

**CITY OF KEENE
NEW HAMPSHIRE**

JOINT PUBLIC WORKSHOP
PLANNING BOARD/
PLANNING, LICENSES, AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, June 8, 2015

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Planning Board Members Present

Gary Spykman, Chair
Christine Weeks
Councilor James Duffy
Andrew Bohannon
Nathaniel Stout
George Hansel
Mayor Kendall Lane
Douglas Barrett

Planning Board Members Not Present

Tammy Adams, Alternate

**Planning, Licenses and Development
Committee Members Present**

Councilor David Meader
Councilor Emily Hague
Councilor Bettina Chadbourne
Councilor Carl Jacobs

**Planning, Licenses and Development
Committee Members Not Present**

David Richards, Chairman

Staff Present

Rhett Lamb, Planning Director
Michele Chalice, Planner

1. Roll Call

PLD Vice-Chair Meader called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and a roll call was taken.

2. May 19, 2015 meeting minutes

Christine Weeks offered the following correction: Page 9, next to last paragraph the name should be "Lory".

Gary Spykman offered the following correction: Page 11, fifth and sixth paragraphs the person who made the motion should read as James Duffy not David Richards.

David Meader offered the following correction: Page 6, sixth paragraph change word "proposal" to "motion"

Christine Weeks offered the following correction: The meeting end time should read as 8:30 PM.

Gary Spykman offered the following correction: Page 14, fourth paragraph change the word "document" to "Comprehensive Master Plan"

A motion was made by Christine Weeks that the Joint Committee accept the May 19, 2015 meeting minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Carl Jacobs and was unanimously approved.

3. Presentation

Monadnock Sustainability Network (MSN) regarding the Monadnock Community Solar Initiative and the installation of a solar project at the Monadnock Food Co-op

Planning Director, Rhett Lamb was the first to address the Committee. Mr. Lamb stated that this is a series of on-going presentations the Joint Committee has called for since the adoption of the Master Plan in 2010. Other similar topics that have been covered were economic development, housing, stormwater management, climate initiative and today the Committee will hear about the Monadnock Community Solar Initiative (MCSI). Mr. Lamb introduced Mr. John Kondos, Nikki Sauber and Georgia Cassimatis.

Nikki Sauber and Georgia Cassimatis are from Swanzey, NH and Mr. Kondos, President of Monadnock Sustainability Network were the next speakers. Ms. Sauber stated for today's presentation they will talk about community solar, how the Monadnock Community Solar Initiative has come to be, accomplishments to date and the future of community solar.

Ms. Sauber said community solar is a solar electric system that provides power and other benefits to the community. It is different from commercial solar because it is produced and owned by people who live in the community. It is not about making a profit but is about providing a service to the community. Community solar projects diversify energy mix, provide jobs, help with the rising energy cost, provide solar for renters, build a strong community and cut carbon emission.

MCSI saw a need for community solar in this region and even though some residential and commercial projects are underway, the region and the State are far behind neighboring states like Massachusetts and Vermont. Because of Keene's inter-connective community base, it makes this a good area for community solar.

In January 2014, MSN submitted a proposal for a collaborative service initiative through Antioch University New England. Ms. Sauber stated that she and Ms. Cassimatis after graduating from Antioch University have stayed on with the Steering Committee of MSN.

Ms. Cassimatis stated since starting the MSCI journey in 2014, the Steering Committee has held community meetings to encourage community involvement in community solar. Over 30 people attended which far exceeded the expectation. Much advertising was done, some of those who attended were interested in investing in the project, some came to learn about community solar and some were looking to put a bid on the array. MSCI Strategic Plan was created with the help of Antioch University and is a 50 page document, which talks about solar models, financing, legal issues and more. This project has been shared with the Town of Nelson to move forward their community solar initiative. A core group was put together as a result of the initial meeting consisting of community members who are committed to seeing this project to fruition. Legal assistance has been sought to complete the necessary documents. A solar model has been decided upon which would best suit the community needs and goals.

