

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

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

**Tuesday, May 28, 2024**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Andrew Oram, Chair  
Tom Savastano  
Ashok Bahl, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Jesse Rounds, Community Development  
Director & Health Official  
Corinne Marcou, Board Clerk  
Rick Wood, Fire Marshall & Building  
Official

**Members Not Present:**

Medard Kopczynski  
Alison Welsh  
Jennifer Seher

**1) Call to Order: Roll Call**

Chair Oram called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM and roll call ensued.

**2) Vote for Vice Chair**

Tabled until a meeting with more attendance.

**3) Minutes of Previous Meeting: March 26, 2024**

A motion by Mr. Savastano to adopt the March 26, 2024 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Bahl. The motion carried unanimously.

**4) Unfinished Business:**

**A) Updates:**

**i) *Southwestern Community Services***

Chair Oram requested staff comments. Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director/Health Official, explained that Application LB 23-15 for Southwestern Community Services (SCS) was outstanding because of remaining Fire Department (FD) issues. Rick Wood, Fire Marshall/Building Official explained that Fire Code review was complete, and he had no objection to the Board approving the SCS applications. Ms. Marcou confirmed that the Board had not reviewed these applications since September 2023, but she was unaware of any substantial changes since that date. These would be application renewals.

Discussion ensued and the Board decided to act upon the applications at this meeting. Ms. Marcou said that SCS was already on this agenda, so there was no need for 24 hours' notice.

Chair Oram opened the public hearing for SCS Applications LB 23-15 (139 Roxbury Street) and LB 23-16 (32 Water Street).

Chair Oram welcomed Craig Henderson, SCS Program Consultant (formerly Director of Housing Stabilization Services), who said there were no further additions to the applications. The issue of capacity was resolved with the FD.

There were no public comments.

The Board reviewed the criteria for approving Application LB 23-15.

*The licensing board shall consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a congregate living and social services license application.*

Criteria 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.*

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 1 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 2 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 3 was met.

Mr. Bahl made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved application LB 23-15 for the Southwestern Community Services homeless shelter at 139 Roxbury Street.

The Board reviewed the criteria for approving Application LB 23-16.

*The licensing board shall consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a congregate living and social services license application.*

Criteria 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.*

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 1 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 2 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 3 was met.

Mr. Bahl made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved application LB 23-16 for the Southwestern Community Services homeless shelter at 32 Water Street.

**ii) *Live Free Recovery Services – 881 Marlboro Road***

[This agenda item was heard before the above Southwestern Community Services applications.]

Chair Oram requested staff comments. Ms. Marcou reported that the Community Development Department Commercial Building Inspector visited the site and looked at a wall partition that was added to separate a large space in the commercial building and found no issues which would require a building permit. Chair Oram confirmed that the public hearing occurred already.

Mr. Savastano made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Bahl. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board confirmed that all conditions were met and approved Application CLSS-2024-03 for Live Free Recovery’s residential drug/alcohol treatment facility at 881 Marlboro Road.

**iii) *Unity House***

Ms. Marcou said representatives from Unity House submitted the outstanding materials, including the evacuation location plan. Thus, the conditions of approval were met.

Mr. Bahl made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board confirmed that all conditions were met and approved Application CLSS-2024-15 for Unity House’s small group home at 39 Summer Street.

5) **Applications:**

- A) **Continued CLSS-2024-05: Applicant, Hilary Seifer, Executive Director for American House Keene, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Residential Care Facility, located at 197 Water St., and is in the Business Growth & Reuse District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Chair Oram requested staff comments. Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director/Health Official, confirmed that all required materials were submitted, and all inspections completed. The applicant had also submitted the license fee, so staff supported approving the application.

Chair Oram welcomed the applicant, Hillary Seifer, Executive Director of American House Keene. Ms. Seifer had no information to add to the application. She updated the neighborhood relations plan and submitted it to staff.

Mr. Savastano asked if there were evacuation maps on each floor of the building. Ms. Seifer said yes, they were included in the original application.

There were no public comments. Chair Oram closed the public hearing.

Chair Oram said he saw no reason to delay the application. With no further comments from the Board, they reviewed the criteria for approving the application.

