



## **Master Plan Steering Committee**

### **AGENDA**

**Tuesday, May 7, 2024**

**6:00 PM**

**City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Council Chambers**

- I. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
- II. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** – April 2, 2024
- III. **Community Snapshot Overview by JS&A**
- IV. **Think Tank Workshop** – May 30 & 31, 2024
- V. **Survey Updates**
- VI. **New Business**
- VII. **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 PM

1 City of Keene  
2 New Hampshire

3  
4  
5 MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE  
6 MEETING MINUTES  
7

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

6:00 PM

Council Chambers,  
City Hall

Members Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair  
Alex Henkel, Vice Chair  
Councilor Michael Remy  
Cody Morrison  
Leatrice Oram  
Emily Lavigne-Bernier  
Alexander Von Plinsky  
Juliana Bergeron  
Joe Walier  
Joesph Perras  
Jay Kahn, Mayor, Alternate (Voting)  
Councilor Philip Jones, Alternate (Voting)  
Kenneth Kost, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Jesse Rounds, Community Development  
Director  
Evan Clements, Planner

Members Not Present:

Joseph Perra  
Pamela Russell-Slack  
Joshua Meehan  
Elizabeth Wood  
Armando Rangel  
Councilor Catherine Workman, Alternate

8  
9 **I. Call to Order & Roll Call**

10  
11 Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

12  
13 **II. Minutes of Previous Meeting – March 12, 2024**

14  
15 A motion by Councilor Jones to adopt the March 12, 2024 meeting minutes as amended was duly  
16 seconded by Mr. Von Plinsky. The motion carried unanimously. [\*Alternates acting as voting  
17 members were not assigned until after this vote, and as such, no alternates participated in this vote.]

18  
19 **III. Potential Names for Project – Continued Discussion**  
20

21 Discussion ensued about suggestions for the project name. The current placeholder was “Vision  
22 Keene.” Potential project names submitted by Committee members to Mr. Clements included:

23

- 24     ▪ Focus 20Forward (\*later confirmed that Mr. Clements misspoke “20Forward”)
- 25     ▪ Forward Together
- 26     ▪ Keene 2040
- 27     ▪ Roadmap 2040
- 28     ▪ Leading 2040
- 29     ▪ Keene Vision 2035: Shaping Our Future
- 30     ▪ Keene Forward: Building Tomorrow Together
- 31     ▪ Keene Blueprint: Paving the Way for Progress
- 32     ▪ Keene Horizons: Mapping Our City’s Future
- 33     ▪ Keene Thrive: Navigating Our Path to Prosperity
- 34     ▪ Learn from the Past & Plan for the Future (as a potential tagline)

35

36 The Steering Committee discussed what project name would be most effective. There was  
37 agreement that “Vision” lends well to aligning with the City’s new branding, as the Deputy City  
38 Manager, Rebecca Landry, demonstrated at the last meeting. Many Committee members spoke in  
39 favor of the phrase “20Forward,” despite that phrase having been misspoken. There was also  
40 support for including a year, which creates a timeline for something actionable. Mayor Kahn noted  
41 that there were many other “Vision” master plans in the City (e.g., Keene State College Vision  
42 2000 and Cheshire Medical Vision 2020), so he thought a similar name for the City’s project could  
43 be apt, as people can focus on the visionary goals.

44

45 Many Committee members agreed that “Vision” is broad enough but still something that can be  
46 personal for community members. Still, a tagline under “Vision” could be helpful for further  
47 explaining the project. Discussion proceeded about not stretching the timeline of this Plan too far;  
48 2040 might be missing the mark. Actionable goals are needed. Mr. Clements confirmed the  
49 timeline, noting that the horizon for this new Master Plan (MP) is 2025–2035, which would be  
50 followed by another two-year process to create the next MP, so the next MP might be adopted in  
51 2037. He thought it was reasonable to have this MP focus on 2035–2040. Ms. Oram mentioned  
52 how Vision 2040 does not imply the same meaning as Vision 2020 did, with its implication of  
53 clear (20/20) vision. So, 2040 might have less buzz. Others mentioned how “Vision” implies a  
54 focus on the next generation. Some agreed that “20Forward” would give the illusion of a date  
55 without specifying one, particularly given that an MP should set the stage for everything moving  
56 forward, and the effects will be felt long after 2040.