The goal is to make this model easily accessible in many other communities which don't have the same resources. They have also looked at a site; roof of the Monadnock Co-op and much discussion has gone into this.

A video was shown next which was created in collaboration with the Food Co-op. It recaps the work they have done so far. Ms. Sauber said this video was created so that they could participate

in the NH Social Innovation Challenge but unfortunately they did not receive this grant but a wonderful video was created because of it.

Ms. Sauber went on to say that the Steering Committee has developed a Gant Chart, which is a visual outline of tasks and timelines and they are currently working on finalizing the partnership with the Monadnock Food Co-op. As they work through the legal process they are also working through the funding aspects for this project. They have recently held a meeting with equity investors to be able to obtain about half the funding.

Ms. Sauber stated MSN would also be putting out a bid for contractors for PV installers and are committed to choosing someone locally and the plan is to construct the system by fall 2015. There is then the plan to package materials and documents which can be shared as a community solar model to other groups and towns for a small fee. An Antioch intern will be working on this portion of the project. Ms. Sauber stated by the end of this year there should be a community shared solar array located on top of the Monadnock Food Co-op and soon after they will be pitching this model to other groups. This concluded the presentation.

Councilor Jacobs asked for clarification as to what it means by “community owned”. Mr. Kondos explained that it is common for community owned solar to be financed by entities from outside the community. For the project before the Joint Committee today, all of the ownership comes from two sources within the community; tax equity investors (70%) and the balance will come from the Co-op. He said community owned means local in this case.

Councilor Hague asked who in the community will benefit from this power and would we able to take advantage of the commercial net metering that is new to New Hampshire. Mr. Kondos stated that the Co-op will consume all the electricity. He went on to say that New Hampshire’s net metering is fairly flawed and hence would not recommend this as a primary model. However, there will be people who would pursue it. He hoped this law could be tweaked to be as effective as it is in Vermont.

Ms. Weeks asked for explanation to what Mr. Kondos said about the NH law that needs tweaking. Mr. Kondos explained that when a group owns a solar system and a meter is assigned to it, in New Hampshire one person would receive check from the utility company for the electricity that was generated from this system. This person now has the task of managing this money themselves, dispersing same, and generating taxable income. In Vermont, each person has their own money and is credited for the amount of electricity that is generated. He added that there is a plan to streamline this law.

Chair Spykman asked how the economics work and how you know it is being successful. Mr. Kondos stated the tax equity investors who contribute towards the funding will own 95% of the system initially and will receive 30% federal tax credit and accelerated depreciation. Within the first year they would receive 70% of their money back and in six years they would make a small but healthy profit and at that time the ownership percentage will flip and the co-op, the other member will now own 95% and the tax equity investors at that point have the opportunity to cash out because they would have made a profit by this time.

Councilor Duffy asked what kind of regulatory hurdles a city would have to face when it comes to supplying solar energy and what suggestions Mr. Kondos has to changing those for the better. Mr. Kondos stated there is the application to the utility company to get an interconnect, city permits, applying for state rebates, as well as federal tax credits which would need to be

addressed as well. Councilor Duffy referred to the Regional Green House Gas Initiative (RGGI) which the state is still involved with and most of the money goes back to Eversource and asked how more funding could be invested in renewable energy. Mr. Kondos stated that Massachusetts and Vermont have legislation that encourages community solar but in New Hampshire even after a year we are still the first one to consider this. He felt the community needs to address this issue with its representatives. Ms. Sauber added for anyone who is interested in learning more about the advocacy efforts that are going on, she asked that they check out the New Hampshire Sustainable Energy Association website where there are individuals who are anxious for New Hampshire to succeed in the solar industry.

Councilor Jacobs stated his church has been working on a project like this and his understanding is that there is a for profit entity that owns the installation in its early years to be able to obtain the tax credit. He felt this is confusing aspect for a community that is trying to benefit from solar. Ms. Sauber agreed that when it comes to community solar, the solar part is easy but the community part is what is difficult. Mr. Kondos stated that they feel they can raise this money locally but the legal obstacles are the issues which they are working through.

