

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ADOPTED

COLLEGE CITY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday June 27, 2016

4:00 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room City Hall

Members Present

Chris Cusack, Co-Chair
Hannah Elliott
Dick Berry
Phil Jones, Councilor
Paula Jessup
Christie Hrynowski
Darryl Masterson
Robin Picard
Marcia Kayser

Members Not Present:

Dean Eaton, Co-Chair
Atticus Rollins
Bettina Chadbourne, Councilor

Staff Present:

Andy Robinson, KSC Liaison
Tara Kessler, Planner

1. Call to Order & Introductions

Co-Chair Chris Cusack called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m. and introductions were made.

2. Review Minutes from May 23, 2016

Chair Cusack asked for a motion to approve the minutes of May 23. Mr. Masterson motioned, and Mr. Jones seconded.

3. International Town Gown Association Annual Conference
Update and Discussion

Robin Picard recently attended the International Town Gown Association (ITGA) annual conference in Chicago on the Loyola University campus. Ms. Picard stated that Keene has town/gown challenges that are similar to other campuses. However, Ms. Picard noted that Keene is ahead of other communities in some ways. She noted that she would like to sponsor a meet and greet in a neighborhood near the College. She mentioned inviting City officials, so students and City officials can meet in a friendly manner. Other colleges struggle with issues similar to those in Keene – noise and large parties. Some colleges are proactive in taming some of these issues by enforcing off-campus properties to register events with the city. Underage drinking is closely watched, and larger police forces are in place. Some cities fine hosts of parties that allow underage drinking. The fines are large enough to discourage further large events. Ms. Kayser asked how a city tracks such events? Ms. Picard noted that stores notify the police and Keene State College if someone buys a large quantity of alcohol.

Other schools were surprised to hear that Keene has a 100-person assembly limit, based on fire codes. Other cities have much larger limits – one is up to 300. Ms. Picard noted that Keene's biggest problem is outdoor gatherings. She mentioned to the group that this conference featured more attendees from city governments, rather than college officials.

When properties come on the market in other locales, the schools purchase them, then develop them to be neighborly properties. Many cities require students to register with their city, and give their address. If certain houses have repeated problems, students and landlords are fined. If landlords are cited twice in 14 months, the tenants are fined for excess consumption, as is the landlord. Ms. Kayser feels that landlords should be held responsible for underage drinking. Others in the group noted that this would be extremely difficult to enforce.

Ms. Picard noted that the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst visits all houses near the campus, which Ms. Picard does in Keene. She also noted that this college posts stickers in windows that note students are athletes, scholars. She said this badge of pride has slowly changed the culture in the community.

Mr. Jones asked if student and family housing is mixed in the UMass neighborhoods. It is, Ms. Picard stated, but the mix has been thoughtful. Representatives from colleges in Minnesota and Oregon similar to Keene State College attended the conference. These colleges have similar challenges as Keene.

Ms. Kessler asked if there was any discussion about landlord associations. State and city statutes were more supportive of landlord/city relations in some communities. Ms. Picard noted that landlords in this area do want to work with the College to preserve and enhance town/gown relations. Ms. Cusack asked if the stickers in windows at other campuses seemed to help students feel ownership. He suggested that the College purchase stickers or signs to put in various businesses and homes welcoming students back to campus. Ms. Kayser said that families in her neighborhood post such signs.

Ms. Hrynowski mentioned that some students never venture downtown, which shows the separation between the College and the City in the view of some students. Mr. Jones said that young students are not interested in brick and mortar; online has become the preferred method of conducting business. Ms. Jessup, owner of Amicci's Pizza, said that over 75% of their business is delivery or pick-up, as opposed to the 30% of some years ago.

The group discussed some of the strategies that are used to welcome students – a City guide; coupons to various restaurants. Ms. Picard said that other communities work to incorporate the nearby college into any city events. Ms. Picard said a regional group is being formed to work on the issues in this area.

Ms. Picard updated the group on a grant that she was pursuing regarding alcohol distribution and use. Her contact said that Keene is not ideal for their pilot program.

