

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**CONGREGATE LIVING AND SOCIAL SERVICES LICENSING BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, June 28, 2022**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Medard Kopczynski, Vice Chair  
Martha Curtis  
Thomas Savastano

**Staff Present:**

John Rogers, Building & Health Official  
Corinne Marcou, Board Clerk

**Members Not Present:**

Andrew Oram, Chair  
Alison Welsh

**I. Call to Order – Roll Call**

Mr. Kopczynski called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, called roll, and declared a quorum present physically.

**II. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – May 24, 2022**

A motion by Ms. Curtis to adopt the May 24, 2022 minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano and the motion carried unanimously.

**III. Unfinished Business**

There was no unfinished business.

**IV. Public Hearing**

- A) **LB 22-01: Applicant, Samuel L. Lake, Executive Director, of the Keene Serenity Center, located at 34 Mechanic St., Keene, which is in the Downtown Limited District and owned by DEW Properties, LLC; is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Group Resource Center as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Vice Chair Kopczynski requested staff comments. Mr. Rogers stated that the Serenity Center is a group resource center currently operating in the Downtown Limited District, which allows for that use. No Conditional Use Permit is required because it is an existing operation, but a license from this Board is required, which was requested in this application.

Vice Chair Kopczynski welcomed the Applicant, Samuel Lake, Executive Director of the Serenity Center (since 2013) to speak about the organization and this application. Mr. Lake recalled that the Serenity Center had operated at this location on Mechanic Street for 3.5 years; they were first located on Carpenter Street. The Serenity Center operates as a peer support agency focused on substance use disorder; it is a recovery community organization (there are 20 in the State Hub and Spoke Model—hub is medical help and spokes are peer support). All recovery community organizations are overseen by a fiduciary organizer, Harbor Care. The funding comes from a variety of grants, State opioid response, and some from the Governor’s Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs. The main function is telephone recovery support and individual support via recovery coaching—there are trained and certified recovery support individuals; someone with lived experience willing and available to share their experiences to help someone move through a use disorder, including harm reduction. There is a temporary program called Road to Recovery that has one car in service each Saturday to help people overcome the challenging barrier of transportation to treatment or medical care; sometimes accompaniment and peer support helps someone arrive to treatment.

Vice Chair Kopczynski opened the hearing to questions from the Board.

Ms. Curtis questioned number two on the application, for which the Applicant’s response stated that meetings occur during the days, with group meetings and workshops outside of normal business hours. He asked how late in the evening those meeting occur. Mr. Lake responded that the latest would be 8:30 PM on a Saturday night. He said workshops are typically planned on the weekend outside normal business hours.

Mr. Savastano referred to the Serenity Center website that discusses to harm reduction, which he said was not mentioned in the Petitioner’s application; he asked if that is something they are doing actively. Mr. Lake replied that they are absolutely doing harm reduction in outreach and internally, honoring people on all pathways to recovery, including medical assistance (overdose training, harm reduction training, Naloxone training, and more). He said it is an important part of the Center’s work. This harm reduction occurs primarily on site at this time, but sometimes off site.

Vice Chair Kopczynski asked whether the client base is primarily from Keene or all over Cheshire County. Mr. Lake said Cheshire County but that much of this population is transient. The Serenity Center works with many people suffering homelessness. Most clients do not have transportation and walk to the site. Vice Chair Kopczynski asked what resources the Serenity Center provides to homeless clients. Mr. Lake said the organization considers themselves as resource brokers and will partner with any organization. Whatever an avenue is available for people seeking support, they try to help from housing, to getting IDs, to seeking a proper primary care provider. They also direct clients to the City of Keene resources.

Vice Chair Kopczynski continued noting that the Serenity Center is on the edge of a residential district and stated that no matter the business, there are occasional issues. He asked if the Applicant had developed a residential communication plan. Mr. Lake said there was nothing structured and that “face it head on” is there community engagement motto, which he said had worked so far being that there were no major complaints to date. He called their clients low barrier people to work with. He is glad they are not in a residential neighborhood. The Serenity Center is across the street from the Community Kitchen, which many of the clients utilize. Mr. Lake said he does get calls any time someone downtown finds a syringe,

and he responds that it is not the Serenity Center's fault, but that he would gladly go collect and properly dispose of the item; he called this part of supporting harm reduction. He continued that Keene is becoming more supportive at facing substance use disorder and homelessness; ignoring something does not make it go away.

Vice Chair Kopczynski asked what kind of community outreach the Serenity Center does. Mr. Lake replied that they do as much as possible, including: the Swamp Bats game with a full booth, weekly Methadone clinic, coaching services at the Department of Corrections, the host a table at the Library every Friday from 1:00 PM–3:00 PM. They will reach out to anyone they can.

Hearing no public comments, Vice Chair Kopczynski closed the public hearing for Board deliberation. The Vice Chair said that as these categories were created to be progressive and recognize these different uses and have a home for them.

Mr. Savastano expressed concern that the application was incomplete, with things left out of different categories, like the neighborhood relations plan. He wanted to see everything answered according to the application to create a precedent moving forward; considering the application point-by-point would establish a regular and constant pattern moving forward. Mr. Savastano wanted the application filled out better before approving it, such as the missing piece of harm reduction, rather than the Board needing to piece it together. Mr. Rogers said that was certainly an option but said that because this is a new licensing process, the Board was likely to see a wide spectrum of completeness. Mr. Rogers did not think it would be as simple as a checklist because things are different for each organization. Mr. Lake stated that the application was unclear and that his business is very small, with only four staff members. Mr. Savastano said he understood but said the Applicant could at least fill in a response for each, even if just "this does not apply to our organization." Vice Chair Kopczynski said that perhaps in the future, Staff could work with Applicants to ensure more completeness; he did not want to hold-up Mr. Lake because of that. The Vice Chair understood the desire for consistency in a new process and said the Chair, Vice Chair, and Staff would work harder to ensure applications are completed better.

A motion by Ms. Curtis to approve application LB 22-01 was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano.

Ms. Curtis felt the application was completed enough for this organization but understood the comments on consistency.

The Vice Chair led the Board in reviewing the criteria for approving an application before hearing proposed conditions:

- 1. The use is found to be in compliance with the submitted operations and management plan, including but not limited to compliance with all applicable building, fire, and life safety codes.*

Vice Chair Kopczynski said there was no evidence on the table of inspections and the Board would need to clarify that in their Rules of Procedure. Mr. Rogers said there was an inspection with Fire Chief Farquhar, the Police Captain, and the Health Official. They found no major issues; there were a few small fire issues, which had been resolved. Mr. Rogers said all three parties were satisfied with the inspection.

2. *The use is of a character that does not produce noise, odors, glare, and/or vibration that adversely affects the surrounding area.*

Vice Chair Kopczynski said, he did not hear any during the Applicant's presentation. There would be no large groups coming and going simultaneously. He said their operations are not noisy compared to other uses. The Vice Chair said it was an office type enterprise.

3. *The use does not produce public safety or health concerns in connection with traffic, pedestrians, public infrastructure, or police or fire department actions.*

Vice Chair Kopczynski said that based on Mr. Rogers' testimony there was no indication that the Fire and Police were frequently visiting the organization. There was no evidence of pedestrian issues. He reiterated that it was an office type environment.

On a vote of 3-0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved LB 22-01.

Mr. Savastano said he wanted there to be a condition on the approval that the application be completed. Mr. Rogers would look at the application and asked Board members to communicate to him specifically what was missing so he could work on the application, which would be sent to the Board for approval.

**V. New Business**

There was no new business.

**VI. Non-Public Session (if required)**

**VII. Adjournment**

A motion by Ms. Curtis to adjourn the meeting was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano and the motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business, Vice Chair Kopczynski adjourned the meeting at 6:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katelyna Kibler, Minute Taker  
July 6, 2022

Reviewed and edited by,  
Corinne Marcou, License Clerk  
July 7, 2022