*The licensing board shall consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a congregate living and social services license application.*

Criteria 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.*

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 1 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 2 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 3 was met.

Mr. Savastano made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Bahl. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved Continued Application CLSS-2024-05 for the American House residential care facility at 197 Water Street.

- B) CLSS-2024-10: Applicant, Phyllis Phelps, Director for House of Hope, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Large Group Home, located at 31 Wyman Rd., and is in the Corporate Park District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Chair Oram requested staff comments. Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director/Health Official, said the application and inspections were all complete.

Chair Oram welcomed the applicant, Phyllis Phelps, Director for House of Hope, who had nothing to add to the application.

Mr. Savastano asked if there were evacuation maps on each floor of the building. Ms. Phelps said yes, on every floor.

There were no public comments. Chair Oram closed the public hearing.

Chair Oram recalled the Board discussing neighborhood relations plans a lot in 2023. He noted that House of Hope—and its neighbor, Covenant Living, which was already approved by this Board—is in a very isolated location, and he thought their neighborhood relations plan should be judged with the same standards as Covenant Living. The plan was acceptable to Chair Oram. Mr. Savastano and Mr. Bahl agreed.

The Board reviewed the criteria for approving the application.

*The licensing board shall consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a congregat living and social services license application.*

Criteria 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.*

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 1 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 2 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 3 was met.

Mr. Savastano made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Bahl. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved Application CLSS-2024-10 for House of Hope’s large group home at 31 Wyman Road.

- C) **CLSS-2024-11: Applicant, Jennifer Houston, Executive Director for Live Free Recovery, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Large Group Home, located at 361 Court St., and is in the Medium Density District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Chair Oram welcomed the applicant, Jennifer Houston, Executive Director for Live Free Recovery, who had nothing to add to the application.

Chair Oram requested staff comments. Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director/Health Official, explained that this application was complicated because the location also required a Food License to cook food that would be delivered to other locations. Discussion ensued about why a Food License was required for this facility. Ms. Houston confirmed that food would be prepared at 361 Court Street to serve at that location and to be delivered to the 881 Marlboro Rd. location.

Mr. Rounds explained that an inspection is required for the food aspect. Ms. Houston said she was not informed of this requirement and Mr. Rounds apologized for overlooking that communication. Mr. Rounds thanked Ms. Houston for submitting all the necessary materials and said this would not be a significant hurdle.

Mr. Rounds continued, explaining to the Board that in reviewing the Land Development Code again, he learned more about the types of approvals this Board can issue full approval, conditional approval, or provisional approval:

- **Conditional approvals:**
  - By issuing a conditional approval, the applicant would be approved for that year, and would need to submit the missing information for renewal the next year.
  - If staff informed the Board that a required aspect of the application was not submitted by the applicant, its submission would be a condition of approving the license. There would be very little grey area.
- **Provisional approvals:**
  - The Board could issue an approval and specify a date by which—up to 180 days—the applicant must return to the Board and present the missing information.

So, in this case, Mr. Rounds recommended that the Board approve this application provisionally, with a date for the applicant to return as September 24, 2024. The application would remain in the Board's unfinished business for approval.

Chair Oram said Covenant Living and American House came to mind, both of which serve food, but that had not been a not a consideration of the Board. Food service had never been mentioned to this Board before this. Thus, he questioned whether this was the Board's purview. Mr. Rounds said that was fair, and that the Board could approve this application and staff would handle the Food License. He said the reason he brought it forward was because he is the Health Official, and one requirement of this CLSS License is for the applicant to meet all Code requirements: Fire, Building, and Health. Still, Mr. Rounds said it is the Board's decision to determine what is in their purview.

Chair Oram said he felt the need to push back. He felt that including food was an additional responsibility for the applicant that had not been required for past applicants. He was uncomfortable because he did not think it was clearly within the Board's purview and thought a precedent had been set already. Mr. Rounds thought the only distinction was a slight difference in that this 361 Court Street location would be producing food for off-site consumption, which is a Food Code issue, as opposed to producing food for only the on-site residents. Still, Mr. Rounds said that if the Board had never considered food production, then he advised approving the application and staff would sort this out as a matter of practice moving forward.

Chair Oram closed the public hearing.