57

58 A motion by Mr. Von Plinsky to approve the project name: “Vision 20Forward: Learn from the  
59 Past, Plan for the Future” was duly seconded by Ms. Bergeron. The motion carried unanimously.

60

61 The name would be forwarded to Ms. Landry, who would use her expertise to develop a logo in  
62 collaboration with the consultants.

63

64 **IV. Survey Updates**

65

66 Mr. Rounds explained that the survey was drafted and ready. The Steering Committee's help  
67 would be essential to distributing it widely and getting the word out. The survey results would help  
68 guide the think tank conversations at the end of May.

69

70 Mr. Beurle noted that it is a long survey, with approximately 36 questions. The length is due to  
71 trying to capture a lot of data. Users are warned of the duration before beginning the survey. He  
72 described some of the important sections of the survey that were developed based on this Steering  
73 Committee's conversations. Profiling questions at the beginning allow for segmenting the data.  
74 The survey asks about people's satisfaction with living and working in Keene (i.e., current  
75 direction, speed of change, and ability to adapt to the future). Other questions assess how people  
76 see the future strategic positioning of Keene in NH and New England.

77

78 There are also questions about Keene's reputation, as well as the importance of having a shared  
79 vision and MP. Then, there is an opportunity to rank a series of more specific topic areas. Mr.  
80 Beurle said he liked the chosen tagline about learning from the past and planning for the future.  
81 He thought he could work with Mr. Rounds to add a section to the survey that lists the vision  
82 elements from the 2010 MP and asks users to comment on the City's success at making those  
83 elements a reality.

84

85 Chair Farrington asked how the survey would be distributed. Mr. Rounds said there would be  
86 multiple ways—both online and in print. There would *not* be a direct mailer to all residents. Mayor  
87 Kahn noted that people can sign-up on the City's website for general email updates about City  
88 events; he asked if those more than 2,000 people would be sent the survey as well. Mr. Rounds  
89 said he would be working with Ms. Landry to use every avenue possible to distribute the survey.  
90 However, he noted that the email list Mayor Kahn referred to does have a bias limitation of those  
91 in the City who were curious enough to sign-up. The survey would still need to reach the other  
92 90% of Keene.

93

94 Chair Farrington asked how the survey would reach commuters and visitors. Mr. Rounds said the  
95 intention was to use the radio to let those demographics know about the opportunity. He agreed  
96 with the importance of reaching these people who do not live in the City. Mayor Kahn mentioned  
97 that the KSC population probably brings more visitors to the City than any other entity; people are  
98 attracted to KSC because of the City, and people are attracted to the City because of KSC. He  
99 thought this was a captive audience of students and parents, and he said it would be interesting to  
100 capture those impressions. Mr. Clements said City Staff were using all their tools to distribute the  
101 survey, but it was important for Steering Committee members to spread the survey to their own  
102 networks too or share ideas with Staff/consultants if they do not have the capacity to reach those  
103 groups themselves.

104

105 Mr. Kost said that the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) would have a  
106 comprehensive list of all town planners and volunteers, who would be good to share the survey

107 with to reach those who visit/work in Keene but do not live here. Mr. Rounds said that Staff were  
108 working with SWRPC. Councilor Remy said he found out that during the last MP process, 564  
109 Keene residents responded to the survey, representing 61% of the respondents, meaning that there  
110 were approximately 1,000 survey responses total. KSC had a survey with 885 responses from the  
111 5,000 students enrolled (data from the survey graphs on page 247 of the 2010 Comprehensive  
112 Master Plan).

