



Master Plan Steering Committee

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Tuesday, September 3, 2024 6:00 PM Heberton Hall, Keene Public Library

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Minutes of Previous Meeting – August 6, 2024
- III. Workshop (led by staff)
 - a. Review Draft Key Themes
 - b. Breakout Groups
- IV. October 5 Future Summit
- V. Fall Outreach and Engagement
- VI. New Business
- VII. Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 1, 6:00 PM

1 **City of Keene**
2 **New Hampshire**

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5 **JOINT PLANNING BOARD & MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**
6 **WORKSHOP**
7 **MEETING MINUTES**
8

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

5:30 PM

**Heberton Hall, Keene Public
Library**

**Master Plan Steering
Committee Members**

Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair
Alex Henkel, Vice Chair
Josh Meehan
Joe Perras
Joe Walier
Emily Lavigne-Bernier
Leatrice Oram
Councilor Catt Workman
Ken Kost, Alternate (Voting)
Councilor Phil Jones, Alternate
(Voting)
Mayor Jay Kahn, Alternate
(Voting)

Members Not Present:

Councilor Mike Remy
Cody Morrison
Elizabeth Wood
Sparky Von Plinsky
Juliana Bergeron

Planning Board Members

Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair
Ken Kost
Mayor Jay Kahn
Tammy Adams, Alternate
(Voting)
Mike Hoefler, Alternate
(Voting)

Planning Board Members

Not Present:

Roberta Mastrogiovanni,
Vice Chair
Councilor Mike Remy
Sarah Vezzani
Ryan Clancy
Armando Rangel
Stephon Mehu, Alternate
Randyn Markelon, Alternate

City Staff Present:

Jesse Rounds, Community
Development Director
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Evan Clements, Planner
Megan Fortson, Planner

9
10 **1) Call to Order and Roll Call**
11

12 Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 5:33 PM and asked for a roll call. Chair Farrington
13 invited Master Plan Steering Committee members Mayor Jay Kahn, Councilor Phil Jones, and Ken
14 Kost to participate as voting members. Planning Board alternate members Tammy Adams and
15 Mike Hoefler were also invited to participate as voting members.

16
17 **2) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – June 17, 2024**
18

19 A motion made by Mr. Walier to adopt the June 17, 2024 minutes was duly seconded by Ms.
20 Oram. Chair Farrington offered two corrections: that Armando Rangel be removed from the list of

21 members and that the word “report” be replaced with “reported” on line 59. The motion to adopt
22 the minutes as amended carried unanimously.

23

24 **3) Workshop (led by David Beurle)**

25

26 a) **Review of Project Progress and Public Input to Date**

27

28 Mr. Beurle explained that the master plan is still in the first phase, which is for visioning. The
29 visioning phase will end on Saturday, October 5th at the Future Summit, which will be held from
30 9:00 am – 12:00 pm in Heberton Hall at the Keene Public Library. He explained that tonight’s
31 meeting will serve as a round-table discussion to begin fleshing out the proposed themes for the
32 master plan, as well as discuss the preliminary heat map survey results.

33

34 Mr. Beurle showed the preliminary heat map results as part of a PowerPoint presentation and
35 explained that the data included all results up through the visioning session in East Keene on
36 Monday night. He noted that additional data from earlier in the day still needs to be incorporated
37 into the results. He explained that the majority of respondents identified Scenario D as their least
38 preferred future and the center of Scenario B as the most desired future. He noted that the survey
39 data not yet incorporated into the heat maps appears to mirror the same results.

40

41 He explained that these results show that people in Keene have an appetite for change in some
42 ways and noted that housing is the number one issue that people have been raising during all
43 public forums. Mr. Meehan inquired as to how Keene’s survey results compared to other similar
44 communities. Mr. Beurle stated that he was surprised by the tight concentration of the results,
45 which indicates a strong consensus.

46

47 Ms. Oram noted that some participants were concerned about Scenario B at the Visioning Session
48 that she attended, and she is glad to see that their input is included on the heatmap. Mr. Kost
49 wondered if participants were given upcoming demographic data about Keene’s population
50 becoming and staying stagnant in the future at the Visioning Sessions. Mr. Beurle stated that this
51 was briefly discussed during the opportunities and obstacles (headwinds & tailwinds) portion of
52 each session. He added that participants often provided contextual data as well, for example an
53 attendee from the Chamber of Commerce shared that 35% of workers are expected to retire in
54 the next 10 years.

