

City of Keene
New Hampshire

COLLEGE / CITY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 25, 2019

4:00 PM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Steve Fortier, Chair
Richard Berry
Kelly Ricaurte (until 4:55 PM)
Dave Richards, Co-Chair
Kya Roumimper
Jeff Murphy
Robin Picard
Danya Landis
Peter Starkey
Ely Thayer (joined via phone at 4:09 PM)

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director
Thomas Mullins, City Attorney

Members Not Present:

Dr. Dottie Morris
Dr. Chris Cusack
Victoria Bergstrom
Philip Jones

Co-Chair Richards called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM.

1) Roll Call

Roll call was conducted.

2) Review of Minutes from October 28, 2019

Ms. Landis made a motion to approve the minutes of October 28, 2019. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Tom Mullins, City Attorney – Review Rules of Order

The City Attorney stated that he is here to review the standard rules of procedure that were created years ago for boards and commissions. He continued that the City-College Commission is a board under the City ordinances and falls under the City's processes and rules. It is a public body under the law and members are appointed by either Keene State College (KSC) and its president, or the City and its Mayor. The City-College Commission, like the other public bodies the City has, falls under RSA 91-A, the Right to Know law. It is important to follow the RSA's requirements and the City is very careful about that.

The City Attorney continued that the rules include that the commission has to meet as a group, with a quorum present, and notify the public at least 24 hours ahead of a meeting. A member can participate by phone if necessary, but a quorum has to be physically present and a person on

the phone cannot be used to form the quorum. Members of the commission and of the public need to be able to hear the person on the phone, and vice versa. Also, the person on the phone needs to state, for the meeting minutes, why they could not be present.

Ely Thayer joined the meeting via phone at 4:09 PM. Mr. Thayer stated that he is unable to be present in person because he is in New Jersey visiting family for Thanksgiving.

The City Attorney stated that the agenda packet includes the standard rules of procedure, which is an outline of the RSA's public meeting requirements. He continued that meeting notices need to be posted publically, as do the minutes. The law requires a certain amount of formality with meeting minutes, which is why the commission (and other public bodies within the City) has a professional minute-taker provided by the City. It is important for the minute-taker to be able to see and hear everything. By law, s/he has to record who makes and seconds each motion. Minute-takers are familiar, to some extent, with parliamentary procedure, and might suggest to a meeting's chairperson if a motion is needed. If a quorum is not present at the scheduled start of a meeting, the minute-taker will stay for about 15 minutes to wait for a quorum to appear. If a quorum appears after the minute-taker has left, the meeting can proceed if the chair appoints someone to take the minutes. Members cannot hold a meeting without a quorum, and if they talk anyway, it does not count as a meeting.

The City Attorney continued that other quorum issues to consider include the fact that if members gather outside of meetings and it turns out a quorum is present, such as at a holiday party, that is okay so long as they do not talk about business (because then it becomes an "unlawful meeting.") They also need to be very careful with emails and online communication. A member of a public body can receive emails and respond to say "I cannot make it to the meeting," for example, and just leave it at that. But a member cannot hit the "reply all" button to say, for example, "Agenda item 3 is problematic and I don't think we should vote on it." It is also not permissible to do sequential emails, such as having Member A email Member B, who then emails Member C, who then emails Member D, and so on and so forth. That, too, can count as a "quorum" under the law.

The City Attorney continued that another change to the rules deals with subcommittees. Subcommittees are permissible, and if the group creates one, the meeting minutes should state who is on the subcommittee, why it was created, and what it will do. Subcommittees, too, are public bodies and subject to the rules and regulations under RSA 91-A so the public can attend and participate. Subcommittees can get complicated and they should be careful. If the group sends one person off to do research to bring back to the full group, that is not a problem. However, if the group sends two people off to sift through information and make judgment calls about what to bring back, that is a subcommittee, in an advisory role to the full committee.

The City Attorney continued that finally, the City-College Commission should not need to go into non-public session, but if they do, they should let Mr. Lamb know. There are strict requirements for how to conduct non-public sessions, and he (The City Attorney) would want to be present to advise. He asked the group to review the rules of procedure, then pass a motion to adopt them, and the City will keep it on file. He asked if anyone had questions.

