

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

7:00 PM

Council Chambers A

Members Present:

David C. Richards, Chair
Philip M. Jones, Vice-Chair
George S. Hansel
Bart K. Sapeta
Robert B. Sutherland

Staff Present:

John Rogers, Acting Health & Code Director
Med Kopczynski, City Manager
Rebecca Landry, ACM/IT Director
Beth Fox, ACM/ HR Director
Kurt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Tom Mullins, City Attorney
Rhett Lamb, ACM/Planning Director

Members Not Present:

Other Councilors Present

Mitch Greenwald
Jan Manwaring
Gary Lamoureux
Carl Jacobs

Mayor Kendall Lane

Chair Richards called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

1) Request to Use City Property – Keene Farmer’s Market

Susan Parke-Sutherland, representing the Keene Farmer’s Market read the request she submitted. The request is dated February 15, 2017 and is included in the meeting packet on Page 3 of 57.

Chair Richards asked if all City requirements had been met. Kurt Blomquist, Public Works Director responded affirmatively.

Chair Richards asked for Committee questions/comments.

Councilor Hansel noted the Farmer’s Market had moved from their location a couple of years ago and had not moved back. Councilor Hansel asked if the group was happy with its location. Ms. Parke-Sutherland replied in the affirmative noting they are very happy with the location.

There being no public comments or further Committee questions Chair Richards asked for a motion.

Councilor Hansel made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Jones.

On a vote of 5-0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the Farmer's Market of Keene be granted permission to use 23 parking spaces along Gilbo Avenue as well as 18 spaces on the other side of the median strip in the Commercial Street parking lot on Tuesdays and Saturdays from May 1, 2017 to November 1, 2017. In addition, the petitioner is granted use of the median area for placement of picnic tables with the understanding that the pedestrian path may not be obstructed. Said permission is granted subject to the following conditions: compliance with the customary licensing requirements of the City Council; the receipt of a total rental fee of \$1,200.00 (payable on the first day of every month at \$200.00 per month); obtainment of a city food license from the Health Department; and compliance with any recommendations of City staff. Access to City electrical shall also be provided at a fee of \$60.00 for the season. It is further recommended that the Farmer's Market of Keene be allowed to erect sandwich board signs on City property prior to the start of sales, subject to review and approval by City staff with respect to the number and location. The signs must be removed immediately after the sales have concluded.

Chair Richards advised Ms. Parke-Sutherland this would go to full Council next week. He also noted although the public is welcome to attend no public comments will be taken.

2) Comprehensive Economic Development Ad hoc Committee Recommendations

Chair Richards recognized Mitch Greenwald, Councilor Ward 2 and Chair of the Economic Development Committee.

Chair Greenwald introduced Rebecca Landry, ACM/IT Director commenting on how instrumental her work was to the Committee. Chair Greenwald thanked Chair Richards for holding off on the full discussion while he was on vacation. Chair Greenwald recognized the Committee members by name many of whom were present. In addition to Chair Greenwald Committee members from the community included Councilor Hansel, Jack Dugan, Tim Murphy, Cindy Rodenhauser Stewart, Phil Suter, Joe Walier, and Michael Giacomo.

Chair Greenwald also listed the speakers who gave presentations to the Committee. Chair Greenwald explained the goal of bringing in the speakers was to hear the good and bad; what is Keene doing right and what is it doing wrong. Chair Greenwald noted a lot of the findings were covered in the PowerPoint presentation at Council last week. He also noted the Report contains many long-range perceptions. Chair Greenwald urged this Report be continued and used in the future.

Chair Greenwald commented a big finding that came out of this process is a swirling mass that needs to be accomplished all at once. We have to grow and educate our workforce; to do that we need to provide affordable housing and entertainment opportunities. In order to get the workers they need to have jobs which means we need to recruit. In order to get the businesses to come in we need to simplify regulations, and at the same time make everything more development friendly. Chair Greenwald continued among the things being recommended is simplifying our regulatory process and rebranding the term Code Enforcement. The term suggested was

Community Development. Chair Greenwald also noted we need to confront the increasing costs of property taxes and energy which is discouraging the influx of new industry, and making it difficult for young individuals to want to live with us.

Chair Greenwald said one of the major issues that need to be dealt with is high-speed internet. He continued we can have high-speed internet if we work with the regulatory bodies to encourage the availability. After additional comments Chair Greenwald said the bottom line is we need to constantly rebuke the perception that Keene is not friendly to economic growth and development. Part of what the Committee heard during its presentations is this goes back to the 1980's. He added it is important to get it out to the development community that we are open for business.

