mr. Robinson questioned whether the term of the student position should be two-years instead of one-year. Co-Chair Cusack noted that these might be questions for the President and the mayor.

Ms. Kessler explained that the Commission has the flexibility to establish its term limits. Co-Chair Cusack asked the Commission if they feel a 3-year term is reasonable, or if it would be a disincentive to serve. Ms. Jessup noted that this period is reasonable for her, but she cannot speak on behalf of other business owners. Mr. Masterson noted that he also thinks the three-year term is reasonable. He also thinks having a term limit of two consecutive terms is sufficient. Mr. Robinson addressed the question of whether term limits should be imposed for all members. Ms. Ricaurte stated that she thinks it is important to have term limits; especially, given the changes experienced in the College environment after four consecutive years. Ms. Jessup noted that she would be in favor of no term limits, as she would like to maintain involvement with the Commission into the future. She noted that she feels many of the topics discussed by the Commission affect the community and her business. Ms. Ricaurte questioned whether there is a way for individuals to continue their involvement as a member of the public instead of as a voting member of the Commission. Mr. Masterson noted that the Commission meets at a time that is not convenient for many individuals.

Ms. Kayser shared a recent article in the Keene Sentinel written by John McGauly, "How to ruin a Keene neighborhood - and how to fix one, too." The Commission entered into a discussion on the topic of student rental housing, vacancies, and what landlords are doing to incentivize student rentals. Ms. Picard noted that there was a recent meeting of local landlords where some of those in attendance referenced the Sentinel article and agreed with its emphasis on landlords taking responsibility for maintaining their properties. Ms. Elliot noted that although the off campus housing orientation is helpful, it should happen earlier in the year. She noted that leases for off campus housing are often signed a year in advance of occupancy and that the pressure to sign a lease early in the year is immense. Ms. Picard noted that many of the landlords at the meeting she attended acknowledge that this is a bad practice. The Commission discussed how many students are not aware of their rights as tenants and there is a need for greater awareness and education for both students and parents. Ms. Picard noted that there is a lot her office and the College is doing to enhance education about off campus housing, including holding workshops

for parents. She also noted that the City's Code Enforcement does conduct visual inspections and responds to complaints and that enforcement needs to extend beyond the City and College to landlords.

Ms. Hrynowski made a motion to approve the draft Commission Charter and to share it with Dr. Huot and the Mayor for their review. Ms. Morris seconded this motion, which was approved by unanimous vote.

5. Other or New Business

a. International Town Gown Association Update

Ms. Picard noted that there is an opportunity through the International Town Gown Association (ITGA) to apply to become one of 5-7 colleges selected across the nation to participate in a project examining the distribution and use of alcohol in a college community. The ITGA would like to see College City Commissions explore this issue and will supply training, resources and potentially funding. She noted that this opportunity would involve having mystery shoppers and student/citizen actors to uncover the underage sale of alcohol. She explained that more information on this opportunity would be shared at the upcoming ITGA annual conference in June, which she will be attending. However, before the College would consider applying, they would like the support of the Commission. The applications for this opportunity are due at the end of June. Ms. Ricourte noted that she is interested in learning how the data that is obtained through this project would be utilized. Mr. Robinson asked if the College were selected to participate, would it place a strain on Ms. Picard's position and her office. Ms. Picard noted that she is trying to form partnerships on this topic and this would provide an avenue to do so. Co-Chair Cusack asked if students would be paid to be actors and if this would be covered by the grant. Ms. Picard stated that the College is not interested in incurring any expense. Ms. Ricourte and others expressed concern about having students acting drunk in the community, and how this might impact the image of students and the College. Mr. Robinson noted that it would be important to have the cooperation of the Keene Police Department. Hearing the many concerns expressed by Commission members, Ms. Picard suggested that she will share more information on this opportunity with Ms. Kessler, who will share it with the Commission in advance of the next meeting.

b. Main Street Pedestrian Safety Update

Ms. Kessler noted that City staff and the College's Campus Safety Director recently met to discuss safety improvements at crosswalks on Main Street near Westwood Nursing Home and Elliot Street. A design has been proposed to improve lighting, visibility, and speed at these crosswalks. However, these improvements would be a temporary measure until a more formal plan for pedestrian/vehicular safety is developed and funding is obtained to implement longer-term improvements. Ms. Kessler discussed the proposed design in more detail.

Ms. Elliott inquired about the possibility of reducing the speed limit at certain times of day. Other Commission members discussed the possibility of reducing the speed limit permanently in this area. Ms. Ricourte suggested reaching out to the Safety and Occupational Health program.

Ms. Picard mentioned that she attended a recent Complete Streets workshop in Keene and there was mention of funding for improvements. Ms. Kessler will follow up with the presenters of this workshop to obtain this information.

Ms. Jessup suggested the Commission conduct a walking tour of Main Street to observe the pedestrian crossing conditions. Commission members agreed that this would be a good idea.

Ms. Jessup encouraged the group to revisit a previous topic of discussion about collaborating with groups like Pathways for Keene to plan for and fund pedestrian/bicycle safety improvements. She mentioned that this topic could be addressed at a future meeting.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on June 27, 2016.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Tara Kessler, Planner
June 3, 2016