113  
114 Mr. Von Plinsky asked if the City would be working with SAU 29 and other local school districts.  
115 He suggested capturing the views of those who would live with this MP the longest (i.e.,  
116 students/young people). Mr. Rounds said that was possible and he had discussed it with the  
117 consultants. In the past, there were classroom activities. Also, the survey is open to anyone who  
118 wants to take it, meaning that Keene students are also allowed to participate. Chair Farrington  
119 added that SAU 29 was rewriting its strategic plan concurrently with this MP effort, and he thought  
120 that strategic plan should be incorporated somehow with the City's updated MP.

121  
122 Mr. Clements said he would be working with Ms. Landry to create an 8.5" x 11" flyer with a QR  
123 code for the survey. This flyer could be distributed to businesses throughout Keene to display in  
124 their windows. Ms. Lavigne-Bernier said the flyers at Prime Roast's cash register get a lot of  
125 attention; Prime Roast also has a social media following of approximately 5,000—most of which  
126 are local—that she can share the survey with as well.

127  
128 Mayor Kahn asked about the timeline of the survey in this MP process. Mr. Beurle said he hoped  
129 the survey would be finalized by approximately April 12, and the intention was to have it live until  
130 May 31. Thus, the survey would be open for 6–7 weeks, which is a good amount of time to build  
131 momentum.

132  
133 Councilor Remy wondered if there should be a different survey for KSC with different questions  
134 that make more sense to students. Mr. Beurle said that was possible, but he did not recommend it.  
135 Segmenting the survey into demographics makes it hard to maintain a common thread, and can  
136 dilute the data, making it harder to assess statistical significance. What he found more effective is  
137 having the more standard, first survey reach as many people as possible—regardless of  
138 demographics—in advance of more specific “cohort” discussions during the community visioning  
139 workshops. The profiling questions in the first survey would facilitate targeting key demographics  
140 in the workshops.

141  
142 Mr. Rounds reiterated that the purpose of this survey as the first step in this process was to lay the  
143 groundwork for later parts of the process, with a lot of future opportunities for additional surveys—  
144 whether City-based or with the consultants. He thought the survey Councilor Remy was referring  
145 to was an Antioch University New England survey that was specifically focused on the downtown  
146 (Appendix B of 2010 MP), and would be a valuable tool for future discussions. Mr. Rounds  
147 thought that Future IQ and the other consultants had a good vision for this process moving forward,  
148 which he thought was a great first step. The think tanks will be a powerful tool. Councilor Remy  
149 clarified that he was not challenging this process.

150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157

Mr. Walier asked whether this Steering Committee’s work and the survey were public knowledge. Are Steering Committee members allowed to talk about this? Mr. Farrington said it is public knowledge and the Steering Committee is encouraged to talk about this effort as much as possible. Mayor Kahn agreed, noting that the City Council formally and publicly appointed this Committee, but added that the Steering Committee could help enhance general knowledge of this effort in the community.

158 **V. Master Plan Presentation from Community Development Director**

159 **A) Jesse Rounds, the Community Development Director, will provide**  
160 **background information about the 2010 Master Plan, the purpose and history**  
161 **of Master Plans, and New Hampshire’s statutory requirements for these**  
162 **documents.**

163  
164  
165  
166  
167  
168  
169  
170

Mr. Rounds gave a presentation on the City’s 2010 Comprehensive MP and the NH laws that underpin this process (he agreed to share his presentation with the Committee). He thanked Mr. Clements for his in-depth work breaking down the whole 2010 MP into goals and proposed solutions. Reviewing all of these details would take a long time, so Mr. Rounds reviewed the highlights. To illustrate why master planning is important, he quoted organizational psychologist, Peter Drucker, *“long range planning does not deal with future decisions, but with the future of present decisions.”*

171  
172  
173  
174  
175  
176  
177  
178  
179  
180  
181

Mr. Rounds said this MP is Keene’s opportunity to decide what the City’s future will be. It is less about future decision making and more about where the future will take us and how much the City wants to work toward potential futures. Master planning is a basis for the City’s regulatory actions, the City’s decisions, and community programs. He said the 2010 MP included a lot of what the City should look into (e.g., greenhouse gas surveys) and the various tools to reach those goals. The City Council, Planning Board, City Staff, and Community Development Department use the 2010 MP regularly to make decisions. For example, when presenting the annual budget, departments tie everything to the 2010 MP. It is a powerful document that depicts how the City should grow and change, leading to a long-term guide. Thinking about 10 years from now is challenging for individuals, let alone a whole community.

