

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

7:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Kate M. Bosley, Chair
Mitchell H. Greenwald, Vice-Chair
Philip M. Jones
Gladys Johnsen
Catherine Workman

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager
Thomas P. Mullins, City Attorney
Rhett Lamb, Community Development
Director/ACM
Mari Brunner, Planner
Med Kopczynski, Economic Development
Director

Members Not Present:

Chair Bosley read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency. She called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

1) Councilor Filiault – Proposed Reduction in Rooms and Meals Tax Rate by Governor Sununu

Chair Bosley asked Councilor Filiault to speak to this agenda item. Councilor Filiault stated that there has been talk in the Governor's Office for a potential cut in the rooms and meals tax. He continued that we can ill afford to have any revenue to the City cut at this time. He thinks it is more grandstanding, because realistically, cutting the rooms and meals tax by 2%, which would basically save someone 20 cents on a \$10 lunch, will not cause people to decide to not go out to eat based on 20 cents. However, over time, that 2% adds up. In previous years, the State has reneged on the monies owed to the City by the rooms and meals tax every year. By law they are supposed to send it, but they send less and less every year. They can ill afford to have any more revenues reduced from the State. The revenues that do not come in, that the State owes the City, are ones the City has to make up by cutting services or raising property taxes.

Councilor Filiault stated that what he is asking is for the City Council to write a letter to the Governor and to our State delegation indicating that the City opposes any cuts in the rooms and meals tax, because once again, the State will not be sending the promised revenues. There are other revenues the State plans on cutting also but he thinks the City Council should address things one at a time. There is another delegation that has sent a letter protesting the proposed

cuts that the State has been making in various revenues, but he thinks the City Council should address one issue at a time rather than making it too broad. The broader they make it the more difficult it becomes. Simply put, it would be a letter saying we cannot afford to have any revenues cut to the cities at this time.

Councilor Jones thanked Councilor Filiault for bringing this forward and stated that he thinks the City Council should do this letter. He asked if Councilor Filiault knows where this stands. Is it at the legislature, or in the committee? Councilor Filiault replied that as far as he knows it is not at the legislature right now, but the Governor has made some serious comments that he plans on doing this. That is why he wants the City Council to send a letter sooner than later. He realizes the new delegation has just been sworn in, so he does not think the Governor is going to waste a lot of time. It looks good when the Governor says he is cutting taxes, but we really know that is not true. It is just a case of reallocating them and making cities responsible for them.

Councilor Jones stated that back in 2008 and 2009 when times were tough the State tried to make themselves look good by making a lot of tax cuts, and what happened was the revenue to the City went down – they were down 1.7 million dollars at one point. The State wants to look good, but the City had to pass that cost on to the taxpayer. Councilor Filiault replied that Councilor Jones is correct; this happens all too often. The headlines look good when Concord cuts taxes but that is not the truth. The taxes have just been redistributed and the responsibility falls on the cities and towns. Money does not just disappear; it has to come from somewhere.

Councilor Workman thanked Councilor Filiault for sending this issue to the PLD Committee and letting them all consider it. She continued that this is right in line with the City Council Goals they talked about yesterday at their workshop and what they are trying to accomplish by getting more revenue from sources other than their own constituents. If they can get more money from Concord, she is all for it. Councilor Filiault stated that just to clarify, they are not even looking for more money; it would be about getting the money that the State owes to the City. He continued that he would love it if Concord sent extra, but they should not hold their breath on that. Councilor Workman replied that she agrees, and it sends a positive message that they are not just resting back and waiting for the check to come in the mail; they are actively advocating for the City and its residents.

Councilor Johnsen thanked Councilor Filiault and stated that she appreciates how he is always right on top of these issues. She continued that her hope is that they would not really be starting until January because this new group does not come in until then. She wants to take a step back to acknowledge that the House Speaker, Representative Hinch, passed away today. He gave many years to the House and she wants the City Council to send their condolences. Having said that, yes, the State is very quick to cut. Her first year (in the House) was 2008 and she gave them eight years and they had a group that really believed that cutting taxes made them look good, but it is as Councilor Filiault says – it looks good but is not the whole truth.

Councilor Greenwald stated that he requests to move the question.

Chair Bosley asked if there were comments from the public. Hearing none, she asked if Staff have any comments.

City Manager Elizabeth Dragon stated that last year, the meals and room revenue for the City was over 1.18 million dollars.

Councilor Jones asked if the Municipal Association is taking a stand on this. The City Manager replied that if there is a bill that is written to reduce rooms and meals tax she is fairly certain that the Municipal Association will oppose that. They have standing policies against any sort of revenue reduction to towns and cities.

Chair Bosley asked if there were further comments from the committee. Hearing none, she asked for a motion.

Councilor Jones made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Greenwald.

On a vote of 5-0, the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee recommends the Mayor draft a letter to the Governor opposing any reduction in municipal revenues including reducing the State's meals and rooms tax.

