

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 10, 2017

7:00 PM

Council Chambers A

Members Present:

Philip M. Jones, Vice-Chair
George S. Hansel
Bart K. Sapeta

Members Not Present:

David C. Richards, Chair
Robert B. Sutherland

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, ACM/Planning Director
John Rogers, Acting Health Director
William Dow, Deputy City Clerk
Kurt Blomquist, Public Works Director
Frank Richter, Housing Inspector
Patty Little, City Clerk
Frank Richter, Housing Inspector

Other Councilors Present

Carl Jacobs
Robert O'Connor

Mayor Kendall Lane

Vice-Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

1) Request to Use City Property for the Fall Festival - Mayor Lane

Mayor Lane reported after reviewing last year's event it was decided to go ahead with another Fall Festival this year which is scheduled for September 30th, from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Mayor Lane noted his request to place this on more time to allow protocol meetings to take place. Continuing Mayor Lane commented the Fall Festival, a celebration of community culture will have a variety of events; he noted discussions with Mo-Co Arts, the Historical Society, the Colony House, and the Children's Museum to list a few. Mayor Lane outlined some of the day's events.

Mayor Lane explained his letter does not address a request for free-parking that day. He noted this was an issue last year with people receiving tickets. Mayor Lane is requesting this be part of the license. Mayor Lane said the Fall Festival is done in conjunction with Keene State College Parents Weekend. He continued they hope to do a better job integrating Keene State College with the downtown this year. To accomplish this some Parents Weekend events will be held in the downtown and some Fall Festival events will be held on campus.

Vice-Chair Jones referred to a More Time item request from Tim Zinn representing "Let it Shine" and asked Mayor Lane if there had been any interaction there. Mayor Lane replied in the

negative noting his understanding is that they prefer the Pumpkin Festival to be a standalone event.

Vice-Chair Jones asked for Committee questions or comments.

Councilor Sapeta commended the event suggesting it will be even better this year. He also made note to the Vice-Chair's question regarding "Let it Shine" and the Pumpkin Festival. Mayor Lane stated his understanding is the proposed Pumpkin Festival is three or four weeks after the Fall Festival. Mayor Lane mentioned the festivals taking place in Keene this Fall and stated any of them are welcome to become part of the Fall Festival. Mayor Lane suggested the Fall Festival may be a little early for the Pumpkin Festival as they need pumpkins. Vice-Chair Jones noted Mr. Zinn's request is for October 29, 2017.

There being no comments from the public Vice-Chair Jones asked for a motion.

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

On a vote of 4-0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the request from Mayor Lane for the use of City property to hold a Fall Festival event on September 30, 2017 be placed on more time to allow City staff to hold a series of protocol meetings with the petitioner.

2) Voluntary Minimum Housing and Safety Inspections – Code Enforcement Department

Frank Richter, Housing Inspector noted his understanding the Committee would like to know more about what Code Enforcement does from a housing inspection standpoint; primarily with respect to the College housing. Mr. Richter reported he and the other part-time Inspector have the responsibility of enforcing the City's Housing Standards. He continued a piece of that job is to do voluntary inspections for Off-Campus Housing for students. Mr. Richter distributed a handout entitled "Voluntary Inspections of Off-Campus Housing" which covers the items checked. Mr. Richter reported 544 inspections have been done over the past two years. He then provided the details of this voluntary program which began in 2011 to ensure student housing met Housing and Safety Standards. Mr. Richter explained once a voluntary inspection has been passed landlords are permitted to publish their rental units on the Keene State College website. Noting there was some opposition at the program's inception Mr. Richter shared how cooperative the landlords are now. He noted one of the by-products is that we have built a good rapport with them, and they are not afraid to call us. Robin Picard, the Off-Campus Coordinator also works well with the Code Enforcement Department. Mr. Richter also explained how Code Enforcement now does presentations at the College for Off-Campus Housing orientations. Mr. Richter discussed the inspection checklist and his polling of one-third of the inspections completed. Of the 544 inspections completed 355 are currently in "Pass" status. He provided the following statistics with regard to needed repairs:

- 83 needed electrical repairs
- 64 needed smoke/CO detector installation or repair
- 32 needed KFD smoke/CO permit
- 26 needed stair and railing repair

- 19 needed plumbing repair
- 54 needed infestation, structure, heating, safety or security related repairs

Mr. Richter reported approximately 95 percent of repairs were completed with no pushback from the landlords. Mr. Richter noted students contact Ms. Picard if there is a problem who in turn contacts Code Enforcement. Mr. Richter also noted the information covered during the Student Orientation. Mr. Richter also reported there is only one Lodging House associated with the College that is incorporated into this voluntary inspection process.

Vice-Chair Jones asked if Code Enforcement participates in the College's Off-Campus Housing Orientation. Mr. Richter noted this is the orientation he mentioned earlier which takes place three to four times a year. In addition to the information provided to the students Mr. Richter said we make a big point of telling the students not to be afraid to contact us if they see issues from the checklist.

Vice-Chair Jones requested a history of what brought about this program. Rhett Lamb, ACM/Planning Director verified the Disorderly Housing Ordinance, which was not adopted is what brought the landlords together. Vice-Chair Jones commented the program is obviously working as the landlords are contacting Code Enforcement. Mr. Richter agreed with Vice-Chair Jones.

Vice-Chair Jones asked for questions or comments from the Committee.

Noting he works with this on the College side, Councilor Sapeta commented he thinks this is a very valuable program. Councilor Sapeta asked if this program could be extended to housing other than that of the College and is there a possibility for a website. Mr. Richter replied he was not in a position to answer that question. Mr. Richter continued we respond on a weekly basis to tenants with issues. John Rogers, Acting Health Director clarified the program is open to anybody. Mr. Rogers also reported the program is already on the City website under the Code Enforcement Department. Mr. Rogers also noted the information that can be obtained from the website by the general public. Mr. Rogers affirmed information Mr. Richter shared regarding the startup of the program and the good relationships that now exist between students, landlords, the College, and the City.

Councilor Hansel asked for information regarding the percentage of total student rentals inspected as part of this program. Mr. Richter replied he wasn't sure of the actual percentage, and reiterated the City has inspected 544 units. Mr. Richter suggested perhaps Ms. Picard could answer that question. Mr. Richter also responded to Councilor Hansel noting the inspections are conducted annually and that not all units pass the inspection (currently 335 have passed).

Referring to Committee presentations from Boards and Commissions, Vice-Chair Jones asked the City Clerk for clarification on how Department presentations came about. The City Clerk explained it has taken some time to get a good understanding of what would be beneficial for the Committee and we have directed our focus to an activity that perhaps the Committee and general public may not be totally aware of. She noted for 2017 the Committee will be seeing Department presentations and in 2018 the Committee will again hear from Boards and Commissions. Mr. Lamb further clarified there will be a subject area addressed that the Department selects and wants to identify as something Council and the public would want information about. Continuing Mr. Lamb explained we will not be doing a general presentation

of everything the Department does as this would not be feasible for a good exchange of information. Vice-Chair Jones noted he was the one who actually asked for this as the Board presentations were getting repetitive. Vice-Chair Jones explained he thought it would be a good idea for Council to know what the different Departments were doing; he added this presentation was a good example.

Councilor Sapeta asked if there was anything needed from the College to make the program even better. Mr. Richter explained he speaks with Ms. Picard on a daily basis. Mr. Richter continued he feels what is key is having the students and parents know the value of these inspections versus those units not inspected.

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

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

On a vote of 4-0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends this presentation be accepted as informational.

3) **Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Committee Vice-Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats Hall
May 11, 2017

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