Mr. Fortier stated that the City-College Commission will be having a holiday celebration. He continued that the KSC President will speak a little bit about business. The City Attorney replied that a holiday celebration is okay, but commission members should not then deliberate or make decisions about anything the President said. Mr. Lamb asked if that needs to be noticed as a

public meeting. The City Attorney replied no, social gatherings are excluded by the RSA.

Mr. Murphy asked if posting meetings on a website is okay for giving public notice. The City Attorney replied yes, meetings have to be posted in at least one physical location, but having the second notice be on a website is fine. Mr. Lamb added that the City takes care of giving notice about the meetings. He continued that subcommittees should let the Community Development Department know about their upcoming meetings so staff can put the notices out. The City Attorney added that all meetings are published on the City's online calendar.

Mr. Fortier asked if there is anything about the rules of procedure that is new since the time The City Attorney met with the group six months ago. The City Attorney replied that anything new is included, such as having who seconded each motion included in the minutes. He continued that other than that, there are no big changes. There are internal, administrative changes about topics such as publishing minutes, but commission members do not need to worry about that.

The City Attorney stated that he will be happy to talk with the Chair if any more questions arise. The group thanked him. The City Attorney left at 4:19 PM.

Mr. Richards made a motion for the City-College Commission to adopt the Rules of Procedure as they are in today's handout. Ms. Landis seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Discussion: Regional Socio-Economic Data and Trends

Chair Fortier stated that he missed last month's meeting, but last month's meeting minutes show a great discussion regarding the commission's focus and purpose. He continued that to reiterate, Mr. Lamb, as the City's liaison, and Kim Gagne, as the college's liaison meet before each meeting. They talked about stepping back a bit, and envision a three-step process, with today being the first step. They looked at fresh data related to the City and the college, and shared a few different reports with the commission.

Chair Fortier asked members to share what jumped out at them from the data/reports that might deserve some of the commission's attention down the road. He continued that he proposes that the commission's December meeting instead be a gathering to celebrate each other and the holiday season and to thank the members who are leaving. In January, they can invite the City's new mayor and President Treadwell to have a dialogue with the group about what the two of them are seeing as needs and opportunities and see how it matches up with what the commission is seeing. In February and maybe March, the commission can do strategic planning regarding data and trends, what they are seeing and hoping for, and what they have come to some agreement with the two leaders with, and shape that into the commission's goals, tasks, and strategic priorities for the year ahead. He asked what others thought about that idea.

Ms. Picard asked if this means the commission is no longer pursuing sustainability and broadband as discussed in the last meeting. Chair Fortier replied that those may well come forward in January as priorities but they are going to step back and have more dialogue. Mr. Lamb stated that one reason to step back is, as Chair Fortier mentioned, the City will have new leadership. He continued that the charge discussed between the Mayor and the President never really came to the commission for review, and knowing that with some new leadership there might be discussion about that, it did not make sense to dive into the ideas of those charge, which could change into the future. Therefore, it makes sense to step back, do some brainstorming, and

look at broader issues.

Chair Fortier stated that he will write people's comments on the white board now, separated into three columns – "college," "city," and "city/college." He asked the group to think about the various reports they looked at, Mr. Gottlob's data, trends, other demographic information, general feelings about the information in those reports, or information other sources such as local media. What jumped out at them? He noted that this is just for brainstorming purposes, and not all of these will come out the other side for the commission to take action with.

Ms. Roumimper stated that poverty rates are increasing ("City" column). Mr. Lamb replied that simultaneously, Mr. Gottlob's data showed that people moving to the area had a little higher income and higher education.

Mr. Starkey stated that growth is found with the larger employers, not entrepreneurship. He continued that the focus is on attracting larger employers and not necessarily, "Here's a college student who just graduated with a great idea; how can we keep them here and help with resources to make that happen." (City/region).

Ms. Ricaurte stated: synergy between the college and city's sustainability plans/goals (City/college).

Ms. Picard stated: substance misuse (alcohol, minor drugs) and related behavior issues. When Chair Fortier put this in the "college" category, Ms. Ricaurte stated that part of the conversation is where students are getting the substances, which makes this a "city/college" issue.

Ms. Picard stated that housing and its cost is a huge piece that will affect both the college and the city. Mr. Richards added "neighborhood relations." (City/college). Chair Fortier stated that Mr. Gottlob really stressed focusing on solving the housing challenges for young professionals, as the college (and hospital, and others) attract new faculty and staff. Mr. Murphy stated that young people want to live where there are many young people. There is a snowball effect. It is harder to get that concentration in rural areas.

Throwing out more ideas, Ms. Picard stated "broadband" (city). She continued that "marketing the region" can be in the "city/college" column. Mr. Starkey added that advocating the region, to Concord/the State, is what brings in money and development, and then more people are attracted to the region and stay in the area and stay a long time.

Mr. Murphy stated that there has been zero growth in jobs since the recession. He continued that even if they were to market the region, they need a piece to market, like good housing, jobs, or broadband. He continued that it is all interrelated. Chair Fortier replied that the Chamber is moving toward a regional marketing strategy.

Mr. Berry asked if it is known how employment breaks down between government, private businesses, and publicly-owned businesses. Mr. Starkey replied that there was a chart showing how private sector jobs have gone down in the Monadnock region, since the recession. Mr. Berry replied that it started before then – for example, Kingsbury used to employ about 1,000 people. Discussion ensued. Mr. Berry stated that in the past, publically-owned businesses have been discouraged from coming here. Chair Fortier asked if Mr. Lamb has that data. Mr. Lamb replied no. Chair Fortier replied that they will try and track it down. Mr. Berry stated that he thinks it would be better to try and create jobs in the private sector. Chair Fortier spoke of how

southern VT has been greatly impacted by publically-owned and traded banks consolidating and losing local support.

Mr. Berry stated that President Treadwell was talking about bringing the college closer into the community. Chair Fortier added “declining enrollment – stabilizing” to the “college” column.

Mr. Thayer stated, for the “college” column, that KSC is tailoring what they offer to what employers are looking for, and making the connection between students and the companies in the region. Discussion ensued about internships and work study programs. Mr. Thayer stated that many local companies with job openings do not hear from KSC students. He continued that maybe the commission can help make sure those communications are happening. Ms. Ricaurte and Ms. Roumimper stated that it would be helpful to know why students are not staying/not applying for those jobs. Discussion continued about possible reasons students would choose to stay in the area. Mr. Starkey spoke about how people here in their 20s and 30s have a hard time making friends outside of work, and the importance of having the social and cultural aspects that bring people together. Chair Fortier spoke about NHPR’s “Stay Work Play” research, and how shocked he was by how few relationships young professionals have in the community outside of work. He continued that there are also promotions to attract former residents who moved away to return to the area – they are called “Boomerangers.”

Discussion continued about new people and their connections to community, and what already exists to encourage connections (e.g., through Hanna Grimes and C&S). Mr. Richards stated that he will find out more and bring more information back.

Ms. Ricaurte stated that “boomerangers” want to know what the school systems are like if they are thinking of moving back here. Chair Fortier added, and they want to know about the hospital. Ms. Landis added, and about childcare.

Mr. Lamb stated that a few years ago during a discussion with big employers, there was discussion about addressing ethnic diversity, such as a matching program to offer connection that way. Ms. Roumimper replied that there is the question about what the city and college are doing to retain diverse people in general. Where can people get their hair done, hair products, foods that their family eats?

Mr. Starkey stated that getting people to buy a house is a way to get them to stay in the area. He continued that there are programs for first time homebuyers, and the potential for incentives for new homeowners – e.g. “Stay in the area for X number of years and we will give you an interest-free loan to do XYZ.” Discussion ensued about examples of incentives that exist elsewhere and what exists in the region.

Ms. Ricaurte left the meeting at 4:55 PM. A quorum was no longer present.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker