

CITY OF KEENE
NEW HAMPSHIRE

**JOINT PLANNING BOARD/
PLANNING, LICENSES, AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, December 9, 2019

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Planning Board Members Present

Doug Barrett, Chairman
Andrew Weglinski
Martha Landry
Mayor Kendall Lane
Gary Spykman
Tammy Adams, Alternate
Councilor George Hansel

Planning Board Members Not Present

Michael Burke
Pamela Russell Slack

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

David Richards, Chairman
Councilor Philip Jones
Councilor Kate Bosley
Councilor George Hansel

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

Councilor Robert O'Connor

Staff Present

Rhett Lamb, Community Development Director
Mari Brunner, Planner
Tara Kessler, Senior Planner

1. Roll Call

Chair Barrett called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm and a roll call was taken.

2. November 12, 2019 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Mayor Kendall Lane that the Joint Committee accept the November 12, 2019 meeting minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilor Phil Jones and was unanimously approved.

3. Presentation on Downtown Zoning Update Draft Ordinance from the consulting firm, Camiros, and City Community Development Staff

Mr. Kopczynski stated the city is working on a fairly significant item known as the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) as part of the Building Better Together Project. The City has retained the services of the consulting firm Camiros to help with that process. Camiros has been focused on a drafting an update to the City's Downtown Zoning. The Consultants will be giving a presentation on the proposed changes to the Downtown Zoning this evening.

Mr. Chris Jennette from Camiros addressed the Committee next. He noted the last time this ordinance was updated was about 50 years ago. With the help of staff and input from the

consultants, it has been determined the best approach for downtown would be Form Based Coding. Form Based Coding puts form and community character at the top of the equation. It thinks more about the physical aspects of development – building placement is the first of these aspects. Standards that affect building placement include build to zone and build to line. This focus helps with reinforcing developed patterns and to make sure they are preserved into the future. It also gives thought to building height where the predominate building height is looked at and a minimum building height is put in place.

Mr. Jennette then went over what they have been doing so far. This project was started in the summer of 2018. Early on in the project, they toured the City with staff, examined the existing development and streetscapes, and gathered the necessary documentation. They have conducted stakeholder interviews and last winter the consultants presented to the Community on the technical review and approaches report and how to move forward with the new Downtown Regulation. A series of community workshops were held at that time.

Mr. Jennette stated the purpose of today's presentation is to talk about the proposed Downtown District (DT). He went over the purpose of the DT District:

1. Provide a series of standards allowing for the orderly growth and development of downtown Keene in a manner that respects and enhances the City's unique identity.
2. Allow for new development that is creative, innovative, and sustainable, and that reinforces the vibrancy, human scale, and pedestrian-orientation of downtown.
3. Ensure that development remains sensitive to surrounding community context, form, and use.

He noted the proposed DT District does this in a number of ways. The first is through the idea of sub-districts. The second is through street types. The third is through form standards. The fourth is through permitted uses. Since downtown is a key walkable core it is also important to give some thought to automobiles and parking in this area.

With respect to sub-districts, there are six sub districts that are being proposed. For street types – type A streets are being created these are where they would like to see a high level of design (zero foot setback, zero foot built to line) similar to what exists downtown. There are however, other parts of downtown that might be room for greater flexibility in design standards, and where it may be important for buildings to have an option to be set back a little bit further from the sidewalk or street. Hence, what is being proposed is for Type A streets are portions of Washington Street, Court Street, and Main Street and Central Square, and Gilbo Avenue. Anything that is not a Type A street would be a Type B street. Mr. Jennette noted that a Type A designation does not mean a street is of greater importance than a Type B street, the designations are a way to classify different categories of standards.

Mr. Jennette began to review the different sub-districts. He began by describing the Downtown Core, which provides for the highest intensity of development. The other sub-districts include the Downtown Growth, where there might be the opportunity for new- and re-development of a larger scale and intensity; Downtown Limited, which is to the north of Central Square and has a unique pattern of development; Downtown Edge, which is composed mostly of general commercial uses (areas off Winchester Street, Roxbury Street and Marlboro Street); Downtown Transition, which mirrors much of the Office Districts and provides a buffer between the intense

activity of the Core / Growth and more residential areas; and, Institutional Campus, which is an interface between Keene State College and Downtown along Main Street.