Chair Oram said he was speculating, but he thought there was a fair chance that both American House and Covenant Living had packed lunches for residents to go on field trips off their premises, for example. Because the Board was never exposed to that information, he was uncomfortable with the Board inserting itself without specific direction from staff. Thus, he believed that the Board should not consider food service as a part of this application.

Mr. Savastano agreed with Chair Oram. He thought that if a food safety violation was found, that would be enough to have it reviewed separately by the appropriate inspectors. He thought that was outside what this Board does.

Chair Oram reopened the public hearing and requested any public comments.

A member of the public began to pose a question about a different entity and location, and they were advised to speak with a member of staff outside of the meeting.

There were no further public comments.

Mr. Savastano asked whether there was security plan, life safety plan, or site maintenance plan in the application. Ms. Marcou said it might have been an oversight. She assured the Board that those items were included in the original application packet and were approved.

Chair Oram closed the public hearing. The Board reviewed the criteria for approving the application.

*The licensing board shall consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a congregate living and social services license application.*

Criteria 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.*

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 1 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 2 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 3 was met.

Mr. Bahl made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved Application CLSS-2024-11 for Live Free Recovery’s large group home at 361 Court Street.

- D) CLSS-2024-12: Applicant, Jennifer Houston, Executive Director for Live Free Recovery, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Large Group Home, located at 26 Water St., and is in the Medium Density District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Chair Oram requested staff comments. Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director/Health Official advised that all materials were received.

Chair Oram welcomed the applicant, Jennifer Houston, Executive Director for Live Free Recovery, who had nothing to add to the application.



Chair Oram asked whether all required application materials were on file and Ms. Marcou said yes.

There were no public comments. Chair Oram closed the public hearing.

The Board reviewed the three criteria for approving an application.

*The licensing board shall consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a congregate living and social services license application.*

Criteria 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.*

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 1 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 2 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 3 was met.

Mr. Bahl made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved Application CLSS-2024-12 for Live Free Recovery’s large group home at 26 Water Street.

- E) CLSS-2024-13: Applicant, David Ports, Interim Executive Director for Monadnock Peer Support, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Small Group Home, located at 24 Vernon St., and is in the Downtown Core District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances**

Chair Oram requested staff comments. Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director/Health Official, said there were no concerns. There was an item of note in the building for the next application, but it did not affect this applicant.

Chair Oram welcomed the applicant, David Ports, Interim Executive Director for Monadnock Peer Support, who clarified that the application was for a small group home (8 beds), not a large group home. Otherwise, he had nothing else to add to the application.

There were no questions from the Board and no public comments. Chair Oram closed the public hearing.

The Board reviewed the criteria for approving the application.

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Criteria 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.*

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 1 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 2 was met.

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

Hearing no objections from the Board, Chair Oram declared that Criteria 3 was met.

Mr. Savastano made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Bahl. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved Application CLSS-2024-13 for Monadnock Peer Support’s small group home at 24 Vernon Street.

- F) **CLSS-2024-14: Applicant, Samuel Lake, Executive Director for Keene Serenity Center, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Group Resource Center, located at 24 Vernon St., and is in the Downtown Core District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances**

Chair Oram asked for staff comments. Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director/Health Official, said there was one outstanding issue with a bathroom in the facility that was under construction and had not yet received a Building Permit. As of the date of this meeting, the applicant was in the process of obtaining the Building Permit and completing the needed inspections, but the permit was not closed yet. So, Mr. Rounds said conditional approval could be appropriate because the applicant was in the inspection process.

Mr. Rounds asked Ms. Marcou whether approval would grant the previous year's license and the current year's. Ms. Marcou said yes, the material submitted included the items missing from the 2024 application and this would also grant them their 2025 license. Mr. Rounds noted that the applicant, Sam Lake, was not present, so he suggested approving the application provisionally and staff would advise the applicant on when to return to the Board; he said the Board could also issue a conditional approval without hearing a statement from the applicant.

Chair Oram said his sense was that a provisional approval could be redundant when used in a situation when there is some doubt or urgency. Whereas he understood conditional approval as the Board feeling confident that rectifying any issue was well underway; a more minor issue that would not demand that the applicant return to appear before the Board. In the case of this application, he heard that the work was underway, so he felt conditional approval was appropriate.