2) The Addition of Ashuelot River Mills to the ERZ Tax Credit Program

Chair Bosley asked Med Kopczynski, Director of Economic Development to speak. Mr. Kopczynski stated that Staff is requesting the addition of a fourth Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ), which is a tax credit program. He continued that it offers short term business tax credit for projects that improve infrastructure and create jobs in designated areas. The three that they have now are Black Brook Corporate Park, Black Brook North Park, and the Marlboro Street corridor. The latter was the latest one that was approved in 2017. ERZs were established to stimulate economic redevelopment and expand commercial and industrial bases, and create new jobs. To be eligible it has to be designated per RSA 162-N, which is what the City is doing right now. They are having the elected body do the designation. And they have to have certain characteristics, such as unused or underutilized industrial parks or vacant land or structures previously used for industrial, commercial, or retail purposes, but currently not used, due to demolition, age, relocation, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Kopczynski continued that the area that they are talking about – which can be called a different name, if they like – seemed appropriate because it is centered on the mill area along the railroad corridor. Its core, which a lot of people recognize as an extension of the downtown, originally was rail and manufacturing. The impetus for this actually came to him from a couple of businesses in this area. They are looking to do some business expansion. And he was directly contacted by the State, asking him to run this through the City Council so that they can get this designation. Clearly this is something that should be relatively easy, from the standpoint of the

City Council and will probably result in some expansion of the manufacturing businesses in this corridor. It could even potentially end up providing some revitalization beyond what they have been thinking in some of the areas along Emerald St. and places like that.

Mr. Kopczynski showed a slide with a map of the area they are talking about. He continued that it is mostly the Commerce District. If you are familiar with the buildings in this district you will recognize why he has set it on Ashuelot River Mills and the railroad itself, and you will know of some of the businesses located in this section. He continued that he is happy to answer questions.

Councilor Jones stated that he thinks this is a great idea. He continued that he thinks the newer Councilors should be reminded that this has nothing to do with City taxes. It just a reduction in the State tax until they are built and ready to run. Is that correct? Mr. Kopczynski replied yes, there is a forgiveness period; it varies a bit, from what he understands, but there is a forgiveness period involved and that is set at the State. It is a business tax relaxation.

Councilor Jones stated that Mr. Kopczynski made an important comment about this being an extension of downtown. He asked, wouldn't that also qualify that area for 79-E? Mr. Kopczynski replied that they would have to take a look at 79-E and see if it would fit, as far as an extension in that regard. He thinks it probably is as far as the railroad is concerned. If they are going to talk about that, he would rather do that after they adopt the Land Use Code, because the Land Use Code will affect some of the properties that they are talking about tonight as well. Councilor Jones stated that he is not asking to do it now, he is just asking if they could talk about that in the future. Mr. Kopczynski replied yes, he thinks they can.

Councilor Greenwald asked why the area was not extended all the way up to St. James St. and up Emerald St. to behind or including the Curry Copy building. He continued that that is pretty much in the same basic theme of this. Mr. Kopczynski replied that it is, but it is in a different district. He continued that what he did was mirror pretty much what they did in the Marlboro St. area, where they took the Historic Downtown, basically the Central Business District and extended it from there down Marlboro St. He basically did it on the other side of the Central Business District in the Commerce District. If there is a desire to extend it they can and there are two ways they could do that: they can take a look at just changing the map, or once they have adopted this, they have the ability to expand the boundaries more or less via emails to the State, from what he understands. The reason the district is the way it is, is because it did not include the Central Business District, which he does think is a little bit different. It does include the Commerce District which had a lot of these existing buildings. Some communities take their entire town or city and make them ERZs but Staff is not proposing to do that.

Councilor Greenwald stated that it strikes him that the redevelopment of Gilbo all the way up as far as they can justify, which would be behind Curry Copy, is pretty much the same theme and it does not really matter what zone it is for this purpose. The State does not care. And where they

are moving zoning districts around with the Land Use Plan, he does not want to make it an amendment or something that formal, but he thinks it would make a lot of sense.

Mr. Kopczynski stated to Mr. Lamb that if the committee wants they can amend the map, because that is what is really providing the basis for this. He continued that they could probably include the Central Business Limited District and parts of the Central Business District in a changed map by the time this goes to the City Council. He asked if that would make sense. Mr. Lamb replied yes, he does not see any reason why they could not do that.

Chair Bosley asked how far down that would capture. Mr. Kopczynski replied probably Emerald St. on the north side up to probably Main St. and then probably to West St. He asked if Mr. Lamb agrees. Mr. Lamb replied yes. Chair Bosley asked if that makes sense to Councilor Greenwald. Councilor Greenwald replied that it totally makes sense and he does not see any reason not to do this.

Councilor Greenwald stated that he was going to ask what the negative to doing this is. Mr. Kopczynski replied that he does not think there is a negative, but he is trying to be as ambitious and as fruitful as he can for the City Council and the public in trying to move these types of things, and he is taking bites as he can and he thought this was a pretty good bite. He has actually been working on this for quite a while, but many things had gotten in the way.

Councilor Greenwald stated that considering what Mr. Kopczynski just said, he sees no reason not to make it as inclusive as possible. Chair Bosley stated that she agrees. She continued that they see a lot of development down there and if they can provide another tool that is helpful.

City Attorney Tom Mullins stated that just to be clear, this was to expand the proposed ERZ Zone into those areas, is that right? Mr. Kopczynski replied that it was to expand the proposed ERZ Zone into those areas. the City Attorney stated that the City Council can make the request upon the State, but ultimately it is up to the State to decide whether or not they are going to, under the statute, and basically this a State program. The City can make a request of the State but ultimately it will be up to the State and under the State's rule-making process whether or not to grant the tax relief in those areas. He just wants to caution them about that.

Chair Bosley stated that it sounds like the State had approached the City with their agreement to see some sort of proposal from the City. The City Attorney replied yes, in that particular area that Mr. Kopczynski identified. We have just expanded it out. Chair Bosley replied yes, she does hear what the City Attorney is saying, but she thinks it is worth putting the proposal out there. Would they throw the baby out with the bathwater, or would they just reduce? The City Attorney replied that they probably would go back to what they had suggested in the first place.

Councilor Johnsen stated that she asked if Mr. Kopczynski would give more information about what this is and how it comes from the State, since she is a relatively new Councilor and members of the public might want to know as well. Mr. Kopczynski stated that this is a tax

credit program that involves State business taxes itself. He continued that there have been some recent changes in the State business tax structure at the State level. What this does is reduce the taxes for a designated period of time at the State level itself; it does not affect City government or City taxes at all. It is about State revenue. If more detail is needed he or the City Attorney can give that to the City Council.

Chair Bosley asked if committee members had further questions. Hearing none, she asked if there were questions from members of the public. Hearing none, she stated that she would entertain a motion.

Councilor Greenwald made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 5-0, the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee recommends to the City Council the addition of the “Ashuelot Mills” to the Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) tax credit program.

3) The Downtown Re-Opening Committee and Keene Young Professionals Network - Keene Food Festival

Chair Bosley asked to hear from the Petitioner. Councilor Giacomo stated that this started as part of the City Manager’s Downtown Re-Opening Committee. A lot of ideas were thrown around there, including the idea of a food festival. They soon realized that was not a good project for a big format with a lot of people so he and Luca from Luca’s Kitchen broke off and started talking on their own. They thought that the City itself should not own this food festival. The Keene Young Professionals Network (KYPN) decided to get involved and were open to hosting the event and being the liaison for it, and working with the City to figure it out. They are thinking of this as a grand re-opening of downtown, hopefully in May, if everything is okay by then. They would like the May 15-16 weekend and are still figuring out a lot of details, especially how exactly it will be structured. The dates are flexible; they are designing this to be a “lift and shift” – if they are not ready in May, it can shift to September.

Councilor Giacomo stated that they are coming in front of the PLD Committee tonight to see if this is something the City is willing to support. They are looking to close Central Square for this event, and allow restaurants to set up around Central Square, with two parking spaces per restaurant. A guest would walk into downtown, pay \$20 for 20 tokens, and walk to, say, Luca’s booth and give him three tokens for a sample of whatever he is making, then walk over to The Stage’s booth and give them four tokens for whatever they are making, then give Denise from CC&D two tokens to try what she has, and so on and so forth. Luca is also planning on trying to organize food/cooking demos in the gazebo area. That is the bulk of the plan at this point.

Councilor Giacomo stated that the piece that they are hoping for the City’s help with is: they are hopeful the City would be willing to spend some of the unused funds from this year that were meant to go toward community events toward this re-opening event, to offset the cost that the

City normally would have billed to the organization. The event will be net neutral to KYPN, the way it is intended. They are not trying to make money off of this; they are just trying to act as an agent to help organize it.

Chair Bosley asked if the KYPN has started to speak with the City to have any protocol meetings. Councilor Giacomo replied that they have started some of those conversations but they have not had formal protocol meetings. Staff came to speak with them as part of the Re-Opening Committee to talk about pluses and minuses.

Councilor Greenwald stated that he definitely supports this and thinks it is a great idea. He continued that he would like to request that it be expanded as such so that restaurants that are downtown that can expand into their parking spaces out front, like Margaritas and Amicci's, be able to participate right in front of their places.

Chair Bosley stated that she loves this idea, and she thinks that anything they can do to bring energy back downtown and support our restaurants is fantastic. She continued that she does not want the group to think small; she wants them to think bigger. She thinks back to the days of the street fair. She would love to see them think about the Gilbo Ave. corridor. The City is talking about an Arts Corridor potentially down there. What could they use that space for? How could they combine it? If the event was on a Saturday, could the Keene Farmer's Market be involved? Could there be others involved? They will have to get with the City on all the protocol meetings, what goes into closing downtown, Central Square, and some of the other locations they are talking about. Also, the funds he was questioning are ear-marked for businesses that are non-profits that have been in existence providing some activity in the past, so that will probably be a question for the Finance, Organization, and Personnel Committee. She thinks the KYPN has support from the PLD Committee and will need to get some of the questions answered and then come back with a plan for the PLD Committee.

Chair Bosley asked if there were questions from members of the public. Hearing none, she called on the City Manager.

The City Manager stated that Staff wants to have some protocol meetings. She continued that they did have a preliminary conversation at the committee level but really have not gotten into the details. It will be important to understand the scope of the event to be able to plan for the City's needs around that event, and also to understand the costs. Before they know how much money is needed to help support the event they need to know the cost associated with the services from the City. She would like this to be placed on more time and for the protocol meetings/conversations to start. Chair Bosley stated that she completely agrees.

Councilor Johnsen stated that these events are wonderful, and it would be great to include music. She continued that if the schools are reopened it might be an opportunity to invite bands from the local schools or the college, although the college students might be gone then. This could be something that could involve that many more people.

Chair Bosley stated that she thinks everyone is craving being back together downtown. She continued that she would like to see a list of events come before the PLD Committee. She would love to see a monthly event happening downtown that really brings people down there and reminds people that downtown needs to be alive. This is a great start.

Councilor Jones asked Councilor Giacomo: he was not at the last Downtown Re-Opening Committee meeting, but at the one before that, Public Works Director Kürt Blomquist was present. He continued that Mr. Blomquist was indicating that they need to keep the footprint north of Roxbury St. because there was something going on there. He asked if that is still the case. Councilor Giacomo replied yes, Roxbury St. will be closed for construction at this time. He continued that the event does not really effect Roxbury St. It was more about an area they could close at the bottom of Roxbury St. and allow that space to be included in it, which would allow the space Twenty One is in to be included pretty easily. They would kind of be in the footprint anyway because Roxbury St. would be closed.

Councilor Giacomo stated that he appreciates all the ideas about this. He continued that KYPN is one group, so if anyone wants to help, they are always looking for more people.

Councilor Greenwald made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Johnsen.

On a vote of 5-0, the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee placed this item on more time, pending review by City staff.

Chair Bosley stated that the PLD Committee hopes the KYPN gets those meetings underway and they look forward to hearing back from Councilor Giacomo about where things are at.

4) Keene Sustainable Energy Program – Energy and Climate Committee

Chair Bosley asked to hear from Staff from the Community Development Department. Community Development Director Rhett Lamb stated that he will introduce this and give a little bit of background before turning it over to Mari Brunner. He continued that it is a remarkable task that has been undertaken for the last several months, particularly on the part of the Energy and Climate Committee (ECC). Several members are in attendance tonight. There is a lot in motion on this subject right now and it is an exciting time. When the City Council adopted these goals in early 2019, even though the City had by that point been working for 15 or 20 years on carbon reduction, energy efficiency, and providing more opportunities for energy and addressing costs for Keene's citizens and for the City, he was actually a little bit concerned about what it would take to go to the next step. They had had tremendous success in the early years, from about 1995 to 2015, where the City operations and City buildings reduced the carbon emissions by more than 20%, meeting their goal, even in at a time when they were bringing new buildings on line and introducing new programs and operations. Even though they had this good track record they realized it was not just City operations and City buildings. They also had to expand

this across Keene's entire population, all businesses and residents. Even though they did not meet those goals in that time period then, they did take a leadership position in the state and in some cases, a leadership position across the country. Former Mayor Blastos was invited to speak to Senate committees on work the City of Keene was doing, in the mid-2000s. As they took this on they recognized that it was an important next step. What this plan represents is exactly that. It is intended to provide people with a specific road map to pursue the next level of goals that the City Council has established. He turned the presentation over to Ms. Brunner.

Ms. Brunner gave a slide show presentation. She stated that her intention is to give an overview of the Energy Plan, both the process that was used to develop it and an overview of the structure. It began in January 2019 when the City Council adopted Resolution R-2018-36, the Sustainable Energy Resolution, which set three different energy goals. The first was to achieve 100% renewable energy for all electricity in the city by 2030. The second goal is to achieve 100% renewable energy for heating and cooling by 2050, and the third is to achieve 100% renewable energy for transportation for 2050.

Ms. Brunner continued that following the adoption of that resolution in January 2019, later that same month, the ECC had its first retreat where the committee began talking about their vision and values for this plan. They did a lot of work on it throughout that winter and early spring, coming up with a public outreach plan. The City had an intern who interviewed 18 different stakeholders in the community and helped devise a really good plan. Starting in the summer they began some outreach. They had their first focus group with local landlords and an in-person community workshop at KSC, with about 35 participants. In the fall and winter they began kicking off a lot of outreach. They had volunteers from the ECC, the Clean Energy Team, Monadnock Interfaith Project, and various other community groups who volunteered to go out in the community and facilitate group discussions about the City's energy goals and what people wanted to see the City do to achieve those goals. There were about 14 of those. In addition, Staff were presenting the energy plan to different community groups and schools and other organizations. In the early winter of 2020, before COVID-19, they had a few more focus groups with businesses and some larger institutions like Cheshire Medical Center and KSC. Once COVID-19 hit they had to adjust their outreach plan and started doing more virtual outreach. They worked with a KSC student team to do a resident energy cost survey to help the ECC understand how much people in the community are paying for energy and whether there is anything the City can do to help reduce costs. In the summer they launched a project website and did a couple online polls. This past October they had a virtual community forum, which was pretty well attended and they received a lot of good feedback.