55

56 Mayor Kahn Noted that data from the New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute shows that the
57 populations in Keene, Manchester, and Nashua have all slightly declined since 2020 whereas the
58 populations of Portsmouth, Dover, and Concord have all increased. Mr. Kost noted that he was
59 happy that the survey data is showing that people are receptive to change. Mr. Beurle agreed and
60 said that the combined survey results show that while people love Keene, they also want to see
61 change and more boldness. He stated that there should be ~300 heat map responses total once all
62 of the data has been compiled.

63

64 **b) Breakout Groups: Identification of Key Themes (Strategic Pillars)**

65
66 Mr. Beurle showed that the highest number of respondents selected Scenario B (Innovation &
67 Intentional – Change²) as their preferred future scenario. Based off of this response and other
68 feedback and data collected so far, he drafted six generic themes/topics:

- 69
- 70 1. Community collaboration and strategic positioning
 - 71 2. Housing availability and affordability
 - 72 3. Economic and business development
 - 73 4. Transportation and neighborhood/regional connectivity
 - 74 5. Workforce and community development
 - 75 6. Environmental stewardship and climate adaption
- 76

77 Mr. Beurle explained that although these general themes were created based off of the survey
78 results, the Committee should take each of these items and make it their own. He also noted that
79 “community character, heritage, and the arts” is something that was brought up frequently during
80 Visioning Session discussions and is something that the Committee may want to consider adding
81 into the themes somewhere.

82
83 Mr. Perras felt that the themes presented by Mr. Beurle looked good. Ms. Oram felt that community
84 character could be added under “Workforce & Community Development.” Councilor Jones was
85 happy with themes presented and stated that implementation plans should be created for each of
86 these areas. Mr. Beurle noted that this would be done as part of the next phase of the project and
87 that the Committee’s charge today is to flesh out the language, goals, and objectives related to
88 these general themes.

89
90 Mr. Kost stated that he thought the proposed themes looked good; however, he wondered how the
91 Committee could come up with implementation plans due to the interconnected nature of the
92 themes with one another. Mayor Kahn stated that Keene’s “magnetism” is what will draw people
93 in, if the community is engaged in each one of these themes. Ms. Brunner added that she heard
94 many people in the Visioning Sessions mention that they came to Keene or enjoyed living here
95 because of the opportunities for socializing and having fun. She was not sure how this could be
96 incorporated into the proposed themes but did not want that feedback to be overlooked.

97
98 Mr. Perras noted that while he thinks that Keene is great, the community needs something that it
99 can use to market itself as being truly exceptional. He thinks that the City may need to focus only
100 on one or two of these areas at a time, for example, a “moonshot” for housing. Mr. Beurle noted
101 that the implementation plans that will be created during the next phase of the project will help the
102 City make progress towards all of these goals and work out priorities.

103
104 Mr. Rounds noted that when City Staff met with Mayor Kahn’s Youth Council, they brought up
105 the importance of childcare availability in the community. He thinks that capacity development
106 may be another good focus area as well. Mr. Hoefler stated that he felt that community character

107 may fit under “Economic and business development.” Ms. Adams noted that a large chunk of the
108 population will be retiring in the next several years and service availability for all ages (infants to
109 elders) is also important.

110
111 Chair Farrington noted that some scenarios brought up by the Master Plan are within the City’s
112 “wheelhouse” and some are not. The City will not be able to address all of these topics alone. Mr.
113 Beurle commented that this is where relationships with local organizations will need to come into
114 play. Mr. Meehan noted that as a representative of Keene Housing, in his view one of the most
115 helpful steps that the City can take to removing barriers for new housing are regulatory changes,
116 including the recent Rural District minimum lot size reduction from 5 acres to 2 acres and the
117 Cottage Court Conditional Use Permit process that recently went into effect.

118
119 Mr. Beurle asked committee members to split into breakout groups to discuss the proposed six
120 themes. One member of each group presented the findings related to a particular theme at the end
121 of the discussion.

122
123 Report-out on Environmental Stewardship & Adaptation (Theme #6)

124 Chair Farrington reported out for this group, which included himself, Ms. Adams and Jesse
125 Rounds. He said they discussed the importance of maintaining environmental quality, the desire
126 for more green/open space within residential areas and the city core (not just natural areas for the
127 Rural District, but also accessible open spaces for other residential zoning districts), the need to
128 maintain agricultural areas in and around the city (keeping in mind local farms and their important
129 to our economy and culture), and being prepared for emerging technologies such as alternative
130 fuel vehicles. He said this group also talked about respecting past plans, visions and commitments
131 made by the city with respect to the environment. We do not need to start from scratch and should
132 keep our past promises/commitments.