182  
183  
184  
185  
186  
187  
188  
189  
190  
191  
192

Mr. Rounds listed the community vision from the 2010 MP: quality-built environment, unique natural environment, vibrant economy, strong and proactive citizenship and leadership, creative learning culture, and a healthy economy. The City has done a lot to support the resulting 21 subject areas and the success of that vision, which has driven a lot of the City’s decisions over the past 14 years. He showed a Venn diagram to demonstrate that social, environmental, and economic sustainability lead to a healthy economy, environment, and populace. Developing vision statements to align with this diagram was very complicated and in-depth. While it was great to articulate everything the community cared about, it was a lot to think about all at once; sometimes such fine detail can lose sight of the ultimate goals. However, this did not discount the value of the 2010 visioning process and engagement, which was second to none. Mr. Rounds said the 2010 MP

193 was missing the “visioning” piece; how would the City reach these goals? Mr. Rounds said he  
194 would like to hear from those involved with the 2010 MP to learn more.

195  
196 Next, Mr. Rounds reviewed NH RSA 674, which guides this MP process. RSA 674 provides a lot  
197 of guidance for the Planning Board and other regulatory bodies.

198  
199     ▪ RSA 674:1  
200         ○ Outlines the requirement to prepare and amend MPs to guide development. This is  
201         the Planning Board’s responsibility. This includes areas outside the municipality  
202         that the City controls (e.g., Airport and water reservoirs). This Steering Committee  
203         was tasked with promoting the MP process, research, implementation, and advice  
204         to the Planning Board.

205     ▪ RSA 674:2  
206         ○ Requires the City to describe an appropriate future for the community, which must  
207         include a “vision” section and a “land use” section, showing the current conditions  
208         and future desired conditions. This includes giving the community an opportunity  
209         to articulate its desired future and giving the Steering Committee an opportunity to  
210         dive deeper into the areas of community importance. Some topic areas, like coastal  
211         management, are less relevant to Keene. Other topic areas, like housing, included  
212         a recommendation to create an implementation plan, which had not yet been  
213         accomplished by City Staff.

214         ○ The RSA includes “optional” MP sections: transportation, community facilities,  
215         economic development, natural resources, natural hazards, recreation, utility and  
216         public service, cultural/archaeological/historical resources, regional concerns,  
217         neighborhood plan, community design, housing, implementation, energy, and  
218         coastal management.

219     ▪ RSA 674:3  
220         ○ Gives this Steering Committee the authority to study existing data trends and  
221         practices. This section suggests MP revision every 5–10 years, as well as ways to  
222         involve the public. The City is looking to its State and regional partners, hoping for  
223         their involvement along with the Keene community.

224     ▪ RSA 674:4  
225         ○ Lists the MP adoption procedures and practices. The Planning Board adopts the  
226         MP.

227  
228 Mr. Kost was grateful for this presentation. He noted that the MP is a “long-term guide,” and asked  
229 if there would also be short-term or interim actions/decisions along the way. Mr. Rounds thought  
230 that the 2010 MP was very good, thorough, and detailed. He thought it might be useful to focus on  
231 the most important details. For example, an implementation plan could be a way to track and  
232 monitor these actions over time. An implementation plan was included in the consultants’ scope  
233 of work. With a project name like “20Forward,” Mr. Rounds thought it would be great to monitor  
234 and track the City’s actions.

235

236 Mr. Von Plinsky asked whether MPs generally have a definitions section. For example, it could  
237 be helpful to a reader to define terms like “affordable housing,” both in general and specifically to  
238 Keene. Other examples included “natural resource conservation” and “green energy.” Mr. Rounds  
239 replied that there is not usually a definitions section, but in the flow of the MP, it is best practice  
240 to define important terms.