Discussion ensued amongst staff, who confirmed that the public hearing for this application was in November 2023. As such, Mr. Rounds recommended giving the applicant the opportunity to make a statement before the Board. Chair Oram and Mr. Savastano agreed since it had been so long.

Rick Wood, Fire Marshall/Building Official, noted that there were employees from Serenity Center in attendance who could speak. Mr. Wood added that he was at the site a few hours before this meeting and could speak to the bathroom construction if the Board wanted.

Chair Oram recognized David Ports, Interim Executive Director of Monadnock Peer Support, who said his staff were in attendance to speak to this application (above). Mr. Ports confirmed that Monadnock Peer Support was undertaking the bathroom project in its building for the Serenity Center space that is rented from Monadnock Peer Support. Mr. Ports assured the Board that the bathroom work would be completed quickly, to all specifications and permits. Chair Oram said that Monadnock Peer Support was undertaking the bathroom project in its building for the Serenity Center's benefit. Mr. Ports said he believed that was accurate.

Ms. Marcou confirmed that the Board had not yet had the opportunity to review the whole application with the applicant. Chair Oram said he did not want to beleaguer the applicant, but the Chair thought it was striking that Mr. Lake had not appeared before the Board since November 2023. The Chair sensed concern amongst the Board about adequately following the Board's process, so he thought the applicant should be present to get this completed. Mr. Rounds noted that Mr. Lake was sometimes slow to turn-in materials, but when staff received the materials, they were always great; staff had helped along the way. He said Mr. Lake had always been understanding.

Mr. Rounds thought it was in the Board's and community's best interest to give Mr. Lake the opportunity to talk about the application process, and to give the public a chance to comment. Chair Oram agreed, noting that all other applicants need to appear before the Board, so it was

good to maintain that process of treating all applicants equally. Mr. Savastano agreed that appearing before the Board in a timely and proper way should be the same expectation for all applicants.

Mr. Savastano made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Mr. Bahl. On a vote of 3–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board tabled Application CLSS-2024-14 for the Serenity Center’s group resource center at 24 Vernon Street.

**6) New Business**

Due to some of the challenges during this meeting, Mr. Rounds said he would institute some new protocols. Monthly, he will include a staff report in the meeting packet indicating whether criteria were met by the applicants. First, he wanted to do this for the Board to have a “one-stop shop” for everything they need to know. Second, this would help him to further understand these projects (especially going into renewals) and to relieve some work from Ms. Marcou, who had been the memory for all of this to date. This would be an opportunity for staff to clearly outline for the Board what requirements applicants had met or not, in an easier way. As these applications progress through multiple years of renewal, a formalized process and organization will help with institutional memory.

To support this process, Mr. Rounds recalled that Ms. Marcou was working to consolidate all application files onto a server that the Board would have access to (read only). This will eliminate the need to publish and send agenda packets that are upward of 1,000 pages, which have challenged the Board to date. With this instituted, the Board would be alerted that application files—everything from the staff reports to neighborhood relations plans—are available on the server. This would be much more accessible for the Board and staff to navigate these lengthy documents.

Chair Oram asked if the staff report would be a sort of checklist. Mr. Rounds imagined it as more than a checklist. He wants to provide the Board with a step-by-step process based on what he found in the applications—e.g., staff recommends approval or denial, or conditional or provisional approval. This would not necessarily eliminate the need for staff comments on each application during meetings, but would provide staff the opportunity to quickly point out what is missing from applications. This would apply to new applications and renewals.

Ms. Marcou added that her hope was that application materials like operations and maintenance plans, which make the agenda packets quite long, would not be added to the agenda packet, but the Board would be directed to where to find each applicable document on the server, organized by agency. Then, the agenda packets would likely only include the agenda, minutes, and staff report.

Mr. Bahl pointed out that he had not been receiving emails with the application/meeting details, and Ms. Marcou said she would work with him to rectify.

Mr. Savastano liked the staff report idea, noting that some applications were easier to navigate than others. With staff assurance that all aspects of applications are complete, the thought it would help the Board. Chair Oram agreed.

7) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Oram adjourned the meeting at 7:13 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker  
June 4, 2024

Reviewed and edited by,  
Corinne Marcou, Board Clerk