

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 11, 2023

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Kate M. Bosley, Chair
Michael Giacomo, Vice Chair
Philip M. Jones
Raleigh Ormerod
Gladys Johnsen (Arrived Late)

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Patty Little, City Clerk
Rebecca Landry, Communication &
Information Director/ACM

Members Not Present:

All Present

Chair Bosley called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1) Rules of Order Amendment – Remote Participation – City Attorney

Chair Bosley welcomed the City Attorney, Tom Mullins, and the City Clerk, Patty Little. The City Attorney highlighted that within this rule is the requirement to notify the City Clerk at least 24 hours in advance of requested remote participation so the Clerk's Office can ensure everything needed is in place. The City Attorney continued recalling that the Council had been discussing this remote participation rule for some time. He noted that the quorum issue is clear. He explained for the Committee and the public that by law, a quorum of active members of Standing Committees or the Council must be present physically at the publicly noticed meeting location before remote participation can be considered. If a quorum is present physically, the NH statute does currently allow one or more members to participate remotely. The City Attorney said one of the biggest changes the Council had been considering was Section Four of the Rules of Order, which is less about the reasons for remote participation but more so about the process to be allowed remote participation. This process includes notifying the City Clerk. Once the Clerk is notified, the request would be placed on the Mayor's agenda, as a procedural issue, for the Council or Standing Committee to consider at the meeting time. Thus, the member requesting remote participation would be present via Zoom at the beginning of the respective meeting, when the Chair would ask where the individual is located and if anyone is in the room with them. Once the Committee has heard the reason for the remote participation request, the Committee would determine whether to allow the participation by consensus. If there was objection to the remote participation, then the matter would be put to vote, with a two-thirds majority roll call vote required. The roll call vote is intended to dissuade denial of a request for any other motivations.

The City Attorney recalled that this rule had been to the City Council, which referred the matter to this PLD Committee, who would now make a recommendation back to the Council on whether to adopt this rule.

Chair Bosley appreciated the City Attorney's explanation. The Chair reminded everyone that these changes arose after a letter from Councilor Greenwald, who joined this Committee for several meetings and was satisfied with the way this language had evolved. The Chair also thought there had been sufficient effort to arrive at this rule and she liked how it had turned out.

With no questions or comments from the Committee or public, the Chair entertained a motion by Vice Chair Giacomo, which was duly seconded by Councilor Jones.

Councilor Jones announced that he would vote in opposition, as he has been against this option all along, citing the potential for abuse and noting there had been worse abuses over the years. He said this issue was defeated overwhelmingly at the House of Representatives earlier this week.

On a vote of 3–1, the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee recommends the adoption of the proposed amendments to the Rules of Order relating to remote access. Councilor Jones voted in the minority. Councilor Johnsen was absent for the vote.

- 2) **Communication – Request to Use City Property – Gathering of the Gourds – Let It Shine**
- 3) **Communication – Request to Use City Property – Taste of Keene Food Festival – Keene Young Professionals**

Because both agenda items two and three were similar, the Chair heard them together. Both requests were for use of City property, one for the Let it Shine Gathering of the Gourds (formerly the Pumpkin Festival) and the other for the Keene Young Professionals Taste of Keene Food Festival. Neither group had met with City Staff yet for the necessary protocol meetings. Thus, the recommendation was to place these on more time to allow those meetings to occur.

With no comments or questions from the Committee or public, Chair Bosley entertained a motion from Councilor Jones, which was duly seconded by Councilor Ormerod.

On a vote of 4–0, the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee recommends the requests for use of City property for the Gathering of the Gourds and the Taste of Keene Food Festival be placed on more time to allow for protocol meetings to be scheduled. Councilor Johnsen was absent the vote.

4) Ad Hoc Housing Stability Committee – Final Report – ACM/Communication & Information Director

Chair Bosley welcomed the Assistant City Manager/Communication and Information Director, Rebecca Landry, who served as the Staff Liaison to the Ad Hoc Housing Stability Committee. Ms. Landry was glad to bring this report to the PLD Committee and the Council. The Ad Hoc Housing Stability Committee was formed in 2021 with the idea of coming-up with recommendations to address housing. First, the group wanted to identify what the housing problem was and how to make recommendation to the City Council to start implementing some review and management to see what the City could do better or change in the future. The nine-member Committee was comprised of very engaged citizens who put a lot of time into this process, including subject matter experts, service providers, and visiting guest speakers who all made it an informative process. Ms. Landry noted that all agendas and meeting minutes of this Ad Hoc Committee were available on the City website. Ms. Landry continued sharing more about the Ad Hoc Committee members. The group included Mayor Hansel, Councilor Lake, Natalie Darcy (the City’s Human Services Manager), Steven Bragdon, Craig Henderson (Southwest Community Services), Doug Iosue (Department of Corrections), Josh Meehan (Keene Housing), Stacie Pickford, and Jennifer Seher (NH Care Collaborative).

Next, Ms. Landry provided an overview and highlighted recommendations from the report, which was available to the Council and public on the City’s website. She said that this is a big issue that affects more than Keene. Rural America is seeing a supply and demand issue with housing and Keene is no exception. As a matter of fact, Ms. Landry said that this had been a problem in NH for 10 years, so this was not new. Ms. Landry also wanted to mention that there was a lot of public participation in this process, including the Monadnock Interfaith Group president who came to most meetings, and concerned members of the public spoke at each meeting. She called this a collaborative process.

Ms. Landry listed the desired outcomes of this Ad Hoc Committee, which gave the Committee its direction. First, and what Ms. Landry said rose to the top, was homeless support and transition to permanent housing. She quoted the report, “Homelessness is on the rise and requires positive change. Housing is a basic human need and is directly linked to health, social, educational and economic outcomes. The pressure on rental rates makes it harder for low income individuals and families to secure adequate housing. The solution is to provide timely and effective transitional services. The Committee has formulated recommendations that aim to help the local unhoused population transition to immediate and, ultimately, permanent housing.” Ms. Landry continued that the Committee made recommendations that aim to help the unhoused population transition to immediate and permanent housing. Ms. Landry said the second desired outcome was to increase available housing. She noted that the pandemic did not help the supply and demand problem, but rather exacerbated it. She said people are moving to rural NH for quality of life, which has stressed rental rates and the need for housing development in Keene. Ms. Landry said the report includes recommendations that the Ad Hoc Committee hopes will increase housing available to all income groups. Next, Ms. Landry stated the third desired outcome, which is

regional engagement in collaborative solutions. She said Keene alone cannot solve housing problems. There are many challenges and facets of those challenges that the region needs to collaborate on solutions.

Ms. Landry continued describing the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for housing development. The first recommendation is a comprehensive housing needs analysis, which is a survey process that had begun already online. She said many in the Community Development Department were working on this study. Ms. Landry encouraged everyone to take the survey available on the City website homepage. She said this information from the public would help to create long-term solutions. The second housing development recommendation is to update local Zoning laws to reduce barriers, which was a common theme for the Committee. Ms. Landry recalled the proposal to change the minimum lot size in the Rural Zone from five to two acres, which the community had talked about a lot. She said this recommendation also supports the City doing what it can to provide multi-family residential development in the Commerce District. She said that next, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended development incentive options. The Committee recommended leveraging all available development incentives to advance the construction of multifamily housing. Ms. Landry said there are many housing solutions that can help, but that multifamily housing would create the most impact in the shortest amount of time; there is more information on this in the report. Ms. Landry concluded describing the housing development recommendations, stating that the Committee also looked at accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as an option that can help people to potentially stay in their homes or help a family member who might not otherwise have an option. The Ad Hoc Committee recommended reviewing the current City requirements that allow ADUs to determine if there are any barriers. How can we make it easier for ADU development?

Next, Ms. Landry described the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations for shelter services. Ms. Landry said it was important to highlight that the City already has case management practices in place. Every person who comes to the City's Human Services Department presenting themselves as homeless is offered assistance and services if they opt to participate, per NH statute. Thus, the Ad Hoc Committee discussed how to improve case management to again determine how to reduce barriers. Ms. Landry continued that improved engagement was another focus of the Committee. She said there are people who are reluctant to—or choose not to—engage in the human services the City provides. So, the Committee looked at how to reduce some of that hesitation and increase engagement. One of the Committee recommendations was to evaluate the possibility of a standard application. They recommended review of the City's welfare guidelines to add assistance for applicants trying to acquire things like birth certificates or valid identification, which are resources many people do not think twice about. Ms. Landry said the Committee discussed ways the City could be more helpful, but there would be a need for other agencies to do the same. Ms. Landry continued explaining the need to better define "residency." Currently, NH RSA-165 provides guidance for how municipalities are required to provide welfare services. She said a lot depends on the last town of residence for the applicant. She said that could be improved to increase participation and responsibility of all NH municipalities and City Managers working closely on that at the State level. Ms. Landry said the City was also

working with the State to map service offerings and track services. She said the City of Keene is relatively unique in that it would help all if more communities can participate in that type of tracking program.

Ms. Landry continued describing the Ad Hoc Housing Stability Committee's recommendations for shelter services. She described the NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program (NHERAP), which she said had been helpful to many since Covid-19 began. She said this could be problematic when there are high costs to place someone in a hotel if shelters are full. She said this option also included no case management, so it is challenging to identify individuals and their challenges to help improve their situations through case management. Ms. Landry said the report recommends that case management services be required to connect all housing participants with all available services and transition to permanent housing. Ms. Landry said the Ad Hoc Committee also identified the need for more homeless outreach services by *trained professionals* (this is a key term in the report). She knew the City was already working on expanded outreach efforts. She said there is a need to better support those leaving the hospital and jail; some Committee members were surprised by this need for people who might have nowhere to go after getting medical attention or serving short terms in jail. She said there are short-term solutions to help people in those situations.

On shelter services recommendations, Ms. Landry noted that the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program—formerly Section Eight—is a program that provides rental rates for people in rentals who cannot afford it. She called this a win-win situation that is good for landlords and people who need housing. However, Ms. Landry explained that there are hesitations to participate as well as potential for income discrimination. Thus, the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation is to work with Keene Housing on an educational campaign so that more property owners are likely to participate, and low-income housing options can be expanded; those low-income options are extremely sparse right now. The Committee also supported advocacy at the State level to help improve tenant use and landlord participation.

Ms. Landry continued on the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Stability's recommendations for shelter services. She wanted to quote to recommendations because they were "hot topics" on camping and parking programs. She quoted item eight on page four of the report. Item eight reads as, "Safe parking programs may provide homeless persons living in their vehicles with a place to stay in their vehicles overnight. The ultimate goal is to provide a temporary safe space in the process of transition to stable housing. The Committee recommends encouraging a pilot 'blue light' safe parking program involving Southwest Community Services, local churches, and other organizations willing to participate." Ms. Landry said a pastor came to the last Committee meeting asking how to get involved, which she said was encouraging. She continued quoting, "This will include best practices such as outreach services, police safety checks, lighting, trash removal, bathrooms, training of staff and volunteers and additional measures necessary for the health and safety of all participants. The City will also play an important role in sharing information with the public," so that people know how to take advantage of these services.

Next, Ms. Landry said that homeless camping is not supported as an option for safe housing. She continued discussing number nine on page four of the report, which is about the need for transition to temporary and permanent housing. She quoted the report: “Current City Code does not allow for camping on City land, however, the Parks Director has worked with campers to allow reasonable flexibility when needed in transitioning to safe housing solutions. This includes connecting campers with community service providers. The Committee recommends that the City Code be updated to expressly provide the Parks Director with the opportunity to work with Human Services to transition campers.” Ms. Landry said that while the report does not expressly support camping as an option, it provides some flexibility to help people in that situation to transition. She noted that for the last year, the Keene Public Library had been hosting office house for human services providers, which she said had been growing momentum. She said this provides a great way for people to connect with service providers outside of City hall or other service locations. Ms. Landry noted that a Councilor—she believed Councilor Lake—raised concern for the safe disposal of needles. While needles are often associated with illegal drugs, Ms. Landry said the Ad Hoc Committee learned that people in need of housing could also have a reason to inject medication. She said that in all situations, it is important that people have needle disposal options. So, the report recommends that the City look into where needle disposal is available currently—there are locations in the community now—and determine how to share that information. The report also recommends investigating whether there is any need to provide more services.

The final recommendations in the report are on the topic of regional coordination opportunities. Ms. Landry said that to make any progress, there is a need to promote opportunities to engage a broader effort in housing services and programs. She shared the Ad Hoc Committee’s first recommendation on regional coordination, which is that housing development funds use a collaboration of local funding partners. Ms. Landry explained that something happened in NH’s upper valley last year, when eight employers partnered with developers and housing services to build apartment buildings. So, she said there are businesses who need employees and are willing to invest in a solution. The Ad Hoc Committee decided that this was an opportunity to consider. The Committee also recommended exploring other local collaborative funding models. Ms. Landry said the Committee looked at The Urban Institute’s Collaborative Approach to Public Good Investments (CAPGI). Through CAPGI, communities use local capital stakeholder impact and a collaborative bidding process to source and pay for new services that any single stakeholder could not support at scale. Ms. Landry said that this is another opportunity for collaboration. She said there was conversation with some regional providers and the University of NH and while it is not possible in the short-term, it is something to keep an eye on.

Ms. Landry continued on the report’s recommendations for regional collaboration. She said that the report also recommends reviewing existing social services and housing initiatives together to maximize impact. She said a lot of services exist and the potential to collaborate and join efforts could really have a broader impact. She noted that Southwestern Community Services (SCS) has a homeless coalition that the City team has been participating with. The report recommends formalizing that group and involving additional social service agencies who might not yet be

involved across the region. Next, Ms. Landry said the Committee also discussed person- and family-centered service plans. She said the goal is to help people stay in their homes and receive the long-term care they might need. She cited Service Link as an example of a service that allows people to age in place. The Committee recommended more opportunities to look into that type of program and shifting to a person-centered entry approach. Right now, when a person needs services, they have to go through an application process. Ms. Landry said there may be an opportunity to have service providers understand who needs services and offer them in a more streamlined approach.

Ms. Landry concluded with the last Committee recommendations on regional collaboration. She said that lack of public transportation options is a unique challenge that is limiting the City's ability to help people. She said people should have access to doctors, appointments, and grocery shopping other than those within walking distance of downtown Keene. So, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended regional efforts to improve transportation services, which would help human service providers to reach some of their clients outside of Keene. Ms. Landry said the Committee also recommended gathering more information from all NH communities to track the services being used, how often, and to what end to help come up with and participate in solutions. Lastly, Ms. Landry said that the common theme of this Ad Hoc Committee's process was about reducing barriers and collaboration.

Chair Bosley heard comments on the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Stability's work from the City Manager, Elizabeth Dragon. The City Manager thanked Ms. Landry for her dedication to the Committee and her work generating this report. The City Manager echoed that there was a lot of public participation with this Committee. She said the Committee learned a lot through this process. She did not wait for the report to be finished before she began implementing and exploring some of these recommendations because it is such a time sensitive and important topic. She recalled that Ms. Landry mentioned the housing needs analysis that is underway currently, which the City Manager said is important because it will inform future strategies related to Zoning, other housing incentives, and things the City might consider. So, a lot of participation in that survey is important and she encouraged everyone to do so. The survey is open on the City website until February 17 and takes about 10 minutes of time.

The City Manager recalled that the Joint Planning Board-Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee had been doing a lot of work around Zoning and reducing barriers to increase housing opportunities and incentives; this work is ongoing. Regarding leveraging development incentives, the Invest NH program became available while the Ad Hoc Committee process was underway. The City was able to assist one project in leveraging funds from that for the 310 Marlboro Street project, which resulted in an additional \$3 million being invested in the project. That project is anticipated to add 55–57 housing units to the community. The City Manager said the Invest NH funds will ensure that at least 15 of those new units are affordable. She said affordable is different to everyone, but the Invest NH program set its own parameters, so over the next five years those 15 units must remain at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) limitation. She said it is all broken down on the Invest NH website by county and region. The

City Manager said the City of Keene had also been fortunate to take advantage of those funds and received two grants through Invest NH to help with the housing needs analysis and implementing recommendations from that analysis. Those Invest NH funds, which are administered by the State, were created through the American Rescue Plan money.

The City Manager continued regarding ADUs. She said she spoke recently with the Zoning Administrator, John Rogers, about this to get the latest update because there are some potential Code changes that could expand ADU use and possible locations. These changes could also encourage or allow for ADUs in detached garages and buildings, where they might not be allowed now. There is also review of some non-conforming single-family homes in the Commerce District that cannot currently add an ADU. The City Manager said there are some potentials that would likely be brought before the Joint Committee soon.

On the recommendations for shelter services, the City Manager said a lot had been done to date. The City has had joint meetings with the shelters every other week to discuss difficult and complex cases or place people in permanent or temporary housing. She said that has been a huge benefit to everyone. She said that this year, the City also changed their shelter agreements. The City provides funding to both organizations in the community that provide shelter services and as a part of those agreements, the City added some language about coordinating and reporting with the City. So, when an individual comes to either of these shelters and identifies as a Keene resident, they must also come to the City as a part of their case management. She said case management numbers had grown a great deal because the City is putting itself in the middle of these conversations, but the City is trying to collaborate more with partners to find ways to make improvements. The City Manager continued echoing Ms. Landry that the Ad Hoc Committee identified barriers for residents attempting to receive services like identification and birth certificates, which was easy to find a solution for with the Human Services Director. Now, individuals can access these things through the welfare system if they are looking to receive services and that is a barrier for them. In terms of the standard application for assistance, the City Manager said that was less about the City's application and more so communities in our region; the City has a standard application already. The City Manager said that when someone presents as homeless or in need of assistance at the City of Keene, the City will provide assistance regardless of where their last residence was. By law, every community should be providing that assistance to their residents. However, the City is trying to work with surrounding communities with different applications and questions being asked. Working with these communities would be easier with a standard application. The City Manager said it would be great if there was a standard application across NH, but at least in the Monadnock Region would be helpful.

The City Manager continued discussing changes to NH law. The City Manager thinks there needs to be a lot of changes to the State laws on providing welfare assistance. She said there had not been a lot of progress making those changes in the past. So, this year, the City is starting with a small but important step. The City Manager had worked with Senator Donovan Fenton to put forward a Bill, which has not been numbered yet. The Bill proposes a change to the definition of "residency" as it pertains to housing, shelter, and other responsibilities of municipalities. The

City Manager said there was a recent effort by the Welfare Administrators group to better define that through an ethics resolution. She said they worked with their membership to come up with some language. The City Manager used that language in this Bill because the Welfare Administrators are the ones dealing with this daily, and she hopes they will help as this Bill moves forward. The City Manager said she had a lot of support for the Bill so far and she would keep the Council posted as it moves forward.

Next, the City Manager discussed the NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program (NHERAP), which provides funding for hotel stays; that funding is not through the City but through the respective shelter. Originally, both Hundred Nights and SCS were receiving those funds. Now, it is really only SCS. She said there was concern that those funds were supposed to end and there were a lot of families in the hotel that the City had never spoken to, so there needed to be a way to bring those individuals and families in for case management. This was important to understand how many people are in need of services but also so the City can be a part of the solution and transitioning them out of the hotel. She said the City had already been working on case management with SCS for those individuals in the hotel. She was very encouraged about the case management changes so far.

Next, the City Manager touched on the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation for homeless outreach. The City Manager had worked with the Human Services Department to change the job description of a part-time role with the City in the Human Services Department to include outreach. She said there was a past advertisement for this position but it was not filled; it is a 25-hour per week, non-benefitted position and did not previously include outreach. So, now she said it is a bigger ask for someone to perform those services. She has talked with Human Services and the Finance Department about maybe needing to add the position to the salary schedule. The City Manager's original thought was to do this as a pilot and see if the job description needs to be changed more. Still, she said the problem is that it is a pilot program, so it is hard to get someone to take the position who is looking for stability. She said the Council would hear more from her about this.

The City Manager continued on a topic she had mentioned to the Council in the past. She had been working on an application to try to access some of the Opioid Grant funds coming into the State of NH. She said she was assigned to that commission by the Governor and they had already done one round of applications. The City Manager seeks to submit an application for a social worker position in the Police Department. She said she met with representatives from the City of Laconia and Dover to review their models. She had also been working on this with former Keene Police Chief Rousseau, who helped the City Manager with a draft for the next round of applications that would be going out soon. She needed to work with the current Police Chief to make sure everything is in place and then she intends to apply for these funds, which would be good for two years. She said it was something other communities were looking at doing more as well, so she thought it would be a good opportunity to see if Keene could make it work. The City Manager envisions that social worker working closely with the outreach worker in Human Services, following the City of Dover's model. She would bring further updates to the Council.

Next, the City Manager touched on the safe parking program, stating that she needed to contact SCS to see how they were doing with it, what services the City could provide, and to explore possible connections with the churches. Regarding homeless camping, the City Manager said a Chapter 58 overhaul was on its way to the City Council that has been in the works for a while to address a lot of things that needed to be cleaned-up. The Council would see more about that soon. The City Manager also touched on the Library office hours for human services, which she called a very successful program. She said that Ms. Landry also mentioned the CAPGI program and Urban Institute collaborative approach to funding. The City Manager and Ms. Landry had met in December 2021 with the University of NH about that model and everyone on the call agreed that was not something the City could put in place right now. The City Manager called it an out of the box funding model that is not conducive to the City structure. Still, the City could help facilitate bringing partners together in the future.

The City Manager talked about collaboration of resources between agencies. She said she had already met with the hospital and would meet with the jail the day after this meeting. With the hospital, she discussed coordinating services and creating a “no wrong door” model. She learned about this model from an Ad Hoc Committee member, Jennifer Seher. The City Manager learned that the “no wrong door” model already exists in NH, but she was unsure it was really implemented that way. The City Manager said she had the first of many meetings with the hope to expand this to many more service providers. She thought there would be more effort over the next year to arrive at a “no wrong door” model, which means everyone coordinating services across the service spectrum. She said this could be difficult because all services get funding from different sources and are not supposed to be in competition. The City Manager hopes to bring all the partners to the table with the acceptance of this report by the Council. On the topic of individuals released from the jail, the City Manager said she learned a lot through the Ad Hoc Committee process about improvements that the City could make on what happens to a homeless person who is incarcerated. She said that if a homeless person is held overnight or in protective custody, they are released on Gilbo Avenue, in some cases without a phone, jacket, or other needs. The City Manager thinks we could do better on this front. She would also be engaging the Sheriff’s office and County Administrator on this matter. She said that even having those individuals brought to the City’s Human Services Office could help them transition to where they need to be.

Chair Bosley appreciated the updates from Ms. Landry and the City Manager. Chair Bosley thanked community members who participated in this collaboration with the City as well as the City Councilors who wrote the letter initiating a lot of this work. She said this helped to bring a lot of behind-the-scenes work to the forefront and helped many service agencies recognize that it is important for them to be continuously working together. The Chair continued that she thought it was very important for the PLD Committee to see ADUs come back before the Joint Committee as a real topic; she thought it was brushed over in the last year as a topic on the agenda with no real forward movement. She said she wanted to see some of the points presented, like detached ADUs and whether two-family homes occupied currently are eligible for that.

Chair Bosley said she also thinks street parking eliminates some of the barriers to people's parking requirements for adding units in some of the denser areas of the City. She said the City would have to revisit that at some point; it is something that was not in the report but that the Chair has mentioned several times and wanted Staff to take note of. She said she would bring it to Council formally at some point if there is no progress behind the scenes. Chair Bosley said she also wanted to mention the Section Eight conversation with Keene Housing, as someone who is involved with tenant relationships and homelessness via her husband's job. She said she understood this program really well and that it is a year's long wait for people to get these vouchers, which she said is a huge problem. She said she regularly sees housed people in the community on the verge of eviction who cannot get vouchers, when there are plenty of unused vouchers sitting at Keene Housing. She said another problem is people who have vouchers but cannot find an apartment. She said there could be other safety nets before someone is in a camping situation. She hoped that issue could be a part of conversations with Keene Housing so those open vouchers are not lost into the system. The Chair continued stating that there was a lot in the report about coordination of potential funds, Invest NH money, or resources. She said obviously that would take some time and Staff involvement to coordinate. Chair Bosley said she had also talked with the Community Development Department at many of the Joint Committee meetings about what can be done regarding Zoning, stating that all of the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations pointed in that direction. So, she wondered if there was a way to find time when someone can identify property that might benefit from some of these investment opportunities as well and whether the City could bridge in helping that to happen. She cited Kingsbury as an example. She asked what resources could be brought to the table to get some of these projects moving forward. She said it was great to make a list and put it on the website but many people probably do not realize this is a property the City is interested in seeing move forward.

The City Manager replied to the Chair, saying that is the job of the Economic Development Director, Med Kopczynski. The City Manager said Mr. Kopczynski talks with people all the time and puts them together with available resources. He made the connection with the Marlboro Street Property. She said the City had multiple connections and people interested in the Kingsbury property but was unable to reach an agreement with the property owner. Now, she said there was only so much the City could do. Still, she said that when people are actively doing that with parcels that the City knows are vacant and ready for some sort of development, the City attempts to make those connections. The City Manager continued stating that while the Invest NH funds are a lot—\$60 million for housing development—it is very limited, only for gap funding. There is \$40 million for municipalities for things like the housing study and incentivizing zoning changes. There is also demolition money the City is pursuing a parcel for reuse. Otherwise, that \$60 million had to be out the door so quickly that there really needed to be a project already in the works and the City had to be able to match those funds. Thus, a lot of things must align for a municipality to access the Invest NH money. She said the City is actively involved in it. The City Manager continued that annually, the City uses its full allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding applications; the City only gets so many in each category. She said she actually has service agencies calling her one year in advance

saying they want to be next to apply for the funds. So, the City Manager said the City is already taking advantage of those funds as much as possible, will continue to do so, and the City would be happy to look at any other ideas brought forward. She said the City is monitoring other things communities are doing, like the creative use of businesses looking to bring-in employees in the upper valley that Ms. Landry mentioned. She said there were early conversations with the hospital one year ago about doing something similar, but it was not something they could move forward with at this time. Still, the City Manager said it is definitely important. Anyone interested can reach Mr. Kopczynski in the City Manager's office on the third floor of City Hall.

Chair Bosley appreciated that explanation, stating that the City had not taken a sit-and-wait approach to this. The Chair had reviewed the City Manager's reports to the City Council to recall all the progress made already. There were several Zoning-related items before the Joint Committee already and the Chair said they could keep working and finding more opportunities.

Councilor Jones first addressed members of the public who were present. He clarified that the City Council was not adopting or amending this report, but just accepting it as an informational resource. He also defined ADU as accessory dwelling unit or what used to be called an in-law apartment. Councilor Jones continued saying he really liked the report. He was interested in CAPGI and he favored the intentions for ADUs. He echoed the Chair that there is a long wait for Section Eight housing vouchers, stating that there's competition with other states because it is Housing and Urban Development money, and that it is hard for someone local to get priority. If there is a fix for that, Councilor Jones would love to see it. Councilor Jones continued stating that this report is great, but that [we] also do not want Keene to become a magnet for indigence. He said the City does want to help its own and that is what they are here for. Councilor Jones also wanted to mention that he was not supporting camping, but that he had been with local church groups on cold nights trying to get people to come inside from camping and many refuse. He said there are some that will always be there even though the City does not support them.

Councilor Ormerod said that in reading the report, he did not see children and pregnant persons addressed specifically. He said those are the people who are most at-risk in the community but least able to reach out for help or get resources. He asked if the City had some data or plans to integrate homeless children into the community, so they do not have the experience of being on the outside. He said if they experience being on the outside at a very young age, they would stay on the outside. Councilor Ormerod said to either house them in our housing or in our prisons. He hoped to see more important details like those. He added that the refugee population is growing in certain parts of the City, stating that the school district was hiring an English language learner teacher. He hoped the City was not forgetting to have resource materials available in other languages, like Ukrainian, as well as outreach to refugees. In terms of getting children into housing, Councilor Ormerod added the need to prioritize new housing developments because it cannot be guaranteed that older developments are lead free; he hoped something would be done on lead this year, after Councilor Williams brought attention to the matter. Councilor Ormerod said to prioritize young children and pregnant people in new housing developments.

Chair Bosley opened the floor to public comment, reiterating that this Committee would not be making any major amendments to this report at this meeting.

Councilor Bobby Williams of Ward Two said this had been quite a process for the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Stability, and members of the public, including Keene mutual aid and the Monadnock Interfaith Project. He said this was really a community effort that ended with a very strong strategy that Councilor Williams hopes the City can take forward and implement. He said he was here for that and knew many others were as well. Councilor Williams was particularly happy to read about the safe parking pilot project, which he said did not necessarily have to be a City project; SCS and some local churches are taking this on. He said the whole community wants to help. The Councilor was also heartened to hear enthusiasm for ADUs. He thinks ADUs are one of the most cost effective ways to add housing, particularly in the low end of the market. He said these options are important because homelessness is really a housing problem, a lot of which he said could be solved if there were enough places for people to live. One thing Councilor Williams did not hear mentioned was the issue of public bathrooms, which was mentioned going into this process. He was grateful for the experiment with a porta-potty this summer, stating that it was used for quite a while before it was vandalized. He said it would be nice for the City to figure out what they can do to keep that from happening. He said there were possibilities for vandalism-proof installations, like the Portland Loo, which is made out of metal. He recalled that the City is entering a phase when the plumbing under the downtown is going to be revised and said that perhaps the City can take advantage of that to determine where public bathrooms could be added to the system. Lastly, Councilor Williams mentioned that there are a lot of complaints about garbage and litter associated with homeless people. He said that while the homeless were being blamed for it, they were not necessarily the perpetrators. He said that if the City can do a better job of keeping areas clean, it would make the community more accepting of everyone who lives in Keene. Councilor Williams was grateful for all this work.

Patricia Lane from Monadnock Peer Support said she does outreach with different organizations. For example, she had been working with Hundred Nights for the past nine months. Ms. Lane said she does a lot of research and spends a lot of time in the community talking to the homeless population. She cited a partner in this outreach, Jason Solomon, who has lived at Hundred Nights for two years. She said Mr. Solomon understands a lot of homeless issues. She said Monadnock Peer Support brings people in to help find solutions and acceptance. She said it was about learning from each other and teaching each other that everyone is human. Ms. Lane had learned that mental illness is not one of the major reasons for homelessness, but that support is the issue. She said the fact that the City undertook this effort to support and connect community organizations was amazing. She said she is at the Library on Mondays from 1:00 PM–3:00 PM and she is collaborating with the worker in the middle of the Library to create a community resource map. She had gone to over 40 organizations to share information about Monadnock Peer Support so people can find their services. She said a lot of people in town are doing outreach. She used the example of Bible study at Hannah's Books; Hannah goes to Hundred Nights to ask people what books they want and she has started doing the same for Monadnock

Peer Support. Ms. Lane hopes to remain a part of the community resources for the homeless. The City is welcome to reach out to her.

Laura Tobin of Center Street echoed a lot of the previous comments. She really appreciated all the work that went into this report. She said it was great to see some of the problems from the last few years being addressed. She thought the issue of transportation was a difficult one. She does not drive and said it could be hard for others to understand how that impacts one's life and health. She must choose between CVS and the grocery store, which is in the opposite direction, knowing she needs her medications but also that she will be sore from carrying groceries home. Ms. Tobin studied psychology and hopes to get a job in the mental health field but said she had been turned down by many local agencies because she cannot drive due to epilepsy. She wondered if that was the reason she was not accepted for a job with the City's Human Services Department. Ms. Tobin also highlighted that for someone to access resources, they need resources to know where to go, call, or begin getting help. She cited frustrations that could arise from walking to one place for services to find out you must walk to a completely different place that might not actually be able to help. She appreciated the City taking an all-encompassing look at this issue.

Ken Kost of 79 Ridgewood Avenue said the report was a great piece of work with many excellent ideas, and he thought that all obviously need further action. Mr. Kost referred to the fourth recommendation about talking to developers, stating that he heard talk about this going on. He liked the idea of talking to the development community and getting them more interested in coming to Keene; he said there must be some barriers preventing that. He called for a housing needs assessment because he thought Keene had the market, though perhaps not as robust as the rest of the State. Mr. Kost said there are plenty of opportunities for developers to start building mixed income housing. He continued that an important part is incentivizing demolition of vacant or underused housing so better-quality houses could be built. He said if the City worked on that sooner it could have a quicker impact. Mr. Kost also mentioned ADUs, stating that they could have an almost immediate impact. He thought homeowners might be struggling to keep their homes or pay their heating and maintenance bills. So, if those homeowners could create a small ADU building, it would help them maintain their own houses; he called it a beautiful solution. He cited the Monadnock Interfaith Project and stated that he was happy to see the Housing Trust and one of the housing development funds mentioned in the report.

Matthew Hall of 431 Hurricane Road said it was a big report that he was very impressed by. First, Mr. Hall pointed out that not everyone in the Rural District has a lot of money. He discussed the proposed change to reduce the minimum lot size in the Rural Zone from five to two acres, stating that there were potential consequences the PLD Committee might not have considered. He said it was a matter of equity and fairness. He said he heard a lot about incentives but wondered what the incentives were for rural homeowners with four to nine acres. He said that instead, those aforementioned homeowners were "being hit over the head with a charge because they will be assessed in most cases." Mr. Hall thought that taxes would increase for those individuals with an additional building lot, stating that this was not an incentive but rather

he called is regressive taxation. He said that it had not been proven yet and no tests had been done to determine whether those with four to nine acres are eligible, stating that their taxes could go up by \$2,000, when taxes for a very modest house are already \$6,000. He said that was a 33.3% percent increase, which he compared to potential increases for lots of various sizes. He thought this matter would fall hardest on people with older, more modest homes, which he said often coincides with people on limited incomes, even if they work full time. He said that when people visit the Rural District, all they see are new buildings and “McMansions,” and they tend to not see the modest homes. Mr. Hall said that the proposed Zoning change in the Rural District might also create non-conforming houses. As he understood from previous meetings, the City Assessor would be the one to determine where the additional lots would lie, not the homeowners. He continued that if a lot had a septic system, driveway spaces, and utilities that would be retained by the house, the house could potentially become non-conforming, which would be a severe burden to the homeowner. He said this could destabilize part of the population. For those with a modest, fixed income, they must engineer their budgets carefully, especially if they are approaching retirement, so they can survive in their homes. Mr. Hall said that this could be a disincentivizing factor and questioned whether homeowners have a choice. Even if someone chose to sell their lot and move out of town, they still have a mortgage that would trigger refinancing and interest rates would be different. Next, Mr. Hall said that although the City is going to determine how many extra lots a homeowner has, that the City was taking absolutely no responsibility for the expense. He said that to subdivide there would need to be surveys to delineate wetlands, slopes, etc., and have plans drawn, stating that it is not free to determine whether a lot even qualifies as developable. He said that for elderly people or those close to retirement, they might have estate plans or trusts that have to be modified, costing them even more money. Mr. Hall cited people with modest incomes from honest work in the community. He said that in effect, if this Zoning change was accepted, it would increase a monoculture in the Rural District, potentially eliminating workforce and affordable housing and causing a rise in gentrification and “McMansions.” He said he heard a lot about substandard housing and wondered what that meant. He continued that some of those “substandard” homes might be to 20th century standards, but can still be a valid place to raise a family. He said if such a home was knocked down, it would probably end up like some of the houses on Old Walpole Road, where three bedroom modest homes are selling for \$500,000, which he said was not workforce or affordable housing. Next, Mr. Hall spoke in favor of ADUs, stating that he was pleased to see them encouraged in this report. He called this a public solution to a public problem. He said almost everyone with a house in Keene can probably find a way to add an ADU, which would help those struggling with finances. He said that an elderly person with a home could move into a two bedroom ADU and rent their house to a family. He said that ADUs do not change the character of neighborhoods. If ADUs were distributed throughout the City, there would not be increased pressure on schools from new residents. He said the issues of ADUs is democratic in many ways and helps to prioritize local people. In the case of a trust, one of the trustees must reside in either the home or ADU. Mr. Hall said that with a big development, local contractors would be bidding against out-of-town contractors; he said it was better to keep the work within the community. Thus, Mr. Hall said that ADUs aid the local economy and employment, as well as being a “green” concept that complies with the existing Keene Comprehensive Master Plan.

Chair Bosley reminded Mr. Hall that the conversation about the proposal to reduce the minimum lot size in the Rural District from five to two acres was not over. She said this report on homelessness is just a recommendation. Mr. Hall would hear a lot more about this proposed change at the Joint Planning Board-Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee, where there would be more information from the City Tax Assessor. She said the Joint Committee would be talking about creative solutions that the City might be able to offer because this is something the Council is very concerned about after hearing public feedback. Chair Bosley was glad that Mr. Hall was present and commenting, and she recommended following the Joint Committee's updates. Mr. Hall commented on challenges getting information about City meetings and agendas, noting that he contacted the City Clerk's office because there was vague wording about the Rural District issue; he said he did not get a clear answer. He wondered where people are supposed to find that information. Chair Bosley encouraged members of the public to sign-up on the City's website for email updates, which include committee agendas, meeting times, and more. Chair Bosley also noted that the public can submit written comments that the City Council reads by the Tuesday after Joint Committee meetings. The Chair said those Joint Committee meetings are an opportunity for the Committee to discuss with City Staff about the possibility. If/once the matter becomes a formal Ordinance, there would be a public notice, which is posted at City Hall, on the website, and in the newspaper. The matter would have a first reading by the City Council, then it would be forwarded to the Joint Committee, and then it would come back to the Council at least twice, with public hearings. So, the Chair said there are a lot of opportunities for members of the public to voice their concerns. Mr. Hall thanked the PLD Committee for their patience, stating that he was impressed with all the work that went into this report.

Tom Julius of Gilsum is the Chair of Monadnock Interfaith Project Board. Mr. Julius complimented the Ad Hoc Committee on Housing Stability for their work. He said the Interfaith Project had been researching housing challenges for almost two years; they have spoken with elected officials, the City, Cheshire County, the State, and social services Staff. He noted what a complex problem housing is, stating that many people wonder what could possibly be done. It was clear that there is no single answer. Keene is not the only town across the country dealing with this problem. Mr. Julius said it was clear from his research and the Ad Hoc Committee report that a systems approach is necessary and it seemed that City Staff were committed to an ongoing systems approach and openness to the community, which the Interfaith Project found really encouraging. He said the Interfaith community is committed to this long-term systemic approach, which he hoped was evident from the Interfaith Project's participation in the Ad Hoc Committee meetings. Mr. Julius added that a local church and SCS are very close to a memorandum of understanding about providing overnight parking; they are discussing a lot of essential elements that have to be in place for people parking in the neighborhood. Mr. Julius concluded by encouraging everyone in the City to continue exploring development of more affordable housing units, apartments, small homes, and ADUs. He said research shows that the housing stock is very small for low to moderate income households. Mr. Julius thanked everyone for their commitment.

Vice Chair Giacomo echoed comments about the need for more affordable housing units. He said this was a part of the Conservation Residential Development (CRD) discussion; he said CRD is what affordable actually means. The Vice Chair said there are a wide variety of definitions of low income and affordable, citing 310 Marlboro Street as having some affordable units at 80% of the AMI, which is \$52,000 annually. He continued that the average person working production or in the service industry, their incomes are in the high \$40,000. Thus, those average people cannot afford those units. The Vice Chair noted that he works at a manufacturing plant, which is always struggling to get people to work production, even after wages increased during Covid-19. So, Vice Chair Giacomo knew that 80% was the guideline and supposed to be the minimum, but as what happened with CRDs, he hoped the City could go beyond that because it is harder for development incentives, because developers want to earn money. He also wanted to ensure the Council/City were not fooling themselves into thinking that they were actually providing moderate to low income housing. While wages had increased significantly, over \$50,000 annually is still a sizeable salary. Vice Chair Giacomo questioned again: what is affordable?

Councilor Jones began by thanking Mr. Julius, who he has known for many years, for his insights that the Councilor appreciated. Councilor Jones added that this is a ubiquitous problem; Keene is not the only municipality with this challenge. He thanked Chair Bosley for mentioning parking, stating that on the previous day, the City of Burlington, VT, amended their parking ordinance to help the homelessness situation. He said Keene should review their plan and consider what can be done here.

Councilor Ormerod thanked the members of the public who spoke at this meeting. He said that public participation underscores the need to have a systemic, multi-prong approach to housing. He thinks ADUs are a very good long-term approach. He said it might not catch-on right away because of the labor and material shortage, noting that Keene might have to start with larger developments and create some open houses to attract residents. Councilor Ormerod also noted that children do not necessarily go to the school closest to them but are assigned to schools with vacancies by the superintendent. He said the elementary school closest to 310 Marlboro Street has a lot of capacity but that children would still be bussed to other school. He thinks there is capacity in Keene's schools for a lot more kids. He suggested keeping all options open because the economy would change and the City would enact policies to take advantage of the best parts of all of them over the next few years.

With no further questions or comments from the public or Committee, Chair Bosley entertained a motion from Councilor Ormerod, which was duly seconded by Councilor Jones.

On a vote of 5-0, The Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee recommends acceptance of the final report from the Ad Hoc Housing Stability Committee.

Chair Bosley said this was the right Committee to present the report to and she hoped everyone would be involved in further discussions over the coming months.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Bosley adjourned the meeting at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker
January 13, 2023

Edits submitted by,
Terri M. Hood, Assistant City Clerk