Councilor Hague stated it was nice to see Antioch University engaging in a partnership in this manner. Mr. Kondos noted this project would not have come to fruition without the help of Antioch University. Ms. Cassimatis stated that they have graduated from Antioch and are now volunteering with this project and are committed to it.

Councilor Stout asked what the plans the two students have for this project now that they have graduated. Ms. Sauber stated the big success would be if MSN is able to share this model with other local groups. As far as they are concerned, they are not necessarily in the solar field. However, working for an organization like this, it would help them learn how community organizing works and use that towards their future goals.

Mr. Lamb added the City, through the Planning Department, is member of the New England Municipal Sustainability Managers Network and has been attending those meetings recently and has learned about the RGGI money which is handed out in Massachusetts and added that the Committee will be astounded how much money is being put into communities by a fully committed state in the RGGI System.

With reference to how to change the overall atmosphere in New Hampshire, Mr. Lamb explained that legislature began this past year recommending that New Hampshire withdraw from the RGGI program but a compromise was reached but now only 10% is coming to communities and the rest is going to the utility companies. This is where change needs to happen. He further stated at the federal level the incentive tax credit is also expiring and urged people to talk to their federal legislators as well. Once those tax incentives go away, many such programs will cease to exist.

Mr. Hansel asked whether Mr. Kondos sees solar becoming more affordable without government subsidies. Mr. Kondos stated in the last four to five years, solar panels prices have dropped by about 50% but this is because of worldwide demand. As demand grows and prices drop, solar should be self-sustaining. One of the biggest problems is that we are not pricing carbon and the risks it is causing to present and future generations are not being looked at- this is a key component. Mr. Kondos stated there is an initiative; Citizens Climate Lobby and encouraged anyone interested to participate, they are working on trying to make a difference.

Councilor Duffy stated that the Journal of Epidemiology in 2006 indicated that the price of treating poor air-quality diseases in New Hampshire is close to a billion dollars a year. By allowing private investors to subsidize this cost is giving people an opportunity to make a good return on their investment. However, a private homeowner for \$50,000 could install a decent solar array on their home and in a few years with net metering is able to sell energy back to the grid, which he felt is smart planning.

Planning Board Chair Spykman pointed out the amount of power that is going to be generated by the installation on the Co-op roof is going to generate less electricity than what the Co-op uses. Chair Spykman felt something similar on a warehouse with low energy draw will produce a greater return and asked whether his assumption was correct. Mr. Kondos stated the return unfortunately is going to be the same but the cost may go down slightly. You can't sell any excess electricity at the retail rate. The benefit of the system on the Co-op roof is that they will save on their retail rate and if they exceed any of that, the excess will then drop down to a wholesale rate and special arrangements will then need to be made and hence it is crucial to keep the system within a building's usage.

That concluded the presentation.

4. City Council referral – Comprehensive Master Plan Implementation Update – Councilor Duffy communication

Vice-Chair Meader stated on March 15th Councilor Duffy sent a communication to the Mayor and City Council requesting that an appropriate committee look at implementation strategies for the Comprehensive Master Plan. That Committee was the PLD Committee who had a subsequent meeting with the Planning Director and Councilor Duffy was in attendance. The Planning Director went over several strategies and it was decided the appropriate place for continued implementation discussion was the Joint Committee. That recommendation was made to the Council, the Council adopted the recommendation and the matter is now before the Joint Committee.

Councilor Duffy stated the communication of March 15 was to start a discussion about what steps can be taken in the City to engage all parties. One of the top implementation strategies of the Master Plan was to update the landuse and zoning codes as well as the idea of creating neighborhood nodes. Councilor Duffy explained that until post World War II, traditional neighborhoods were single family homes. Senior citizens lived in these same neighborhoods and there were also mixed use areas and most people could obtain what they needed within a two-mile radius.

Councilor Duffy said, most recently there was the Marlboro Street Corridor study and there was focus on the eastside neighborhood. In these forums what was stated is that people want to see more cohesive neighborhoods and a lot is being said about affordable and workforce housing. The average income in this region is about \$38,000. The average apartment in Keene is about \$970 and for a home that costs about \$231,000 the average family income will need to be about \$98,000. He indicated there a lot of people in this average income level who are asking for housing that is affordable and central to downtown. We are also hearing a lot about creative economy and supporting the arts. How do we take this step and make it happen.

Councilor Duffy stated he is encouraged that there have been many studies done about neighborhood planning and finding ways through regulatory measures and incentives to make

this type of development happen. This seems to be consistent with all six goals identified in the Master Plan during the visioning sessions:

1. A Quality Built Environment
2. A Unique Natural Environment
3. A Vibrant Economy
4. A Strong Citizenship & Proactive Leadership
5. A Creative Learning Culture
6. A Healthy Community

The Councilor stated that those who sit in these leadership roles need to provide proactive leadership. Creating strong citizenship comes from creating vibrant neighborhoods where people are interacting while maintaining right to their own property.

He went on to say that the east side of Keene has a high rate of rental housing and many of these are in less than desirable condition as opposed to the west side Keene where there is a higher percentage of owner occupied homes. The Councilor stated he hopes this type of discussion would happen more at the Joint Committee level, perhaps every other month. There are also other venues where this discussion can happen such as before the City Council, community groups, the development community and find ways to help private development move on some of this work.

Mr. Lamb was the next speaker. Mr. Lamb stated the reason he suggested this matter come before the Joint Committee is because he felt this something the City Council and Planning Board should be working on together. He noted the Comprehensive Master Plan does recommend the Joint Committee be the location for this discussion in terms of implementation and initiatives and how changes should occur as the Plan evolves. He indicated his intention tonight is to listen to the discussion and come back next month about some of the implementation initiatives that are underway.

Mr. Lamb stated the landuse code update was mentioned earlier and noted he will have an update on this item for the July meeting. He added that staff is still pursuing the regulatory phase of the Marlboro Street project. He reminded the Committee that the landuse code update is a City wide attempt to streamline the regulatory process and to look at more updated planning and regulatory ideas and see if they can be integrated into the Cite Code. The Marlboro Street project was intended to be a test case for the larger project and staff will be back with a set of zoning changes and a set of changes to the Planning Board Regulations and some guidelines for the Planning Board Regulations.

Mayor Lane stated that Councilor Duffy had brought up two issues that the Councilor and he have discussed in past. One of them being neighborhood nodes – business nodes within neighborhoods. The Mayor stated the Joint Committee needs to have a discussion as to how that should look like and how to make it economically viable. He agreed that the Councilor is correct in that neighborhoods grew up around neighborhood nodes which included businesses. However, when malls came into being and access to automobiles became easier, neighborhood businesses started to suffer. Malls are now suffering because of the internet. The question is how we create neighborhood nodes that are economically viable, sustainable by the business and within the neighborhood structure. They won't exist unless there is an economic need for them, which is going to be the challenge the City is going to face.

The Mayor went on to say that the other item Councilor Duffy highlighted was the east side redevelopment and the question again is what mechanisms are available to foster private development into the eastside neighborhood, particularly with development happening in the SEED District, 250 units of student housing being completed on Ralston Street which is going to take students away from the eastside neighborhood causing less impact to family housing. However, Keene State College is also suffering from a decline in enrollment which will also have an impact on this. Once students move away from east Keene, then that housing will need to be replaced with family housing.

Mayor Lane stated that part of this is going to be the City's responsibility to update water, sewer and the roads as well as some great deal of private investment. The Mayor noted that the City is working with Southwest Community Services to redevelop some land on the east side of Keene, which has been vacant. Part of this will create workforce housing and infrastructure to support workforce housing (greenway along Beaver Brook, parks and other such infrastructure work). He felt the issues raised by Councilor Duffy were very valuable.

Mr. Stout stated he would like to complement the City for the implementation of the Master Plan that has happened so far. However, questioned how this Master Plan upgrade can be handled in a manageable way; how do we cover all the issues so the Master Plan doesn't become cumbersome so we can implement the upgrade. He stated that what he will like to hear in July is about the "50,000 foot" view and where the City will be in two years with an upgraded plan. He thanked Councilor Duffy for bring up this issue.

PLD Acting Chair Meader noted this document envisioned an Implementation Committee and asked for clarification from Mr. Lamb. Mr. Lamb stated the Plan recommended an implementation plan and schedule and assigned that responsibility to the Joint Committee.

Ms. Weeks stated that she would like to speak up for the senior citizens in this community and would like to know if there was any information on demographics on people who are 65 years and older. She indicated that there has been a lot of discussion about workforce housing and felt there should be discussion about housing for senior citizens as well. One of the attractive aspects about a continuing care retirement community is that income is protected and the models is attractive for those on a fixed income and are looking to age in place.

Ms. Weeks talked about how her life has changed in the past five years and her desire to continue living in this community. She added she was surprised that continuing care retirement communities were not prevalent when this Master Plan was drafted in the mid 2000 time period. Ms. Weeks stated that she would like to have a further discussion on this item if that was agreeable to the Committee.

Mr. Lamb added that he is happy to bring demographic information but there is a difference between re-writing a plan and determining how it's going to be implemented. Mr. Lamb stated the discussion today is about taking the good ideas in the Plan, developing a clear expectation and then a schedule to move forward with implementation. He added he would be cautious about bringing new information and entering into a planning process. Mr. Lamb reminded the Committee that they were implementing not rewriting the plan.

Mr. Bohannon noted that if you were to look at the younger generations, there is an opportunity to look at technology as a means to create different nodes to provide faster internet to businesses that are looking to grow. Mr. Bohannon stated the City had great results with public input

through Mind Mixer software platform during the Carpenter Field discussion and this will be used again for the skate park discussion and felt there are other similar things that could be brought into this venue as well.

Mr. Hansel asked whether there is a schedule to update the Master Plan because of the suggested changes he is hearing and if there was going to be a revision whether the implementation could be built into that. Mr. Lamb stated the Community vision is a 20-year vision which was adopted in 2008. The plan itself is on a ten year cycle but can be adjusted on an as needed basis. For instance, the 2004 goals for carbon emission reduction was adopted in this Plan and that goal is set to be re-evaluated in 2015 for the reduction goals the City set. Mr. Lamb added that portion of this Master Plan can be updated as needed. He went on to say that what he was cautioning was to not make an extensive amount of changes but to write out the implementation plan and the schedule as stated back in 2010.

Councilor Jacobs stated he appreciates this discussion. He felt the Master Plan is a living document, it is not a mandate, and it is a framework we can use. He felt the reason downtown is surviving is because it is a mixed use area and stated that a neighborhood node appeals to him. He added that he also is happy to hear the quality life issues that were raised and added that the arts appeal to him which he felt should be part of the fabric of a community.

Councilor Hague building on what Mr. Bohannon stated felt it was important to keep the community engaged in this document in the form of a progress report or feedback because of the amount of community involvement that went into the formation of this document. She felt that as the City begins the update process, assigning to the existing Boards and Commissions specific tasks for implementation which she thought was part of Councilor Duffy's vision. Mr. Lamb stated that since January all City Council Board and Commissions have been asked to provide an update to the City Council connecting what that Body has done over the past year or so to the Comprehensive Master Plan. Acting Chair Meader thanked Councilor Duffy for initiating this process with reference to getting other Boards and Commissions involved in this process.

Ms. Weeks stated that she moved to this community in 1982 and the change she has seen in this community is astounding. Downtown at that time consisted of pavement with very little vegetation and small retail stores. The mixed use that exists downtown now is very different and is vital. Same could be said about Keene State College. Keene is now a very vibrant community. However, the biggest negative change the City has seen are the students moving into the east side communities and breaking up single family homes but felt this is also changing with the new student housing that is being proposed on Ralston Street. She noted that this is a remarkable City and asked how many other cities the size of Keene would have all its store fronts occupied and felt we have a lot to be proud of.

Planning Board Chair Spykman felt the reason Keene is the way it is, is because of the robust planning that exists behind it. Chair Spykman referred to the rules of procedures for the Planning Board which dates back to 1990 talks about the update to the Master Plan happening every five years and goes through a procedure when it will happen in increments. He added the Planning Board for the past 25 years has been asked to put together a plan and use the community input into a larger document. Chair Spykman stated what he took from the comments made last month is that the Master Plan is just a guideline but felt much work was put into this document by many people to turn this into a Plan and it should be used as such. Implementation of this document is the issue and of all the things that have been brought up the three that stood out for him were neighborhood nodes, mixed use and the need for affordable housing and many raised the issue

with east Keene and stated he agreed with those concerns as well. Chair Spykman also brought up the issue with the new college housing that is coming up on Ralston Street and noted to the declining enrollment Keene State is going to be facing next year. This would result in the demand for housing going down and questioned how some of the homes on the east side of Keene could be reverted back to single-family homes.

Mayor Lane noted that the City adopted its first Master Plan in 1927 and has been committed since that time to planning and this has been an important facet of this community. He added the east side forum was not limited to industrial or commercial uses, there were a number of residential uses and the first implementation that would result from this forum is residential and this forum was very broadly focused.

The Acting Chair then asked for public comment.

Mr. Jim Gardner of 27 Birch Street stated that he came today to talk about priorities and agreed there is much work to be done. He felt the sentence that is the best summary of the priorities of the CMP is the sentence that talks about achieving community sustainability. If this was true what actions would be necessary to promote community sustainability? The fundamental thing to do would be to mitigate the impact of climate change which is very destructive. The biggest driver of climate change would be the reduction of greenhouse gas emission. Keene might not be able to change the planet but we can do our part. Mr. Gardner referred to the letter approved by the City Council to EPA which should be the priority City Government needs to take.

He noted there is a statement in the implementation section which talks about adopting the 2009 NH Climate Action Plan which does look old compared to science that exists at this item. Mr. Gardner specifically referred to the Report from Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which refer to much more stricter standards about greenhouse gas emission.

Mr. Gardner stated he has no issue at all with solar energy but if greenhouse gas emission is going to be reduced, just installing solar panels might not be the answer; conservation and efficiency is the answer. For the \$150,000 estimate for solar panel installation, if that money is used for conservation and efficiency, it would reduce greenhouse gas emission by more than 40 kilowatts than was previously suggested. He agreed solar work is necessary but an integration of all renewable energy resources is also necessary.

Mr. Gardner asked the Council direct the activities of the Climate Action Committee to get the greenhouse gas emission levels to best and current science. He felt it was important to have a target so the City would know where to go with their implementation strategies.

Councilor Duffy thanked everyone for their comments. The Councilor referred to the comment from Mr. Stout about maintaining a 50,000 foot view and felt the City has this but we can lose it by not focusing on how we go forward. It is also very important to work on getting into the detail while still maintaining the bird's eye view of being the best community in 2028. He added that the challenge is implementation. Councilor Duffy referred to Ms. Weeks' comments about addressing the needs of senior citizens and noted that nationally 15% of our elderly population lives in poverty or below poverty. He noted he has heard of communities that provide affordable housing for seniors in exchange for providing ten hours a week of childcare for foster kids whose parents can't afford to work and pay for daycare at the same time.

The Councilor referred to the location of Ralston and Emerald Street which went through a zoning change to accommodate senior housing but because of grant issues the project never moved forward. This would be senior housing but would also have space for young professionals and families and an area for a home office space. This could provide for telecommuting which is on the increase.

Councilor Duffy stated there is a law in New Hampshire where you can create living space for senior citizens (700 – 1,100 square feet of space) within an existing neighborhood. The Councilor also referred to a workforce housing law that was passed in 2008 and suggested this be added to the discussion as well.

Acting Chair Meader in closing stated next month there will be a report by the Planning Director on implementation. He felt it is important to discuss implementation and the Joint Committee was the best venue to do this.

5. Next Meeting – Monday, July 13, 2015

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Krishni Pahl,
Minute Taker

Reviewed by Rhett Lamb,
Edits by Lee Langella