Mr. Jennette then addressed the form standards for each of the sub-districts. He noted that the proposed standards are tailored to fit each sub-district, and that they address items like build to lines, setbacks, minimum lot areas and widths, building heights, and building activation. Building activation related to how the building interfaces with the street, including considerations for how much transparency is being permitted on the ground floor or on upper stories, the distance between setback and sidewalk, and how much blank wall is permitted.

Mr. Jennette stated one of the items they are moving towards in the Downtown Zoning Update is transitioning to a more generic use approach, and to have groups of uses rather than specific uses. New social service and congregate living uses are proposed to be added as well.

With respect to the Downtown Core Sub-district, Mr. Jennette noted that a zero foot build to line is proposed. Build out is required to be much more at the street (80% for type A streets and 60% for type B streets). Building height is required to be at a minimum of 18 feet. There are a few exemptions to building height, downtown core will allow up to 85 feet (seven stories). There is a permitted height exception to increase architectural interest that allows a building to have an additional eight feet of height up to 25% of the square footage of the story below, but it cannot create a new story.

Within the Downtown Growth Sub-District, the standards propose greater flexibility than in the Core. There is a zero to five feet range for the build to line for type A streets and five to fifteen feet built to line for type B streets. The maximum height is 85 feet with the same exceptions as in the Downtown Core. This district can accommodate a mixture of research, development and light industrial uses.

Standards within the Downtown Limited Sub-District are tailored to reinforce what development already exists in this area. The front setbacks would be between zero to fifteen feet. Type A and B streets do not apply here. Height is limited to 35 feet or 2.5 stories. This area would be suitable for mixture of limited commercial and retail, mixed uses.

Within the Downtown Edge Sub-District, there is a mixture of development forms. A minimum lot area of 10,000 square feet and a minimum lot width of 50 feet is proposed to keep with the established pattern of development. A maximum height of 40 feet or three stories is proposed.

The proposed standards in the Downtown Transition Sub-District are mostly consistent with the standards of the current Office District. A slightly higher building height is proposed compared to what exists in the Office District, which is 35 feet. The proposal would be to go up to 40 feet.

The Institutional Campus Sub-District would serve as the interface between the college and downtown.

Mr. Jennette reviewed the parking standards proposed for the Core and Growth Sub-districts. On Type A Streets parking is not permitted within the first 24 feet of lot depth and no parking can be

accessed via a Type A street unless there is no alternative. If parking is going to be visible from a public right of way it needs to be screened. He described the proposed screening standards. He noted that there is more flexibility with respect to parking standards in the other sub-districts.

Mayor Lane asked how the Type A and B streets are determined. Mr. Jennette stated it was determined using the existing developmental pattern and discussion with staff. Type A is where they want to focus the highest quality of design in the downtown. Mayor Lane noted the city a few years ago developed the SEED District and Emerald Street was part of this District; however, Emerald Street is not being considered as Type A Street. He questioned why Emerald Street is not being included. Ms. Kessler stated the consultants did recommend this to be a Type A street but staff was concerned about limiting the flexibility for placement of buildings on these lots. If a zero build to line was put in place on Emerald Street it could restrict the options for development in this area, and also the opportunity expand the sidewalk space. If there is a greater range for where a building can be built, there is the potential to create more space in front of a building for the public realm and activities such as outdoor dining.

Mayor Lane noted homeless shelters are only being permitted in the Growth Area and nowhere else downtown asked whether this was an over limitation. Mr. Kopczynski stated what they were trying to balance was the allowance for this use in proximity to available services including the City's transportation network. Staff felt the Growth Area was the best solution. However, noted this is a draft document and changes can always be made.

Councilor Bosley stated she would also like to indicate her interest in some of these Type A Streets. She stated the following areas exhibit some of the Type A Street characteristics; portions of Roxbury Street and West Street. Edges of West Street leaving Central Square and edge of Roxbury Street leaving Central Square already have zero build to lines and hoped if any of these building were to be reconstructed they would be reconstructed in that manner. She also noted Emerald Street, Eagle Court and Railroad Street. She noted what creates a vibrant downtown are these walkable side streets. Mr. Jennette stated this is an item they have discussed a lot with staff. He added both Type A and B streets are high design standard streets. However, Type B streets would have more flexibility with respect to where the building could be placed. It would still not be able to go further back than five feet.

Councilor Jones clarified whether the intention was for the Type A streets to be arterial streets into downtown. Mr. Jennette stated they perform an overlay – the Councilor referred to streets like Marlboro, Washington Streets, which are gateways into the downtown. Mr. Jennette agreed.

Councilor Jones noted the Use Matrix has quite a few conditional use permits and asked what Mr. Jennette envisions for a process for the conditional use permit, Mr. Jennette stated this is an item that needs to be addressed as part of the larger process.

Councilor Richards noted lodging houses seem to be located in just the Downtown Transition District and felt this seems rather limiting. Ms. Kessler stated the uses on this table were only looking at the Downtown Sub-districts and these will be proposed in other zoning districts outside the downtown. The conversation about where these Congregate Living and Social

Service Uses are located outside the downtown area is currently taking place at the Joint Committee. The next meeting on this topic will be on January 13, 2020.

Ms. Adams referred to the Institutional Campus Sub-District and asked why it did not wrap around Winchester Street. Mr. Jennette stated the reason it is confined just to Main Street is because the college should reflect an extension of the form of downtown at least along the Main Street frontage. What the City is asking from the college and what the college wants to do to participate in the fabric of downtown should be focused on the primary access. He noted the needs of the city and the needs of the college are quite a bit different.

Mr. Spykman noted a lot of work has gone into this and this draft seems like it might be somewhat close to what it would look like in the end and asked if that was accurate. Ms. Kessler stated pending significant feedback received from the community, they are narrowing in on a final draft. Mr. Spykman felt there are three sections to this; the vision of what the downtown should look like, the written regulations, and the graphic interpretations. With reference to the written regulations, and graphic interpretations, Mr. Spykman stated he felt the language could be simpler and less wordy and would like to make it more accessible to people.

With reference to the graphic representation felt the isometric was very helpful. He noted the plan representation however, was confusing.

Councilor Hansel referred to lodging house and noted Keene's history with reference to lodging houses has been with fraternities or sororities and noted there are communities that use lodging houses as shared living alternatives and make for good workforce housing. He asked whether there is room to accommodate this type of housing. The Councilor went on to say with respect to congregate living and social services, it was difficult for him to see the total picture without seeing what surrounds it. He asked whether these uses are going to be require to go through the CUP process. He felt the current zoning does not meet the needs of those agencies. Ms. Kessler stated the January 13 Joint Public Workshop will be focused on the congregate living and the social service ordinance and stated they will review the location of these uses outside the downtown at this meeting.

Chair Barrett noted the minimum height for Downtown Core is 18 feet but Downtown Growth has it at 24 feet and asked whether this should be reversed. Mr. Jennette stated the varying heights that exist in the Downtown Core is what makes it interesting. Within the Growth District there is less to go on, there room for other amenities in the Growth District (parking etc).

Mr. Weglinski referred to Open Space Uses – Conservation Area and asked for clarification as to what this refers to. Ms. Kessler stated it is a carryover from what currently exists in the zoning ordinance and is area set aside for open space uses.

Chair Barrett stated this is not a public hearing but stated he would be willing to take comment. There was no public comment.

Ms. Kessler then went over sessions where public can get more information on the draft:

There would be an similar presentation the following evening given by the consultants for the general public. There would also be an open studio between 10 and 4 pm on Tuesday, December 10. This is an opportunity to meet with staff and the consultants directly, and would be at the former Brown Computer Solutions store.

The website, www.keenebuildingbettertogether.com, is another location for learning more about the information provided and the greater project. Staff will then be making further edits to the document and a final draft will be ready early next year and the adoption process will then begin. Staff will be accepting written comments on the draft until December 31, 2019.

Mayor Lane felt what is before the committee tonight is a positive step forward with a few tweaks that need to be made.

The Chairman thanked the consultants for their work on this document

4. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker
Reviewed and edited by Tara Kessler, Senior Planner