4. Proposed Main Street Safety Improvements Update

Ms. Kessler displayed a map that presented a proposed plan to make the crosswalk at the intersection of Elliot Street and Main Street safer for pedestrians. She showed a plan that featured narrowing of the travel lanes in this area to accommodate a painted median in the center of the roadway. The median would provide a refuge space for pedestrians in the center of the road. Ideally, this median would be raised from the road. A yield to pedestrians sign would potentially be installed in the middle of the road. In addition, parking spaces would be removed in some areas to enhance the visibility of pedestrians entering the crosswalk. The City Engineer is proposing to make Elliot Street a right-turn only at this area. Elliot is currently a one-way

street, emptying onto Main Street. Mr. Berry asked if the safe area will be painted. Mr. Kessler replied in the positive.

There are a number of factors involved – durability, slickness of paint, and visibility. The Public Works Department and the College are exploring the options. There is also a proposal that there be a street light on both sides of Main Street at both crosswalks. Mr. Berry asked if there is better lighting for crosswalks than what is in place now. The plan is to have Cobra lights installed, but there might be more effective lighting. Councilor Jones noted bump-outs on the sides, and an island in the middle of the road might be effective. Ms. Hrynowski was concerned that the lanes would be narrowed to such a point as to make them dangerous. Ms. Kessler mentioned that rumble strips are being explored; however, the noise might be irritating to nearby residents. Ms. Jessup asked if speed bumps have been explored. Ms. Kessler said they have been considered, and that speed tables are the more widely used method of slowing traffic. In this area, plowing and other road maintenance would be difficult.

The measures currently being explored by the City to improve safety in this area are temporary, but the City is attempting to present the best possible solution as quickly as possible. Ms. Hrynowski asked if “Pedestrian Crossing” signs could be installed, as they had been in the past. The College owned these signs that had been posted. Councilor Jones said that the crosswalks at National Grange on West Street are being updated, and paid for by the Grange.

5. College City Commission Report Update & Discussion

- a . Status of Report – Ms. Kessler asked the group as to the best method of tracking at six month check-in. How would the group like this feedback? Councilor Jones noted that a template might be simplest for the City.

Ms. Kessler asked if every six months is a realistic check-in point. Mr. Berry asked how often President Huot and Mayor Lane want an update- on a semi-annual, or annual basis. Councilor Jones said that no other committees check in every six months, but since this work is fairly new and moving forward, perhaps more frequent check-ins make sense.

Ms. Picard asked if the President and the Mayor could attend the next meeting on a quarterly or semi-annual basis. Ms. Jessup wondered if this Commission could meet annually with the Mayor and the President for in-person updates. Ms. Kayser noted that the best time for this might be once there is a draft report from this Commission.

Councilor Jones asked how the Commission handles issues that are out of the purview of this group. He gave the example of storm drainage. Mr. Cusack spoke with Frank Mazzola at the College last semester about the communication between College and City.

There was discussion about motorized vehicles being allowed on South Bridge, and how the College wants to use golf carts to get to the playing fields. There is a desire to exclude ATV's, dirt bikes, and other recreational motorized vehicles. Ms. Kessler will ask internally about golf cart use by the College through Mr. Blomquist, and will report back to the group.

- b . Progress Tracking Tool - Ms. Kessler said that staff will continue to devise this tool. The College President and Mayor are invited to the August 24 meeting; most likely this date will be changed as this is opening week for the College. She stated that there could be a full presentation

to the Council or a Council Committee on the report. Ms. Jessup thought that one presentation might be most effective. Mr. Masterson said he would rather attend Council Committee meetings. Mr. Cusack asked if there are Councilors who need to hear this information. Mr. Masterson said that those who attend PLD would receive this information. Members of the Commission can attend this meeting as citizens or Commission members.

Mr. Cusack noted that once the comments of the Mayor and Dr. Huot are incorporated into this report, it would be complete and ready for presentation. He mentioned that the group might want to skip the July meeting, and meet in August.

The July meeting has been cancelled.

Mr. Jessup asked if Mr. Eaton is still co-chair of this Commission. Ms. Kessler replied in the affirmative.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on August 24, 2016.

7. Public Comment

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted
Sue Walthour, Minute-Taker
June 29, 2016

Reviewed and edited by
Tara Kessler, Planner