Ms. Brunner stated that throughout this whole process and the overall strategy for coming up with the plan, they wanted to start with collecting data and developing baselines for electricity, thermal, and transportation energy use, with a particular focus on electricity, since that is the 2030 goal and is coming up much faster than the other two. The City hired the Cadmus Group as consultants to help them do the electricity baseline and get the data there. They also helped identify some of the most effective strategies they could pursue to reach the electricity goal.

Ms. Brunner stated that the ECC did a lot of work here, brainstorming a list of strategies and actions and tools that the City could use to reach the energy goals, and using that feedback from the public that they were getting through all those community energy conversations and the forums, the ECC evaluated those strategies based on different evaluation criteria in order to prioritize them and focus on the ones that would have the biggest impact. Through that process the ECC identified 17 priority strategies and for each of those they worked on identifying best practices, relevant examples from other communities, and what the major implementation steps would be for each strategy. They came out with a draft plan in October and put it out to the public for about two to three weeks. The draft the PLD Committee has before them has incorporated the feedback from the public.

Ms. Brunner continued that as part of the planning process the ECC worked on developing an energy vision for this plan: “In 2050 Keene will be a thriving and resilient community powered by affordable, clean, and renewable energy. All electricity and energy use for heating, cooling, and transportation will come from renewable energy sources.” She continued that the intention was to develop a vision statement that really captured the goals of the plan but was also a concise statement of where they are hoping to go.

Ms. Brunner stated that another important piece was to define what they meant by “clean and renewable.” The ECC spent a good deal of time talking about this. That was one of the online poll questions and they got feedback from the public. Ultimately, the committee decided to propose that the City use the definition of green power that is on the US EPA’s “What is Green Power?” webpage: renewable energy sources that have the most environmental benefit and the fewest adverse impacts. An example of a renewable energy source that is not considered a green power source is large hydropower, mostly because of its land use impacts and impacts on fisheries. Examples of green power are wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, biogas, and low impact hydropower.

She continued that within the Energy Plan there are four pathways to get to the energy goals. Each of the four pathways were applied to get to those three goals – electricity, thermal, and transportation. These include reducing energy use as the first and most critical step. In order to reduce the total amount of energy we consume as a community and help control cost, the second pathway is to generate and store renewable energy locally as much as possible and take advantage of the co-benefits there with job creation and keeping money circulating in the local economy. The third pathway is to switch any remaining demand for energy that they cannot meet through energy efficiency and local generation to renewable sources generated outside our region. Throughout this whole process, the fourth pathway is to conduct ongoing advocacy and information sharing both to increase community buy-in and make sure people are aware of the options out there but also to reduce barriers at the state and federal level to renewable technology adoption.

Ms. Brunner continued that she will briefly go through each of the three sectors and the priority strategies within them. The electricity sector is first because it has the 2030 goal. Priority action strategies in this sector include establishing a community power program, in which they aggregate the community's electricity load and then go out to bid and purchase electricity from a third-party supplier on behalf of the city's residents. This is probably the top priority in the electricity sector. The City is already in the process of pursuing it. The City has a Community Power Committee that has been meeting since July, and the City is currently in the process with working with consultants to develop a community power plan. The second strategy is a virtual power purchase agreement. This means entering into a long-term, fixed-price contract for renewable energy from a specific project. This is sometimes referred to as a "contract for differences," but the key here is that they would not necessarily be buying the electricity directly, but purchasing the environmental benefits associated with that electricity generation. The third strategy is to adopt solar photovoltaic (PV) and electric vehicle (EV) ready guidelines. This is meant to encourage new development occurring within the city to be built in a way that accommodates future installations of solar and EV charging stations, because that is much more cost effective way to do those. Of the last two, one is to offer renewable energy loans, which is an opportunity where the City could partner with a local financial institution to create a loan product to finance renewable energy installations. This type of program could be targeted at residents, businesses, or both. The example she recalls is a program called Milwaukee Shines – there are other communities that have done this. Finally, the last one is to collaborate with our utility, Eversource, to see if they can provide a pilot battery storage program, for residents and businesses, in order to help particularly the businesses to reduce their demand charges and help them control costs that way.

Ms. Brunner moved on to the thermal sector. She stated that the priority strategies are to establish a home energy labeling program. This type of program would require homes to disclose their energy efficiency and their energy use for existing and new residential properties at the time that a property is listed for rent or for sale. The goal is to make the energy use of that property transparent to consumers, so that when people are choosing where they want to live that is one more piece of information they can use in making that decision. It is also a good reminder to people when they are buying a home that there are programs that can increase their home's energy efficiency, and things they can do to reduce energy use. Second is a benchmarking ordinance. The City could adopt this, and it could be mandatory or voluntary, or start out voluntary and transition to mandatory. It would require owners of buildings of certain sizes or potentially in certain zoning districts to report their energy use data to the City. Then the City could report that data back out to the public, if they wanted to. It could be done in a way so that you could not tie back to individual properties but would give the community an idea of the overall energy use. And the individual property owners would be able to see how much energy their building is using in comparison to other buildings in the city of similar size. The third priority action strategy is to help promote and enhance existing weatherization programs, which includes partnering with NH Saves or other weatherization programs through Southwestern Community Services, to help enhance their outreach and public education and amplify their impact and increase their capacity. The next one is a Heat-smart Campaign, which is the same

idea as the Solarize Campaign, except instead of Solar PV it is with renewable thermal technologies. She has seen it most often done with air source heat pumps. It is meant to encourage the installation of renewable thermal technologies for space heating or cooling or for hot water heating through local outreach efforts. Hopefully if you are able to get together a big enough group you can offer a bulk purchase discount. The last one is a little different from the rest, because most of the other priority strategies here are more short-term. Even though this is more long term, the committee felt it was important to include because it has a potential to have a pretty high impact: to explore the feasibility of implementing a renewable district heating system in Keene. It would begin by commissioning a study to assess the potential for that in Keene in order to understand where in the city this could make sense. Considerations would be seeing if there is enough demand from businesses or homes to justify the creation of a system, as well as what local renewable sources are available, and what it would likely cost.

Ms. Brunner stated that finally, with the transportation sector, out of the priority action strategies that the committee identified, the number one strategy was to accelerate the shift to electric vehicles. Within that, they have been installing public EV charging stations (both level 2 and fast charge), in on-street parking areas or in public parking lots or structures, and work with the KSD and the local school bus company and Home Healthcare Community Services (HCS) which operates the City Express and the Friendly Bus to encourage them to switch to electric busses. The second strategy is to continue the City's Complete Streets program. The City already has a Complete Streets program but the committee felt it was important to really formalize it as much as possible and incorporate the adopted Complete Streets design guidelines into the City's street standards, and develop Complete Streets standards for reconstruction of existing streets. The guidelines are really geared toward brand new roads, which the City is not building a lot of these days. Of the last few strategies here, one is to enhance public transit in Keene and they would do that by increasing the financial support for the City Express and Friendly Bus programs, and also working with HCS and encouraging them expand their services and routes in order to increase usage of those bus programs. Another strategy is to work with community partners to construct a multi-modal transportation center in Keene in order to promote interstate transportation options. There is currently a study underway that she believes is on hold right now with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission to look at potential sites in Keene for that. Because of that, the committee felt that it was important to include this strategy, since there is already work being done on it. Finally, there is a strategy to advocate at the federal and state level for more funding to support public transportation, active transportation, and EVs and other alternative fuel technologies. A lot of the infrastructure for transportation is expensive so we really do need more assistance at the state and federal level to build and maintain our infrastructure.

Ms. Brunner concluded her presentation and asked if anyone had any questions. She reminded the PLD Committee that members of the ECC are present and able to answer questions as well. Chair Bosley thanked Ms. Brunner for the well-organized presentation.

Councilor Greenwald thanked Ms. Brunner. He continued that the report is 230-something pages and he looks forward to reading it. He asked, regarding a district heating zone – there was a proposal for something like this a couple years ago, when City Manager was just coming in. What happened to that? Is that feasible? He does not want to see them run down the same dead end.

Mr. Lamb stated that he is probably talking about the project called Hot Zero, which was a proposal to build a biomass district heating plant. He continued that the location was on City property, behind a former Public Works yard. That project did go quite a distance toward reality; however, they came in at a time when there was a significant reduction in natural gas and other fossil fuel opportunities. They ended up not being competitive over the longer term. He thinks they did start a program in either Claremont or another city. He is not sure if it ever got off the ground. The City wants to have a placeholder for an idea like that because it has the potential to be a game-changer for local generation – heating, primarily, which is one of the tougher nuts to crack, from the point of view of renewability, in our region, when almost exclusively heated by number 2 fuel in most people’s residences. It has a great opportunity potential; they wanted to identify that in the plan. It is not specifically related to that former project from several years ago.

Councilor Greenwald replied that he thought it was a great idea. He continued that overall he is supportive of the whole plan and the whole goal. He works with the philosophy of “If you don’t shoot for the moon you’re never going to get off the ground.” There are a lot of very aspirational issues in there that he really questions whether are going to happen. What goes on in 2030 he has interest in and what happens in 2050 his grandchildren has interest in. He wishes them well with it.