241  
242 Ms. Oram asked if the City had ever self-assessed how it did implementing the 2010 MP. Mr.  
243 Rounds was not aware of any such activity. Part of his presentation at this meeting came from a  
244 2012 Planning Department (now Community Development Department) presentation that was  
245 intended to be an update. He thought that a formal look back could be useful to build into the  
246 overall process. Councilor Jones said the City tried to start a look back like this at the Joint  
247 Planning Board-Planning, Licenses, and Development Committee level, but it was pushed off  
248 because of so many applications taking precedence. Mr. Clements said he hoped this  
249 exercise/presentation would result in some reflections. A formal review would require a significant  
250 effort and coordination between City departments to comb through the whole MP. While some  
251 goals in the 2010 MP were easier to implement (e.g., improving the water treatment plant), the MP  
252 was also extremely granular (e.g., use low toxicity paints). While valuable information, such  
253 granular details might not be appropriate for the level of this MP document.

254  
255 Mr. Von Plinsky suggested that this next MP should include clear ways that the listed goals could  
256 be measured in the future. Mr. Clements agreed, stating that the MP document is designed for this  
257 sort of tracking; articulating those goals and strategies in a way that is easy for City departments  
258 to track will be essential. Mr. Morrison suggested that another way to measure the effectiveness  
259 of the MP is to survey external partners. When he applies for a grant for a project, Mr. Morrison  
260 must show how the project aligns with local, regional, and Statewide planning. Thus, a few times  
261 annually, he reviews the City’s 2010 MP.

262  
263 Councilor Jones wondered whether the MP could list short-term goals in addition to the long-term.  
264 Mr. Rounds said yes, without listing a timeframe, the MP would lose some utility as an  
265 implementation plan. Mr. Beurle said one of Future IQ’s philosophies is to think of the MP like a  
266 roadmap. Yes, it is a statutory requirement, but it is also a vision/roadmap with directions along  
267 the way. In developing the implementation plan, the consultants will identify first, second, and  
268 third-level actions. Beyond five years, there is a level of uncertainty, so those action levels should  
269 be reviewed often.

270  
271 Mr. Perras wondered whether the City had ever included a demographer in its MP processes. He  
272 said it could be useful for understanding where the City is headed from a population standpoint,  
273 noting how his experiences showed how insightful it can be. While it had not been included yet,  
274 Mr. Rounds thought it was a great idea. Other places that Mr. Rounds had worked brought  
275 demographers in annually to understand impacts to planning. Mr. Rounds agreed to talk with the  
276 consultants about this possibility and Mr. Perras offered to share resources.

277

278 Mr. Kost supported the demographer idea. He also recalled the City’s Housing Needs Assessment,  
279 which was informed by significant research. He thought that assessment was still relevant. Mr.  
280 Rounds said yes, the consultants had access to the assessment, which he called an incredibly  
281 valuable tool to consider growing the housing sector.

282

283 **VI. New Business**

284

285 This agenda item is a placeholder for Committee members to suggest topics for upcoming  
286 meetings.

287

288 Mr. Clements asked the Steering Committee to submit photos, bios, and quotes to Staff. Members  
289 should also continue submitting names for the think tanks (80–100 people) and potential one-on-  
290 one stakeholder interviews as soon as possible. Serving on a think tank would not preclude  
291 someone from participating in a one-on-one interview. The interviews are to understand and build  
292 connections with key players in the community that can help with context or reaching large  
293 networks. Members should share as much contact information as possible to help Staff reach  
294 participants.

295

296 **VII. Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 7 at 6:00 PM**

297

298 **VIII. Adjournment**

299

300 There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 7:19 PM.

301

302 Respectfully submitted by,  
303 Katie Kibler, Minute Taker  
304 April 8, 2024

305

306 Reviewed and edited by,  
307 Megan Fortson, Planning Technician