

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

**PLANNING BOARD**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, June 24, 2024**

**6:30 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Harold Farrington, Chair  
Roberta Mastrogiovanni, Vice Chair  
Mayor Jay V. Kahn  
Councilor Michael Remy  
Sarah Vezzani  
Armando Rangel  
Kenneth Kost  
Michael Hoefler, Alternate  
Stephon Mehu, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Megan Fortson, Planning Technician

**Members Not Present:**

Tammy Adams, Alternate  
Ryan Clancy  
Randyn Markelon, Alternate

**I) Call to Order – Roll Call**

Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and a roll call was taken. Mr. Mehu and Mr. Hoefler were invited to join the session as voting members

**II) Minutes of Previous Meetings – May 13, 2024 & May 20, 2024**

A motion was made by Vice Chair Mastrogiovanni to approve the May 13, 2024 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn and was unanimously approved.

Chair offered the following correction to the May 20, 2024 meeting minutes:  
Line 262 – there is no indication of a vote for the motion that was made.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Mastrogiovanni to approve the May 20, 2024 minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn and was unanimously approved.

**III) Final Vote on Conditional Approvals**

Chair Farrington stated that as a matter of practice, the Board will now perform a final vote on all conditionally approved plans after all of the “conditions precedent” have been met. This final vote will be the final approval and will start the 30-day appeal clock.

The Chair asked whether there were any applications tonight that were ready for a final vote.

Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, stated that there were two applications tonight that are ready for a final vote. The first one is SPR-12-17, Modification #2, which is a site plan for Archway Farm, located at 183 Arch Street. This application had three conditions precedent to final approval: getting the owner’s signature on the final plan set; submitting five paper copies and a digital copy of the final plan set; and the submittal of a security in form and amount acceptable to the Community Development Director to cover the cost of sediment and erosion control and landscaping. All of these conditions have been met.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Mastrogiovanni that the Planning Board issue final site plan approval for SPR-12-17, Modification #2. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn and carried on a unanimous vote.

Ms. Brunner stated second item is SPR-01-13, Modification #3, which is a site plan for the Cheshire County Shooting Sports Education Foundation located at 19 Ferry Brook Road. This application also had three conditions precedent to final approval: getting the owner’s signature on the final plan sets; the submittal of five paper copies and a digital copy of the final plan set; and the submittal of a security in a form and amount acceptable to the Community Development Director and City Engineer to cover the cost of sediment and erosion control.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Mastrogiovanni that the Planning Board issue final site plan approval for SPR-01-13, Modification #3. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn and carried on a unanimous vote.

#### **IV) Public Hearing**

- a. PB-2024-05 – Congregate Living & Social Services Conditional Use Permit – Live Free Recovery, 973 Marlboro Rd - Applicant Live Free Recovery Services LLC, on behalf of owner BTD Properties LLC, proposes to operate a residential drug and alcohol treatment facility on the property located at 973 Marlboro Rd (TMP #249-004-000). The parcel is 1.1 ac and is located in the Rural District.**

Chair Farrington stated that since the Board agenda packet was sent out, there has been communication from the applicant requesting to continue this application to the July Planning Board meeting to address issues that need to be resolved with the Marlboro Zoning Board.

Chair Farrington opened the public hearing and asked for public comment.

Mr. Bruce Robbins of 5 Main Street, Marlborough addressed the Board and stated that he is a direct abutter to this property on the west, south, and east sides. He indicated the Marlboro Zoning Board denied this application due to the 24 hour commercial nature of this business

operating next to a residential zone. He indicated the playground that exists at this location is to be turned into a smoking area that is only ten feet from his property and this would prevent him from enjoying the outdoors.

With no further public comment, the Chair closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Mastrogiovanni that the Planning Board continue PB-2024-05 to the July 22, 2024 Planning Board meeting at 6:30 pm. The motion was seconded by Councilor Michael Remy and was unanimously approved.

**V) Nomination of City Representative to SWRPC Commissioners**

Ms. Brunner stated the City received an interest form from Michael Conway, who is interested in serving on the Board of Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC). The City's process, which is laid out in State Statute, is for the Planning Board to formally nominate the individual. The nomination then goes before City Council for their vote. She noted the City already has two members on SWRPC's Board.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Mastrogiovanni that the Planning Board nominate Michael Conway to serve as a Commissioner on the Board of Southwest Regional Planning Commission. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn.

Mayor Kahn indicated that Todd Horner from the Commission and the nominee were present tonight, if the Board wish to hear from them.

Mr. Horner addressed the Board and explained that SWRPC is a nonprofit public agency, a voluntary association of municipalities, that is authorized under New Hampshire RSA 36. He stated their mission is essentially to provide member municipalities with technical assistance and guidance on planning issues related to land use, housing, economic development, transportation, etc. Mr. Horner stated their relationship with the City is perhaps a little different compared to some of their smaller member communities that don't have staff to assist with planning issues, process applications, or handle zoning questions.

He felt their relationship with the City has been very productive over the years. He referred to some of the projects and activities they are working on with the City, including Community Development Block Grant Administration activities, which support housing infrastructure, as well as other improvements that are intended to benefit low and moderate income people. They are also administering a CDBG grant that is part of the funding for the Roosevelt School rehabilitation.

The City has representation on SWRPC's Transportation Advisory Committee, which among other activities, guides the 10-year planning process for this region related to transportation planning, which in turn guides investments and transportation infrastructure at the state level. This is how the region's priorities are conveyed to New Hampshire DOT and other such entities. He indicated they are currently leading a feasibility study looking at regional transit and different

operating models for improving public transportation options in Keene and the surrounding areas.

Chair Farrington asked for the actual geographical boundaries of the southwest region. Mr. Horner stated they have 33 member municipalities and their service area includes all of Cheshire County, Western Hillsborough County and one town in Sullivan County.

The Mayor asked how many regional planning commissions exist in the state. Mr. Horner stated there are nine across the state.

The Mayor noted that with Mr. Conway's qualification as an environmental engineer and Mr. Kost's qualification as a landscape architect, they will bring a lot of expertise to the SWRPC Board that smaller towns might not see.

Mr. Michael Conway addressed the Board and reminded them that they may remember him in connection with the Habitat for Humanity property on Old Walpole Road. He stated that he is still involved with Habitat for Humanity and will continue to serve them. He stated he has an education and career background in environmental engineering and felt he can be a good resource for SWRPC in more than one way.

The motion made by Vice Chair Mastrogiovanni carried on a unanimous vote.

## **VI. Master Plan Update**

### **a. Project Updates**

Ms. Brunner stated that since the May Planning Board, meeting the City has hosted a scenario planning workshop (i.e. – a “think tank”) which held over a two-day period on May 30th and 31st and had about 60 people in attendance. After that planning workshop, one of the outcomes was the identification of key drivers that will drive the exploration of different plausible future scenarios that could happen for Keene. At the end of the second day, the participants were asked to indicate their preferred future for Keene and their least desired future for Keene, which helped guide the eight visioning sessions that were held last week. The consultant made a presentation at the end of the visioning sessions to the City Council.

Ms. Brunner stated the purpose of those visioning sessions was to test and validate the outcomes of the think tank with a broader audience. Throughout the month of July, there will be visioning sessions held on an “on demand basis.” Another round of these sessions will be held in August and will be open to the general public – exact dates have not been determined yet.

August 6<sup>th</sup> will be the next Master Plan Steering Committee meeting, which will be a round table discussion where the Steering Committee will be asked to identify focus areas and the strategic pillars for the plan.

Ms. Brunner stated that all of this information is on the Master Plan website ([keenemasterplan.com](http://keenemasterplan.com)), which also has the think tank report and community snapshot report

along with the economic and demographic data that was collected. Ms. Brunner noted the survey closed on June 8<sup>th</sup> and this data is also available on the website.

Mr. Kost stated he had attended one of the sessions at the YMCA and asked how well attended the other sessions were. Ms. Brunner stated the session at the YMCA was a small group consisting of eight individuals, whereas the session at the Senior Center had about 20 participants, similar to the number of people who attended the other two sessions as well. The Elm City Rotary Club was the biggest session with nearly 60 attendees and the Kiwanis Club had about 20 people.

## **VII. Staff Updates**

### **a. Future Planning Board Training Topics**

Ms. Brunner stated that she was advised that there had been a discussion at a recent Planning Board meeting about conducting trainings to keep the Board current with its regulations. She indicated that for tonight's discussion, she has a list of topics she feels might interest the Board and that she would like to get its feedback.

The topics are as follows:

1. **Site Plan Review**: Reviewing the Board's authority for site plan review and the purpose of it; Thresholds in the regulations for major and minor site plan review; What the major site plan review process looks like in Keene; Items the Board should be considering; An overview of the site development standards; Off Site improvements; Timeframes to act and the types of decisions the Board can make and what should be going into that.
2. **Subdivision Review**: Same format as for site plan, to review the Board's authority, purpose, process, role in reviewing the subdivision standards.
3. **Driveways**: Ms. Brunner explained Planning Board has jurisdiction over commercial driveways. Single- and two-family driveways are reviewed through the City Engineer's office. However, driveway approvals are oftentimes done as part of a site plan approval. There are distinct driveway standards that need to be met anytime a street access is being modified or new ones are being created.
4. **Conditional Use Permits**: Their purpose and the types of conditional use permits the City reviews. In Keene, there is a process known as concurrent review where the Board reviews conditional use permits at the same time as any other approvals that are required for a project (such as site plan review).
5. **Zoning Ordinance**: Review relationship of the zoning ordinance to the subdivision regulations and site plan regulations, as well as the Board's amendment process in relation to the zoning ordinance.
6. **Earth Excavation Permit**: Ms. Brunner stated that the City has had only one of these types of permits to date, but there is likely to be another coming before the Board in the future.

This concluded Ms. Brunner's presentation.

The Chair asked each Board member to indicate items they would like reviewed.

Mr. Hoefler stated he would like a better understanding of the approval larger projects, such as the Home Depot site in the Monadnock Marketplace Plaza.

Mr. Kost stated he had listened to Ms. Brunner's presentation on Thursday where she had talked about creative or innovative ideas for zoning in Keene and felt it was done very well. Mr. Kost stated site plan review and conditional use permits (CUPs) were important to him. He stated he would also like a review of the meeting process for the Planning Board itself. For example, what are we voting on, acceptance of application completeness, all the different steps that the Board goes through.

Councilor Remy stated he would like a review of site plans, conditional use permits, and a clearer understanding of what the Board is supposed to consider during review.

Ms. Mastrogiovanni suggested site plan and subdivision review as well as a review of the Site Development Standards.

Mayor Kahn asked staff if they consider any of the items on the list to be outdated and asked if anything would require an update in order to be more useful. Ms. Brunner stated that staff maintains a running list of potential changes to the Land Development Code, including changes to the Planning Board's Regulations, the Zoning Ordinance, etc. She stated that most of the changes staff have identified are included in Article 25, which outlines the application procedure and submittal requirements for each type of application.

Mayor Kahn suggested site plan review and conditional use permits as areas he would like to review.

Mr. Rangel suggested site plan review, conditional use permits, and subdivision applications.

Ms. Vezzani asked for review of what she should look for during a site visit.

Mr. Mehu asked for a review of CUP's.

Councilor Haas addressed the Board and suggested as part of the training to review the efficiency of the review process.

Ms. Brunner addressed the Board again and stated that as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, Megan Forston, who is currently the department's Planning Technician, will be moved to the position of Planner. Evan Clements will remain as a Planner and will also be taking on the role of Zoning Administrator.

### **VIII. New Business**

None

### **IX. Upcoming Dates of Interest**

- Joint Committee of the Planning Board and PLD – July 8th, 6:30 PM

- Planning Board Steering Committee – July 9th, 11:00 AM
- Planning Board Site Visit – July 17th, 8:00 AM – To Be Confirmed
- Planning Board Meeting – July 22nd, 6:30 PM

3. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 7:16 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Megan Fortson, Planner