Chair Greenwald thanked Councilor Hansel for running some of the short-term goals up the flagpole at the last meeting. He added it was a little confusing without the full presentation being given. Chair Greenwald explained his ultimate request is for this Committee to recommend to the full City Council adoption of this Economic Development Plan and suggest the City Manager begin plans for implementation. More specifically RSA 79-E as an economic development incentive needs to be researched; it was proposed as a development tool and we do not know all the good and the bad. Formation of the Business Advocacy and Response Team (BART) is also a good idea needing some research by staff and discussion within City Council. The rebranding of Code Enforcement is something for the City Manager to work on. Within the longer term discussion Chair Greenwald noted marketing- do we do this in-house or hire a consultant. Reduction of regulations- some are being look at in the Land Use Code update. Finally a recommendation to the Mayor that Economic Development Committee, Implementation Phase 2 be formulated

Ms. Landry commented she would be happy to take any questions and would appreciate Committee members having the opportunity to say something if they would like to. There were no Committee members that wished to speak.

Chair Richards noted his support for this and asked how do we proceed going forward?

Chair Richards asked for Committee questions/comments.

Councilor Sutherland first thanked the Committee for its hard work. He provided a scenario and commented we have an expensive situation here in Keene because of our taxes. Councilor Sutherland asked what efforts the Committee focused on to try to cut spending and to try and drive the cost of coming here down. Chair Greenwald replied there are two variables; cutting the spending or increasing the revenue. Increasing the revenue without increasing the taxes means bringing in more properties paying taxes. There is an awareness that spending has to be controlled but, the focus was on bringing in more tax paying entities. Continuing Councilor Sutherland said so focus was more on bringing entities into this high cost environment rather than cutting spending to lower the costs in the environment to attract new businesses. Chair Greenwald commented the job of the Council is to try to cut the spending.

Councilor Sutherland asked his second question of Ms. Landry. Councilor Sutherland said his understanding is that FastRoads is a broadband initiative partially funded by the federal government. He continued 26 entities around the City were identified as being ideal for this initiative and only two actually signed up the others were happy with their broadband situation. Councilor Sutherland suggested the discussion is not that we do not have broadband here; it is a matter of the costs for delivering that last mile. Councilor Sutherland asked what the City could do relative to zoning, for example, to lower the costs of that last mile, and are we looking into that. Ms. Landry replied she does not think zoning is a barrier to broadband development. She also suggested the numbers put forth by Councilor Sutherland were not accurate. Ms. Landry reported there are a number of FastRoads customers in Keene; they started by connecting all the community anchor institutions free of charge as part of the grant. They also provided fiber optic connections to the FastRoads network as well as all the schools, Library, etcetera. Councilor Sutherland reported he was told SAU 29 was not on the network. Ms. Landry advised there was one school that opted not to install- the Middle School. Ms. Landry reiterated she does not feel zoning is a barrier to broadband development. She continued there are some very capable broadband providers; FairPoint for one. Ms. Landry shared the recent experience of a local business trying to expand but was unable to get the services they needed; in the Colony Mill. She shared the installation costs and the fact that the monthly cost was three or four times what you would have to pay in other areas. Continuing Ms. Landry said you are looking at services one is not able to get here whether it is the fees or the costs. Chair Greenwald noted the Dig Once initiative was also discussed.

Councilor Hansel thanked Ms. Landry and Chair Greenwald. He commented he wanted to highlight something they said tonight which was the fact this is a multi-pronged approach and we need a cohesive strategy that we are all able to move forward with on a consistent basis. Councilor Hansel hopes this report does not end up on a shelf as was demonstrated by his being forceful and wanting to move these things forward. He continued everyone in Keene should be thinking about this and economic development should be at the front of all our minds.

Councilor Sapeta also thanked the Committee for its work. He commented on the last recommendation outreach noting he feels this is critical. Councilor Sapeta sees the City website as a portal for information. He asked if there was a way to collaborate with the other businesses to combine the resources. Chair Greenwald reported there was discussion at the Committee that there should be a development website. Ms. Landry reported the City website is getting a refresh and should be available within four to six weeks. Ms. Landry agreed with Councilor Sapeta that navigation is a number one priority. She also concurs with what Chair Greenwald said about having an independent website strictly focused on economic development. After additional comments Ms. Landry noted we do have in-house talent to do this or we could work with a contractor.

Chair Richards asked for public comments/questions.

Mike Giacomo, of 39 Union Street and a member of the Economic Development Committee commented a lot of the ideas mentioned at the end really tie closely together. This includes the marketing outreach which is either a position or at the very least an initiative that will tie closely with the rebranding effort as well. Mr. Giacomo continued the rebranding recommended is not

strictly a rebranding of Code Enforcement; we want that Department to be something that draws people into town, not provide a hurdle for them to get over. As part of that hopefully we will be able to tie all that in together and remake the entire process by which a company would go through to get into the City. We are talking about a portal that developers will look at to see how they get established in Keene.

Mayor Lane first thanked the Committee members for their work, their effort, and the importance they attached to the necessity of economic development. Mayor Lane commented on a couple of things going on in addition to the Economic Development Plan. One is the Land Use Code update which is a necessary part of going forward with an Economic Development Plan. The Mayor urged City Council and the public to be involved with that initiative as well as the Economic Development initiative. Secondly the Mayor echoed Chair Greenwald noting this is not the end of the line; this is the beginning of the line. Mayor Lane continued we need to look at Economic Development Phase II to begin the implementation of all the items in the plan. Mayor Lane said this needs to be a comprehensive plan going forward in how we address the economic development issues facing this city. Lastly Mayor Lane said he does not want to lose sight of the fact we talk about bringing industry into Keene but we also need to pay attention to the industry that is in Keene. Mayor Lane shared there is a local company looking to expand and cannot find the site they need. He stressed how critical it is that we pay attention and assist local businesses to help them grow. After additional comments Mayor Lane said he looks forward to the implementation of this plan.

Med Kopczynski, City Manager said he needed some clarification for those who will be doing this work. We do have information sent to City Council with the three motions that will be voted on at the next Council meeting; in addition to the information provided here this evening. The City Manager noted he requested a list of the items from Ms. Landry that he would like to read into the record.

1. Create the Business Advocacy and Response Team (BART) and start meeting.
2. Create a Community Development Department – The City Manager noted he made this suggestion 15 years ago. The City Manager indicated he was unsure what the Department name would actually be.
3. Update Land Use Code – this is underway.
4. Adopt RSA 79-E resolution – when the ordinance is brought forward we will bring up all the pros and cons.
5. Inventories of downtown amenities
6. Promote broadband
7. Next century Dig Once Policy
8. Create and distribute development opportunities package
9. Brand Keene
10. Create website and maintenance plan
11. Use targeted social media
12. Inventory developable properties
13. Get current info into the state's NHDHR database
14. Implement CIP prioritization mechanism and apply for grants

Mr. Kopczynski continued a lot of these are not functions of City government or have not been in the past, so it may take a bit of thinking on how we accomplish those. Writing an ordinance is a normal function and Mr. Kopczynski noted he has had conversations about the BART. For clarification he asked if it was the intention to reconstitute the Committee to be the sounding board for these ideas or as we develop these ideas we bring them back to the PLD Committee and the City Council; with the Committee working on something else. Mr. Kopczynski commented a lot of these ideas indicate somebody is going to do this work and we have to figure out who that is. He mentioned the idea of inventorying the developable properties and asked what would we do with it after that? Mr. Kopczynski noted it would be helpful to have ideas on how to push this out. Chair Richards commented his idea was to go to full Council first for approval and then come back to this Committee to solve those questions. Chair Richards then deferred to Chair Greenwald or the Mayor for further thoughts. Noting there are many ideas Chair Greenwald said reconstituting the Committee to advise the PLD is a good way to go. Mayor Lane said the reason for reconstituting the Committee, in his view, is to keep the focus right on economic development. City Council Committees have a lot of work they do- economic development is part of a wide sphere of things they are involved in. If we have the Committee to just focus on economic development it is still advisory; and would be advisory to the PLD Committee. The Mayor continued PLD would have to do the actual implementation.

Councilor Jones clarified the Part II would be part of the motion prepared by Chair Greenwald; the second part that says the City Manager should suggest a plan for implementation; so we do not need to include that in that plan. The City Manager commented he is at the Committee's beckon call. Chair Greenwald commented it would likely suggest the Mayor reform or form the Part II Committee. The City Manager commented once this occurs he will sit down with staff and start flushing this out and bring back some ideas on the broader aspect. He continued one course would be the Committee itself, its reconstitution, and its membership. Chair Richards was in agreement with the City Manager. Councilor Jones clarified that also would not be part of the motion because it is the Mayor who reconstitutes the Charge. Chair Greenwald said he wanted to add time being of the essence. The City Manager asked for clarification; are we talking about the broad implementation plan or reconstituting the Committee. Chair Greenwald replied reconstituting the Committee.

Carl Jacobs, Councilor Ward 2 commented he thinks this is a great piece of work and very exciting for the future. Councilor Jacobs said he wanted to emphasize Cheshire County and the surrounding municipalities. Through his work and research he finds when regions get together to do marketing they can be more effective than individual towns trying to market themselves. Councilor Jacobs feels housing is another area where there are regional solutions. He hopes the regional emphasis continues going forward.

Councilor Jones thanked the Committee for the job they did. He continued the good part is we are seeing some Deja vu; some of the idea here are part of the Comprehensive Master Plan implementation and on the City Council Goals Committee.

There being no further comments from the public or the Committee Chair Richards asked for a motion.

PLD Meeting Minutes
March 8, 2017

Councilor Jones made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Hansel.

On a vote of 5-0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends to the full City Council the adoption the Economic Action Plan, and requests the City Manager suggest a plan for implementation.

Councilor Jones asked for verification the minutes would reflect the request for the Mayor to reconstitute the Committee. This was affirmed by the minute taker.

- 3) **Adjournment** - There being no further business before the Committee Chair Richards adjourned the meeting at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats Hall
March 10, 2017

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