Councilor Greenwald continued that there is another issue that they brought up: reporting the energy consumption of different properties. He is wondering why. What would that really do? They will find out that some building is consuming more, or less? What does that mean? Ms. Brunner replied that the benchmarking idea was driven by the need for better data around how much energy and water buildings use in the city. She continued that right now they do not have a good data source for that. And what they have seen in other communities when they have implemented these types of programs, which some communities have had for a long time and thus have a good amount of data from, is that when you implement a program like this, even if all you are asking the building owners to do is report their energy use, the effect of that – even though you are not requiring anyone to reduce their energy use or do anything other than report the data – it tends to make people realize, “Oh, wait a minute, I’m using way more water than I should be using, compared to other buildings. I should figure out why and fix that.” Over time, you will see a decrease in energy use and water use. That is a trend that other communities have been able to show. You can also tie it to incentives and use it to help drive participation in energy efficiency programs and weatherization programs.

Councilor Greenwald stated that he thinks it is a great idea, but every building owner he knows is trying to use as little water and fuel as possible. He continued that he does not really know where this is going, but if it points out that someone's neighbor is using a lot less water than they are and it causes them to look into it, that is good. He goes back to the free enterprise and he is trying to run his business, and as a property owner, be as efficient as possible, which is all working toward the same goal that this presentation is proposing. It is all good. He applauds what Staff is doing. If they have other suggestions he knows property owners downtown will be willing to listen.

Chair Bosley stated that they should have access to all that water data, for any business that is on public water. Ms. Brunner replied that is correct, and she was speaking more specifically to heating and cooling energy use, which is a tricky nut to crack, in terms of data, because there are so many different providers of fuel oil and some people are on city gas and others are on propane and so on and so forth. Chair Bosley replied that since Staff has access to the water data without asking anyone to do any work outside of Staff, potentially, they could maybe provide access for individuals to search the database to see if they had factory buildings of a certain size or other multi-family apartment buildings when the water usage differs. That might do the same thing without asking residents to have to be forthcoming with any information, and it might incentivize them to want to participate in another program.

Councilor Jones thanked Ms. Brunner for the presentation. He continued that he thinks there is more they can do to help implement things, especially the 2030 goal. The city probably has 1000 vendors that service the city. They can be asking those vendors, how can you help us achieve that goal? They might take a look at it, and they might already be doing something that we do not know about, and that would help the City get more data. Also, when they do an RFP, they should mention the City goal and make that something the City might be considering as part of an RFP, because it would help them meet that goal. There are people who *will* do something to help meet that goal. Lastly, outside agencies are asking the City for money, and the City should be asking them, how can you help us achieve this goal? They can all be doing something to help. Ms. Brunner mentioned that HCS runs the city's bus service – besides expanding the service, maybe they can be looking at renewable energy also. Their buses could be running with clean gas or electric vehicles. There is a lot we can do to implement this and get more data back. You cannot manage what you cannot measure, so they would like to measure it more.

Councilor Johnsen stated that she can see that Ms. Brunner, Staff, and the ECC worked very hard on this. She continued that she appreciates what people who run businesses are saying because this gives her such hope for the future, and as Councilor Greenwald said, it is hope for our grandchildren. She thanks them for the hard work and the presentation; it means a lot to her as a citizen of Keene and to her constituents.

Chair Bosley asked if anyone from the ECC wants to speak or add anything.

Dr. Ann Shedd of 59 Greenwood Ave. stated that she is Chair of the ECC for a few more weeks before her term ends. She continued that she thanks Staff for all of their hard work to bring this plan to the PLD Committee by the deadline that was set in the resolution of January 2019. It has been quite a process, and really just a continuation of a journey the City has been on for 20 or more years, taking leadership as Mr. Lamb alluded to in climate action, and adaptation, recognizing that we already are underway with changes that we will need to adapt to. She also thanks the other members of the ECC and many local residents who have been part of this process, coming to meetings, joining focus groups, giving feedback, responding to polls. The resolution called for a transparent and inclusive process to develop the plan and she commends the City on the work it has put into that, especially during this challenging time of 2020.

Dr. Shedd continued that she wants to point out how well the various strategies outlined in this plan contribute to the visions that were defined by the City's Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). It is an opportunity for the City to exercise proactive leadership. Many communities are just stumbling into the future and waiting to see what happens. This is an opportunity for the City to take active steps to meet the future and the changes and opportunities that are coming. It is an opportunity for citizens to be educated and engaged, and be the active citizens that the CMP calls for, to understand and modify our energy use and to understand our energy supply, and in some cases to own our energy supply. Certainly the measures to keep energy dollars local through energy generation can contribute to the vision of a vibrant economy and there is potential for job creation, particularly in the energy efficiency and weatherization realm. The measures to decrease our collective vehicle miles traveled by augmenting our public transportation options and to decrease our tailpipe emissions by the switch to EVs will contribute to the healthy community that the CMP envisions. Over the long term, all of these measures will help to protect Keene's unique natural environment.

Dr. Shedd continued that she heard questions about the implementation of the plan. It will not be easy. There are a lot of different steps and steps not outlined in this plan that they will eventually need to confront. Some of the measures will require some Staff time and developing deeper collaborations with other entities, certainly with our utility. Over time it will require a lot of citizen education and engagement. Some of the measures outlined will be driven by market forces that are happening already anyway, like the increase in the adoption of EVs by manufacturers who have committed to transitioning away from internal combustion engines in the near future and the increasing number of EVs that are being sold. Keene can be positioned to have the charging infrastructure to support that transition. As has been alluded to, just tracking our progress is going to be a project in and of itself.

Will the measures outlined in this plan be enough to meet the challenges that we are all facing? It is difficult to see the many ways that our energy and transportation landscapes are going to evolve over the coming decades and all the ways that the changing climate is impacting and will impact our lives. Thus, the plan will need to be flexible and will need to be revisited from time to time as we see what the impacts of climate change are, and as we see what emerging technologies are. This is a start. She is counting on as much energy and enthusiasm from the

PLD Committee in supporting this resolution as there has been for some of the other measures before them tonight. This is potentially quite transformative for the city and its residents. The ECC encourages them to move this forward to the full City Council and they look forward to the City Council's support in the coming years to do everything possible to consider the impacts of climate change in everything that comes before the City Council and to do everything they can to see that this plan and other measures are implemented.

Peter Hansel of 61 Bradford Rd. stated that he is a member of the ECC and the Chair of the Community Power Committee. He continued that Dr. Shedd is correct that a lot of the credit for this plan goes to City Staff and the interns that worked with them, and Ms. Brunner and Mr. Lamb in particular have done a fantastic job on this Energy Plan. When they first started this they looked all around NH and New England and even throughout the country, to see what other communities had done in regard to energy plans. They found some plans that were a few pages long and others that were longer, but they did not find any that are as comprehensive as the one that they have prepared. It is a little shorter than what Councilor Greenwald said, though, if you take away all the addendums, but it is comprehensive. The City of Keene can be very proud to put this out as an example of what a community can do. It is a very clear road map to the future. As Dr. Shedd said, it also has to be flexible; they do not have a crystal ball telling them how technology is going to change or what market forces are going to do, so built into this plan is some flexibility. Also, the ECC will have to be reviewing this going into the future to make sure the city responds to the changes that come. He thinks the City of Keene has taken a great leadership role in the community power aggregate process. They jumped on it with both feet and got way ahead of other communities in the state. Keene is on track to become the first NH community that has one of these plans going forward, so that is exciting. That is a key component of this energy plan. As Ms. Brunner said, a lot of the strategy they are banking on is converting fossil fuel energy use to electrical energy use, but that is only good if you can buy electrical energy that is renewable. That part of the plan is critical to the whole success of this. He thanks the City for taking a leadership role, and he encourages the PLD Committee to recommend this plan for adoption by the City Council.

Chair Bosley stated that she agrees that the community power energy plan is very exciting and she cannot wait to find out the details of that as it comes forward. She welcomed comments from the public.

Suzanne Butcher of 44 Felt Rd. stated that she is speaking on behalf of the Clean Energy Team, the group of citizens who first brought the idea of 100% clean energy to the Mayor and City Council. She continued that they want to congratulate the City on this excellent plan and to express their appreciation for the process that created it. They appreciate the work of the ECC led by Dr. Shedd and Peter Hansel, and City Staff, especially Mari Brunner, Rhett Lamb, Elizabeth Dragon, and so many professionals throughout the City government who contributed. As they developed the plan, the ECC and Staff reached out to citizens with a variety of opportunities to get input and involvement. They drew on that citizen input, crunched a lot of data, gathered information and advice from a lot of experts, and listened to the experiences of

other communities. While residents and businesses were participating in the development of the plan, the whole community continued to make progress toward the goal. For example, with energy efficiency initiatives for home owners; commercial and residential solar installations and a solar tour highlighting them, which can be seen on the Clean Energy Team's website; and fuel efficient vehicles. The ECC and Staff worked long and hard to create this ambitious but realistic plan, with specific, do-able steps that will set Keene on the course to reach the 100% goal. The whole world is transitioning away from fossil fuels. This plan is a well-considered set of measures and programs that will make Keene a clean energy leader.

Chair Bosley asked if there were further questions from members of the public or the committee. Hearing none, she stated that she would entertain a motion.

Councilor Greenwald made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor Workman.

On a vote of 5-0, the Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee recommends that the City Council adopt the Keene, NH Sustainable Energy Plan dated November 2020.

Councilor Greenwald stated that he has a question for Assistant City Manager Lamb – regarding the ERZ issue, as the motion sits, have they enlarged the zone, or was it as presented? Mr. Lamb replied that as he understood the motion, he and Mr. Kopczynski would return to the PLD Committee with a revised map for the vote as it reaches City Council next week. Councilor Greenwald asked if that means it would be unnecessary to ask that the motion be reconsidered to enlarge the zone to perhaps West St., Main St., Winchester St., or Emerald St. Is it clear the way the discussion went, or do they need a revised motion? The City Attorney replied that Councilor Greenwald can amend it on the floor. He continued that the intent was for Mr. Kopczynski and Mr. Lamb to come back with the map, present it at the time of the City Council meeting, and then the motion can be amended on the floor to incorporate the new spaces. Councilor Greenwald replied that he will be ready.

There being no further business, Chair Bosley adjourned the meeting at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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