133
134 Report-out on Workforce and Community Development (Theme #5)

135 Vice Chair Henkel stated that his group, which included himself, Emily Levigne-Bernier,
136 Councilor Workman, and Megan Fortson, discussed workforce and community development. He
137 explained that his group discussed the fact that workforce development needs to match community
138 needs and therefore should be reassessed regularly. They talked about creating a reciprocal
139 relationship of positivity between the City and its residents, promoting local events and
140 opportunities to draw people into the community (and retain them), evaluating what sectors of the
141 workforce will be retiring in the next decade to help fill in the gaps, improving infrastructure for
142 all life stages (childcare to eldercare), and working with young people in the community to fill in
143 the gaps.

144
145 Report-out on Economic and Business Development (Theme #3)

146 Mr. Perras stated that his group, which included himself, Mayor Kahn, Joe Walier, Councilor
147 Jones, and Evan Clements, was focused on economic and business development. They discussed
148 how Keene could serve as a convenor for economic development across the region. He explained
149 that the area of Sunapee, where he lived before moving to Keene, had an organization called a

150 “Corporate Council,” which was different from a Chamber of Commerce, but brought together
151 different sectors of the community to take action towards improving the community in doing things
152 such as creating housing funds. He went on to explain that his group also discussed inventorying
153 and creating workflows around grants, incentives, etc. and creating an updated City website with
154 this information and a “How to Start a Business” tab that can be filled with resources for new
155 business owners in the area. The idea is to make it as smooth and easy to do business here as
156 possible. He ended his recap by stating that his group also discussed showing new businesses how
157 Keene is “exceptional” through the promotion and creation of local events and by pairing
158 job/learning opportunities with local educational institutions. He stated that he believes Keene can
159 become exceptional through a series of small investments in the community.

160
161 Mayor Kahn added that an example of a small investment that could yield large results could be
162 to invest in our farmer’s market to make it the best in a 40-mile radius. He said Keene also has the
163 Monadnock Food Co-op and optics engineering that we could “lean into” to make exceptional. His
164 group also discussed launching a new business incubator.

165
166 Report-out on Housing Availability and Affordability (Theme #2)
167 Ms. Oram stated that her group, which included Josh Meehan, Michael Hofer, Ken Kost, and
168 Mari Brunner, was focused on housing availability and affordability. She explained that her group
169 discussed the need to offer a wide spectrum of housing types, housing mobility and availability,
170 creating the position of a housing concierge in the community, streamlining the development
171 process, offering tax incentives, creating partnerships with businesses to develop housing for
172 employees, and creating an inventory of lots available for development or redevelopment. Ms.
173 Brunner added that the group discussed the walkability of Keene as an attractor for new residents
174 and the opportunity to add housing density in the downtown and surrounding areas, possibly
175 through public-private partnerships. Keene offers the amenities of city living with lots of New
176 England/small-town charm.

177
178 Report-out on Transportation and Regional / Neighborhood Connectivity (Theme #4)
179 Mr. Farrington stated that his group also discussed theme #4, which was related to transportation
180 and neighborhood/regional connectivity. He explained that his group discussed both movement
181 within the City and between Keene and the surrounding towns. They discussed exploring
182 alternative modes of transportation, transportation funding and ownership models (such as a joint
183 City-employer relationship), organizing and incentivizing volunteer transportation opportunities
184 within the community, and assessing parking needs and potential solutions. Other possibilities
185 discussed also included the maintenance and expansion of the existing trail network.

186
187 None of the groups discussed Theme #1, “Community collaboration and strategic positioning.”
188

- 189 **4. Upcoming Public Engagement Opportunities:**
190 a. Tabling at Keene Sentinel Celebration Event on September 7th
191 b. Tabling at Monadnock Clean Energy Fair on September 28th
192 c. Future Summit on October 5th, 9 AM-12 PM at Heberton Hall

193
194 Ms. Brunner ran through a number of public engagement opportunities that will be occurring
195 during the months of September and October. She mentioned an opportunity that was not included
196 on the agenda is the Keene International Festival, which will be September 28 at Fuller Park and
197 the Recreation Center. Chair Farrington, Councilor Workman, and Mr. Kost volunteered to work
198 at the Keene Sentinel Celebration Event on September 7th. Mayor Kahn volunteered to work at the
199 Keene International Festival on September 28th. City Staff said that they would email out additional
200 information about these events.

201
202 5. **New Business**

203
204 No new business was raised.

205
206 6. **Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 3 at 6:00 PM**

207
208 7. **Adjournment**

209
210 There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 7:45 PM.

211
212 Respectfully submitted by,
213 Megan Fortson, Planner
214 August 7, 2024

215
216 Reviewed and edited by,
217 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner