

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 24, 2025

6:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair
Roberta Mastrogiovanni, Vice Chair
Mayor Jay V. Kahn
Armando Rangel
Kenneth Kost
Michael Hoefer, Alternate
Stephon Mehu, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Megan Fortson, Planner
Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager
Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Director of Parks &
Recreation

Members Not Present:

Councilor Michael Remy
Sarah Vezzani
Ryan Clancy
Randyn Markelon, Alternate
Tammy Adams, Alternate

I) Call to Order

Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and a roll call was taken. The Alternates were asked to join the Board as voting members.

II) Minutes of Previous Meeting – February 24, 2025

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn to approve the February 24, 2025 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Armando Rangel and was unanimously approved.

III) Final Vote on Conditional Approvals

The Chair stated as a matter of practice, the Board will now issue 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. He asked whether there were any applications tonight that are ready for a final vote.

Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, stated there is one application this evening that is ready for a final vote. 36 Elliott Street, which is a Cottage Court Conditional Use Permit application, is ready for

a final vote. Ms. Brunner continued, stating that this application had two conditions precedent, which have been met.

Those conditions included the owner signature appears on the plans, and Submittal of final copies of the plans.

A motion was made by Roberta Mastrogiovanni that the Planning Board issue final site plan approval for PB-2025-02. The motion was seconded by Armando Rangel and carried on a unanimous vote.

IV) Public Hearing

- a) **PB-2024-20 – Earth Excavation Permit Major Amendment & Hillside Protection Conditional Use Permit – 21 & 57 Route 9 – Applicant Granite Engineering LLC, on behalf of owner G2 Holdings LLC, proposes to expand the existing gravel pit located at 21 & 57 Route 9 (TMP#s 215-007-000 & 215-008-000). A Hillside Protection CUP is requested for impacts to steep slopes. Waivers are requested from Section 25.3.1.D & Section 25.3.13 of the LDC related to the required 250’ surface water resource setback and the 5-ac excavation area maximum. The parcels are a combined ~109.1-ac in size and are located in the Rural District.**

A. Public Hearing

Mr. Justin Daniel of Granite Engineering addressed the Board and began by introducing Brent Cole, also with Granite Engineering, Joel Banaszak, Geologist, Louis Remor of Capital Drilling and Blasting and Cody Gordon, Applicant with G2 Land Holdings.

Mr. Daniel stated this property is located in Keene on Tax map 215, lot 7 and 8, and Sullivan on Map 5 Lots 46 and 46-1. He stated they will be going before the Town of Sullivan in April for the required Special Exception and Planning Board application for this project. He noted to Sheet 3, which represents the existing conditions plan. The current gravel operations received City approval in 2022.

He noted to the material processing area, which is approximately seven acres in size. He indicated there is an existing access road off Route 9 with Otter Brook to the south. The other key feature to this area is the sediment retention basin that collects the storm water associated with this pit and infiltrates it into the ground. The applicant is proposing an amendment to his application to expand his operation to the north.

The first phase would establish the operating area for the project. The area required to process and store the material is such a large size that it prohibits further excavation of the pit to what was approved. The approval back in 2022 included removing an additional 40 feet of material from this area.

Mr. Daniel went on to say this project either has Periods or Phases – this one would have eight. The pit areas will be accessed by the existing Hall Road where the operations area is located and continue into Sullivan.

Mr. Daniel stated the Periods or Phases are proposed as follows:

Period One will be when excavation begins just north of the operation material processing area.

Period Two would be just north of this area.

Periods Three and Four (reason for three and four) are because a portion of it crosses into Sullivan.

Periods Five, Six, and Seven are the northern portions which cross over into the Sullivan town line.

Period Eight is the final phase of the project. Once all phases are completed and reclaimed, Period Eight will occur. Operations will be moved off site and the remaining amount of material will be excavated - this was permitted in 2022.

He noted the large infiltration basin on the site and stated it will capture stormwater associated with the gravel pit.

Sheet 17 (page 134 of the packet): Reclamation being proposed.

Six months prior to the completion of a period, a permit renewal application will be submitted to the City prior to moving to the next phase. This will give the City time to review the period completeness and to verify reclamation has been completed.

Mr. Daniel addressed Permits and Waivers next. The application requires a conditional use permit and two waivers, which are the same waivers that were approved for the project in 2022.

The Conditional Use Permit is being requested for excavation on 15% to 25% slopes.

The first waiver is a Surface Water Resource Setback Waiver for excavation within 250 feet of a wetland. Mr. Daniel noted there are wetlands on the left and the right of the site. There is a requirement not to get any closer than 75 feet to the wetland.

The second waiver is for the maximum excavation area being no greater than five acres. The applicant has calculated the maximum excavation to be 12 acres. Once the phase is completed, the area will be restored and reclaimed before excavation would be done to the next area.

Mr. Daniel stated this project will require an ACS Alteration of Terrain Permit, which has been submitted for review. This project proposes no wetland impacts. He noted there was a site visit conducted recently with City Staff, and with the Planning Board and Conservation Commission members.

This concluded the applicant's comments.

Staff comments were next.

Ms. Brunner addressed the Board and indicated that the applicant has requested a continuation of this application to the May Planning Board Meeting, since the City's consultant, Fieldstone Land Consultants, is asking for a few items of clarification.

She indicated that the Conservation Commission suggested recommendations for this application. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the Planning Board consider the following with respect to this application:

The first item was greater consideration of a 100-year storm or flood event. This application uses the 50-year storm event, and the commission recommends using 100-year storm event. The Commission's reasoning is because storm events are increasing in intensity in general.

They also recommend further study into potential offsite impacts of acid mine drainage. One of the members of the commission is a geologist, a retired Keene State College professor, who was concerned about the material that is being mined from the site and how it would be used once it is sold.

The Commission also discussed the potential increase in the forest buffer with Route 9 and included native pollinator friendly plantings and considering trees to address the view from Route 9 in the remediation plan.

Ms. Brunner stated she wasn't sure if site impacts of acid mine drainage were within the Board's purview. The Board's purview is limited to site impacts. However, this was something that the Conservation Commission noted in their motion.

The Chair asked if the applicant had seen the Conservation Commission's recommendations and Fieldstone Land Consultants' report. Mr. Brent Cole answered in the affirmative. He added another reason for asking for a continuation is because the City has very strict regulations regarding acid mine drainage. He stated this is something they take very seriously and will be working with Fieldstone on this issue.

Mayor Kahn asked that traffic concerns be addressed with proper signage. Ms. Fortson stated that her understanding is that the applicant is not proposing any increase in traffic as part of this application, and they have resubmitted their initial traffic analysis from when the project was first approved in 2022. Although they are expanding the gravel pit, the applicant agreed that they were not proposing an increase in traffic. The Mayor encouraged more traffic signage at this location.

Ms. Fortson stated the application was recently reviewed by the City Engineer who indicated on March 12th that he had concerns about the existing paved access road radii. The City Engineer stated the access road radii need to be increased in order to support the traffic loading and associated turning movements into and out of the site. The existing turning movements extend outside of the pavement and will exacerbate the deterioration of the road. She stated this is something the applicant is working to address as part of the updated materials that need to be submitted.

The Chair asked for public comment next.

Mr. Bill Manley, abutter to this property, addressed the Board. He noted this hillside is referred to as the Nims Hill. He stated this proposal is a very serious regional activity, which would have negative consequences to the community and residents—especially those living within half mile—and permanent consequences to Nims Hill. Negative impacts to residents include the following: vibration, sound, dust, and possible contamination of wells. He stated his project will obliterate the southern knoll of Nims Hill, which would further impact the aesthetic nature of this area.

He went on to say that the potential for acid mine drainage is real. As described in the acid mine drainage report, the independent Fieldstone assessment, and the Southwest Regional Planning Commission's letter. In addition, as was noted in the Conservation Commission meeting of 17 March, the potential exists for gravel to be generated by the planned expansion to literally become a carrier of acid drainage/heavy metals to the users of that gravel.

Mr. Manley went on to say that this is a 13-year project. A proposed blasting plan for the duration of the project has not been provided. Potentially impacted residents have no way of knowing how often, or to what extent, blasting will occur. This project is largely unknown to the immediate and greater community. He felt residents should be notified of the duration of this project, its adverse impact and given a chance to express their concern.

He added G2 Holdings has undertaken excavation in Keene and Sullivan without permitting, and there is one complaint outstanding with the Department of Environmental Services. In addition, at the Conservation Committee meeting, Granite Engineering asserted that it is impossible to see the G2 quarry activities from Route 9. Mr. Manley noted to the view he had submitted from google maps, which shows the view currently with a 50-foot cliff and felt it would be drastically more with the 300-foot cliff.

In closing, Mr. Manley stated his recommendation would be pre-planning projects, and that a visualization of the final project should be provided. He also recommended an animated drive through of the view shed, starting at Sullivan County store to the entrance of the Army Corps of Engineer Otter Brook Lake, be constructed to visualize both the current impact that could be seen since the applicant is in denial of this and the impact should this plan be approved.

Second, a proposed blasting plan for the duration of the project should be submitted.

Third, to increase awareness and transparency, this project should appear at a minimum in the Sentinel and all residents within the potentially impacted half mile radius should be contacted as soon as possible, advising them of the potentially negative consequences of this project along with the proposed blasting plan.

Fourth, given that the potential exists for acid mine drainage and subsequent leaching of heavy metals into water supplies, this potential should be further studied by independent third parties prior to approval. In addition, the possibility of material extracted from the site being a carrier of acid and heavy metals should also be investigated.

Ms. Heidi Bukowski of 58 Eaton Hill Gilson Road addressed the Board and stated that she lives above the excavation pit of the Gorren Brothers in Gilsum. She stated she is unhappy with what has happened to their road. She stated she knows of a neighbor whose concrete floor has cracked because of this work, and they were never advised when blasting was going to occur. She knows of animals and people being shocked by this noise. This is a big change to the environment. Ms. Bukowski stated if anyone is interested in this work, they should visit Gilsum to see the impact this blasting has had on that area.

Mr. Cole asked for permission to address the concerns that were raised. Mr. Cole noted to snapshots provided to the Board on Route 3 traveling 55 miles an hour – he agreed the site can be seen but did not believe the ledge is unsightly and felt this is a common visual in New Hampshire. He explained this is how rock is extracted to construct roads. He added that a majority of the project is hidden from most of the view. He explained the reason for each phase, or period, is to give the City an opportunity to review that period before it closes. He indicated a bond would be posted and reclamation would occur before they go to the next phase; additionally, the City would need to be comfortable with the phase moving on. Mr. Cole stated there is a lot of Staff and Board oversight through the entire process. He added, similarly, in Gilsum there were notifications that were sent out according to the blasting schedule, which is state law. There was well monitoring and testing that happened—this is a very well-regulated industry from multiple facets. If there is more that the City wants to implement, the applicant will certainly be working with the planning board and staff.

He went on to say there are no 300-foot cliffs, as was mentioned, there are 50-foot segments. He noted Gilsum is a pit that was approved by DES and the town.

With no further comment, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

B. Board Discussion and Action

A motion was made by Roberta Mastrogiovanni that the Planning Board continue PB-2024-20 to the May 27, 2025 Planning Board meeting at 6:30 pm in the City Hall 2nd floor Council Chambers. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn and was unanimously approved.

V) Boundary Line Adjustment

- a) **PB-2025-05 – Cedarcrest and Monadnock View Cemetery - BLA – 521 Park Ave & 91 Maple Ave – Applicant ReVision Energy, on behalf of owners Cedarcrest and the City of Keene, proposes a lot line adjustment that would transfer ~1.7-ac of land from the ~46-ac parcel located at 521 Park Ave (TMP #227-027-000) to the ~5-ac parcel located at 91 Maple Ave (TMP #227-018-000). The Cedarcrest site is located in the Low Density District and the cemetery is located in the Conservation District.**
- b) **PB-2025-04 – Cedarcrest & Monadnock View Cemetery – Major Site Plan & Solar Energy System Conditional Use Permit – 521 Park Ave & 91 Maple Ave – Applicant ReVision Energy, Inc. on behalf of owners Cedarcrest, Inc. and the City of Keene, proposes to install a medium-scale solar energy system on ~1.7-ac of undeveloped land located at 521 Park Ave (TMP #227-**

027-000) to provide power to the Cedarcrest facility located at 91 Maple Ave (TMP #227-018-000). The City property is ~46-ac in size and is located in the Conservation District, and the Cedarcrest property is ~5-ac in size and is located in the Low Density District.

A. Board Determination of Completeness

For the Boundary Line Adjustment (PB-2025-05), Megan Fortson, Planner, stated the applicant has requested exemptions from submitting all technical reports as well as a plan showing the metes and bounds for all parcels. After reviewing each request, Planning Staff have made the preliminary determination that granting the requested exemptions would have no bearing on the merits of the application and recommend that the Board accept the application as complete.

A motion was made by Roberta Mastrogiovanni that the Board accept PB-2025-05 as complete. The motion was seconded by Armando Rangel and was unanimously approved.

For the Site Plan and Conditional Use Permit (PB-2025-04), Ms. Fortson stated the applicant has requested exemptions from submitting a plan showing grading/limits of clearing, a lighting plan, a decommissioning plan, traffic analysis, soil analysis, historic evaluation, screening analysis, and architectural and visual appearance analysis. After reviewing each request, planning staff have made the preliminary determination that granting the requested exemptions would have no bearing on the merits of the application and recommend that the Board accept the application as complete.

A motion was made by Roberta Mastrogiovanni that the Board accept PB-2025-05 as complete. The motion was seconded by Armando Rangel and was unanimously approved.

B. Public Hearing

Ms. Megan Ulin, Solar Project Developer with ReVision Energy, addressed the Board. She stated her company has been in business for over 20 years and has been very fortunate to work with the City of Keene in a number of different capacities through municipal projects and commercial and residential projects.

Ms. Ulin introduced Russ Huntley of Huntley Survey and Design, who was also present, as well as representatives from Cedarcrest, Jim Yannizze and Bethany Leclaire, and representatives from the City.

She stated for the past year or so, ReVision Energy has been working with Cedarcrest and the City to develop a project that would offset Cedarcrest's electricity use. This came from an agreement that ReVision Energy had with the City of Keene to explore solar development on several parcels of City owned land to further the City's goal of reaching 100% renewable energy use by 2030.

She noted Cedarcrest is a specialized medical and pediatric facility. They have a high electricity load that is required to provide critical services to the community. They do not have the

opportunity, on their current parcel, to build a solar energy system of a size that would reasonably offset a significant portion of their electric load. For the roof-mounted system, they don't have a roof of the scale or size necessary to provide that opportunity.

Ms. Ulin stated this opportunity is unique in that Cedarcrest directly abuts City property, and would have an opportunity to tie the system directly behind Cedarcrest's meter, which provides them a significant additional benefit. It reduces their demand and it allows their electricity load to be reduced directly by the solar, compared to just receiving a credit on their electricity bill. She pointed out that the City had to designate a portion of the Monadnock View Cemetery as a priority for solar development and without that direct connection to Cedarcrest, ReVision Energy would have been required to bring in a new three phase power line that is very costly and likely would not be supported by a system of this size.

Ms. Ulin went on to say the reason they are pursuing a boundary line adjustment was to simplify site ownership and site control going forwards rather than a long-term lease. Cedarcrest will purchase necessary land from the City to install the array. Secondly, the City offers solar energy property tax exemptions for residents and businesses, which means that when you install a solar array, you are not taxed on that property.

Ms. Ulin stated, if they had located this in the original location, it would have had a greater impact on the community gardens. The site now is at the northwest corner, further from visibility and meets the required 50-foot setbacks.

The Boundary Line Adjustment affects 91 Maple Avenue and 521 Park Avenue, transferring 1.69 acres in the conservation district from the City of Keene to Cedarcrest. The Cedarcrest parcel would increase from 5.01 acres to 6.7 acres and will contain land in the low density and conservation district. The City parcel decreases from 46 acres to 44.3 acres and remains fully within the conservation district. The access points to the property remain the same as the existing conditions.

With respect to standards for Boundary Line Adjustment:

20.2.1: Lots – The area of both adjusted lots will remain greater than 5 acres. The lots both meet the minimum requirements with 200 feet at the building line, 50-foot setbacks, no impact to the minimum road frontage for either parcel, and are not impacting any discontinued roads.

20.2.2: Character of Land for Subdivision – The area proposed for the BLA is a flat field suitable for development. It is absent of hazardous conditions that would pose a danger to health and safety.

20.2.3: Scattered and Premature Development – It does not promote either of these conditions as the solar development is proposed directly adjacent to the existing facility which will benefit from the electricity produced and the array itself does not use City services.

The applicant is not proposing significant landscape alterations in terms of tree line.

No grading or significant clearing is being proposed.

There is no impact on any scenic points, steep slopes, stone walls, or historic landmarks, or any primary or secondary conservation areas that are identified in section 20.3.4.

Monumentation – 5/8-inch aluminum capped rebar will be set on the corners.

Flood Areas – Not Applicable

Fire Protection and Water supply – The array does not require additional fire protection or water supply. However, there will be padlocks at the gates to provide access for the fire department of an event of emergency.

City Water and Sewer – Project does not require City water or sewer.

Ms. Ulin next addressed the site plan. She stated the proposed solar development is a 333.2 kw fixed tilt ground mounted solar array. This array produces around 364,900 kw hours of clean, renewable electricity per year, and will offset approximately 67% of Cedarcrest's existing electricity usage. The primary components of the system are the earth screws, which are the foundations. They are driven into the earth with relatively minimal disturbance. The rows of panels are oriented at 212° SW on the site location to optimize the system size within that area and to reduce shading. At their peak, the panels are approximately 13 feet tall, so they do meet the height requirements of the CUP. The inverters, transformers and electrical equipment are proposed to be located on the southern corner of the Cedarcrest building and will be screened with vinyl privacy fence.

For the array itself, a six-foot agricultural fence is being proposed, which is comparable to what has been used at other sites and is considered a wildlife fence. The wildlife fence will allow small critters to pass through to make use of the area's habitat.

The applicant is proposing re-seeding the area with a conservation seed mix, which has pollinator benefits.

There is also a proposal for a small swale along the north and southeast sides of the array, which is intended to ensure there is no off-site stormwater impacts.

There will be warning signage installed on the outside of the fence because of its proximity to public lands.

Construction is being proposed to occur this summer 2025 and will take three to four months to complete.

Existing and Proposed Use – What is being proposed is a collaboration with the City to relocate the current community gardens to the southwest area and redevelop this area as solar energy system.

Conditional Use Permit Criteria – This is considered a medium scale solar energy system by the land development code. It is approximately 3,233 square feet in size.

Siding – 16.2.1 – The lot will be greater than five acres once the boundary line adjustment occurs and the solar footprint is under one acre. Hence, it meets the requirement for siding.

Height – This system does meet the required height constraints and does not exceed 15 feet.

Lot coverage was calculated to include all ground-mounted components of the solar energy system, including the solar panels and the transformer. Solar land coverage would equal 15% and does not exceed 70%.

Ms. Ulin stated elevation drawings with dimensions have been submitted.

Visual Buffer 16.2.5 – Ms. Ulin stated they were before this Board last month for advice and comment on these criteria. This project location has been sided to reasonably minimize the view of the system from surrounding properties and public rights of way. It is located at the very rear northwest corner of the Monadnock View Cemetery, where there is very limited visibility from the public right of way. The existing planting buffer will remain. The City has submitted a letter in support of the existing screening.

Noise and Glare – Inverters are rated up to 60 dba during daylight hours. They only operate during daylight hours, so there will not be any noise impacts during evening hours. Inverters meet the criteria in the land development code for noise. They are also over 50 feet from any property line and will be enclosed by vinyl privacy buffers.

Security – Ms. Ulin stated there were some comments questioning the suitability of the fence to keep out trespassers. She indicated the fences they utilize are designed according to code requirements and there haven't been any instances of trespass or vandalism. She noted those instances are relatively rare and felt the perimeter fence should be suitable.

Utility Interconnection Requirements – Conduit will be buried, meeting the criteria to have underground lines. The decommissioning plan was not applicable for a medium scale solar array.

Drainage Requirements – Applicant did submit an updated drainage plan. When the applicant originally designed the project in this area, there was a small corner on the northeast that does slope. The panels were just on the line of the New Hampshire DES threshold for sheet flow. Per comments from City Engineer to prevent off site impact, a shallow swale has been proposed on the northeast and southeast sides.

Erosion Control – The system does not require a lot of grading or soil disturbance. There are wetlands on the City of Keene property. The wetlands are over 200 feet from the proposed development. There is a grinding berm being proposed along the side of the array, which faces the wetlands.

The general sequence of this installation would require bringing in a crew that does the foundation installation. Array structure would be built and associated electrical components

would be installed. The stormwater swale would be installed at the end of the project when the reseeded and revegetation is being done.

Ms. Ulin stated they have been working with the Parks and Rec Department to discuss the coordination and timing of this installation so that it does not interrupt cemetery operations. There is an agreement with the City to access using the cemetery entrance during construction. This concluded applicant's presentation.

Mr. Kost asked about the sound that comes out of the transformers and other electronic equipment. It states sound is minimal during the day and asked for clarification. Ms. Ulin stated the sound is like a hum. Mr. Kost asked whether people visiting the cemetery would hear the noise. Ms. Ulin answered in the negative as it is at a sufficient distance away and behind a vinyl fence.

Chair Farrington asked whether the conduits would be entirely on the Cedarcrest property. Ms. Ulin answered in the affirmative and referred to the location on the map.

Mr. Hoefer asked whether the undeveloped land without gardens on it located to the southwest was considered as an area for this array. Ms. Ulin stated this was the original location but because of the solar energy property tax exemption, Cedarcrest intends to purchase the land for the array, drawing that lot to meet the dimensional requirements is required by the Land Development Code and meeting the 50-foot setback would have a greater impact.

Staff comments were next.

Ms. Megan Fortson addressed the Board and stated this project contains three different types of applications. There is the boundary line adjustment for the transfer of 1.7 acres from the 46-acre cemetery City owned parcel to the currently 5-acre parcel owned by Cedarcrest. The two parcels are zoned differently. Cedarcrest is currently located within the low-density district and the cemetery parcel is located in the conservation district. Following the boundary line adjustment the portion transferred to Cedarcrest would be in a split zone.

The applicant is proposing to construct a medium scale solar array consisting of 560 individual solar panels. The Zoning Board, at their March 3 meeting, granted a variance. As mentioned, a portion of the parcel to be developed is located in the conservation district. The conservation district does not allow for a ground mounted solar array as a primary use. Hence, they were granted a variance from the zoning board to allow for that use. Because this array is approximately 33,000 square feet in size, it is classified as a medium scale solar array, which requires the submittal of a Solar Conditional Use Permit application and a Major Site Plan application to document the site changes.

Ms. Fortson went on to say that planning staff did not feel that either of these applications had the potential for regional impact.

In regards to department comments.

The Police Department had concerns about the six-foot tall agricultural fence that is proposed to be installed around the perimeter of the array. The only other staff comment received was from code enforcement, which is a reminder that a building permit is going to be required prior to the construction of the array.

Ms. Forston next reviewed the CUP Standards and Site Development Standards.

Setbacks - Article 16 of the LDC – The proposed array is going to be set back exactly 50 feet from a few of the property lines and 52 feet from one of the other property lines. Because of this, planning staff is recommending that the Board include a subsequent condition of approval related to the flagging of this setback by a surveyor licensed in the State of New Hampshire to ensure that that setback is properly maintained during construction.

Visual Buffer – The Board, at its prior meeting, had provided the applicant with the preliminary feedback that formal screening was necessary. The proposed conditions plan does show the existing tree line and other vegetated areas that are proposed to be maintained to provide screening. The Board would need to decide if the visual buffer and screening requirements have been met.

Environmental Section -16.2.6 – The narrative states that the disturbed areas will be re-vegetated with the conservation grass mix, which is going to be suited to solar installations. Planning staff are recommending the submittal of security to cover the cost of that conservation seed mix. This standard appears to be met.

Security – The Police Department did have concerns about the agricultural fencing, which has been proposed. The Board is going to need to make a determination as to whether or not this fence is sufficient.

The staff report addressed the concerns raised by the City Engineer regarding the proposed stormwater measures. The applicant has indicated under the New Hampshire DES requirements, they have provided what is sufficient. Further review with the engineer indicated he was satisfied with what is being proposed. That standard has been met.

Sediment and Erosion Control – The City Engineer was satisfied with what was being proposed as part of the sediment and erosion control measures. However, Staff recommend a security be included for this as well.

Traffic and Access Management – The applicant has stated they have permission from the City of Keene to use the cemetery site to access the property during the course of construction. Staff would recommend a condition of approval indicating the applicant has this approval from the City. The Engineer also recommended a condition of approval related to the addition of this note on the plan because the access aisle that is going to be used on the cemetery property during the course of construction is currently gravel. It is going to need to be somewhat improved to be used. City engineering staff would like to be part of that review. process and make sure that it is modified properly.

Ms. Fortson next reviewed the conditions of approval.

The Mayor indicated there also needs to be some consideration regarding the fence. Ms. Brunner noted in consideration of the comments around the fence, the agricultural fence has less of a visual impact than some of the alternatives. A chain link fence would have a bigger visual impact, so that would be the tradeoff. The Mayor stated he would like to hear from City Staff present tonight regarding what their preference is.

Ms. Fortson noted the letters the Board has received from members of the public regarding the community gardens, and while this array would impact the community gardens, this is being handled independently from this proposal. The Board is reviewing the application based on the applicable regulations—subdivision standards, site development standards under Article 21 of the Land Development Code, and solar conditional use permit standards. While the City will receive testimony related to the community garden, this is not something that the Board is actually deliberating or providing feedback on during the course of this meeting.

Mr. Kost asked whether the use of the cemetery access would be properly coordinated with internments. Ms. Fortson referred this question to Parks and Rec staff.

Chair Farrington referred to the fence and stated the regulation says the maximum height of the fence can be 8 feet, but the applicant is recommending 6 feet. The Chair asked whether staff has any further insight as to the Police Department's concern. Ms. Fortson stated their main concern is not necessarily the height of the fence but that they would probably prefer a chain link fencing with some barbed wire around the top.

The Chair asked for public comment next. He asked that public comment be kept to three minutes.

Mr. Peter Hansel of 61 Bradford Road addressed the Board next. Mr. Hansel stated he has been a member of the Energy and Climate Committee of the City of Keene and stated he is excited to see a solar project going forward. He stated one of the things the committee did was try to identify sites within the City that could take solar arrays, and Monadnock View Cemetery has been discussed as a potential site. As a City committee, they are devoted to implementing the City's resolution to achieve 100% renewable energy for electricity by 2030.

In identifying this site, they were under the impression there was plenty of room for a solar array that would not impact the community gardens. He stated he was disappointed when he heard that that this had changed and, possibly, even more disappointed when he heard that this change had not been communicated with people in the community that were involved with the community garden. He felt the City needs to work hard to try to rectify this miscommunication or lack of coordination. He stated he is aware this hearing is about the solar array and not about the community garden but felt they were both inner interconnected. Mr. Hansel stated he wanted to make his view clear that if there was anything that we as a City can do to coordinate and rectify this problem – it should be done.

The Chairman invited the Parks and Rec staff to address the Board.

Andy Bohannon, Deputy City Manager, addressed the Board and stated that this project has been in the planning phase for a while. He stated this is the only cemetery land the City has left in the City. He noted it was realized the original location would be costly to be able to provide a direct path for solar to Cedarcrest and the original location would have impacted more of the community garden. This new location for the garden would provide more room for growth and provide for irrigation possibilities. Mr. Bohannon also referred to a storage shed that was donated by Benson Wood, which would also be moved closer to the new garden location.

He stated the City works the best it can with users of this garden and has been fairly successful for the past eight years with the help of Roland Russell and the Antioch University Community Garden program. Mr. Bohannon stated Staff wanted to make sure this project was going to be viable before communicating to the growers that there was not going to be a growing season this year. Staff did indicate to the gardeners last fall that was possibly not going to be the case this year – but nothing was certain last fall.

With reference to the question related to the cemetery operations, Mr. Bohannon stated staff has been working very closely with ReVision Energy to understand the schedule. He stated the reason for the delay to July was because May and June were the heaviest burial time – the City averages about 16 burials during those months. The City gets 48-hour notice for burial request and will work with ReVision on those schedules to make sure construction is not happening during burial times.

Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, Parks and Recreation Director, stated since last month, they met with a group of community gardeners on two occasions as well as the Conservation Commission. She felt this proposal gives them the opportunity to relocate the garden, improve access, and increase opportunities for more people to participate.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated at the present time there are 17 gardeners, and 39 of the 61 plots are being used. The number of Keene resident plots are 35, non-Keene resident plots are four, and 12 are open plots. The current plot size is 19 x 25. What Staff is proposing moving forward is a combination of new opportunities. In the space that was originally planned for the solar array, 68 new 20 x 20 plots, 24 new 10 x 10 plots, which are being named kitchen plots, nine 4 x 8 raised beds and a 500 square foot pollinator garden. That total square footage equals 29,888 square feet and that is an improvement from the 61 plots that the City currently has in the existing community garden structure, which the total square footage is 28,975 square feet.

Ms. Fisk-Hennessey stated they are also working with Cheshire County Conservation District and Antioch University to try to identify alternate spaces for this year because staff understand that the communication was late in terms of starting seeds. Stonewall Farm and Cheshire Medical Center are possible options.

Mr. Bohannon addressed the fence issue and stated a conservation fence is more open and allows wildlife to get through. An 8-foot-high chain link fence would be very noticeable, but would keep the wildlife out of the area. He stated this space is very minimally used except for gardeners and occasional staff.

Mayor Kahn asked if Mr. Bohannon feels the 8 feet were more satisfactory. Mr. Bohannon stated an 8-foot conservation fence would work but stated this is not a high traffic area and a 6-foot fence could also work. He added he does not see much difference between a 6- and 8-foot conservation fence, which also help with critter travel. Ms. Ulin stated a conservation fence has larger openings on the bottom and added they don't typically install 8-foot fencing around their arrays. She stated these arrays don't pose public safety concerns when properly installed and encouraged a 6-foot fence.

Mr. Rowland Russell of 77 High Street was the next speaker. He stated they commend Cedarcrest and the City for this solar array installation, and any effort to move away from fossil fuels should be commended. He stated the gardeners were not included in any of the meetings regarding this issue but did meet with Staff during the second week of March, even though these plans have been discussed for a long time. He stated they are disappointed in not having a voice in this decision until today.

Mr. Russell stated in the 2010 Master Plan, it refers to solar arrays as being a step toward energy independence—then community gardens are a step toward food sovereignty and food security. He noted Cheshire County only produces 5% of its own food, which means community gardens and residential gardens are a resource that can help. He went on to say nationwide, community gardens produce about 40% of our fresh vegetables. In 1975, at the current location, there were 200 plots reserved with a waiting list. Keene's community garden has been in existence for over 50 years with significant improvements to irrigation and other infrastructure. Much has been done over the last five years, especially with thousands of dollars of external funding, donations, gardener contributions and in-kind support. Over \$15,000 of which is from the Cheshire County Conservation District, to add infrastructure, tools etc.

Mr. Russell pointed out that it is naive to think that a new garden could be built, infrastructure moved, soil health improved to the current state and pollinator habitat re-established without significant effort and expense on the part of the City. He explained you cannot simply transfer soil, for example, without disrupting the structure.

In April 2024, the Zoning Board unanimously approved variances to permit the installation of a solar array on undeveloped land adjacent to the community garden. It was indicated at the October 21, 2024 Conservation Commission meeting that the project was moving forward at that location. He encouraged reconsideration of the present plans to relocate the garden and take a careful look at whether those 2024 plans might balance Cedarcrest's needs with those of the gardens. Mr. Russell felt a complete cost-benefit analysis should be completed to also include the garden. He asked whether all interested parties, including our gardeners, collaborate to come up with an alternative plan to bring before the Planning Board at a later date. He asked the Board to consider this option, as the gardeners were not aware of this change until it was brought to their attention by one of their supporters.

Mr. Russell stated for the gardeners, gardening is not a hobby, it is a necessity.

Lastly, in addition to food – Mr. Russell stated they foster community in the community garden. They have tremendous expertise and heart that is brought into this gardening community and asked that it be preserved, because it is something that has been accumulated over the years.

Four-year-old Max addressed the Board with help from his mom. He talked about the seedlings he has grown and his disappointment with the closure of this garden. Max's mom Michelle Nikiforakis indicated she has been disappointed with the decision made by the City. She talked about how special the garden was for her and her son. Max has learned a lot about gardening. She indicated that they harvested hundreds of pounds of tomatoes, which they were also able to preserve. She indicated they have already purchased many different types of vegetables and perennials for the upcoming season. Last year they were told they did not have to till their garden patch, which meant some of the plants could be retained for the next year. She talked about the many plants she has grown over the years.

She indicated she saved hundreds of dollars from being able to eat from their garden.

Ms. Nikiforakis expressed her frustration with the City over the choice between solar and a community garden. She questioned how the money from the sale of the land will be used.

Autumn Delacroix of 618 Court Street asked what the decibel count of the noise would be from the solar panels. She asked that the size of the array be shrunk to give room for others.

Amy McIntire of 26 Barker Street was the next speaker. Ms. McIntire stated much planning goes into gardening. She raised concern about not having a garden in 2025 and even in 2026. Starting a new garden in a new location does not seem realistic. She questioned what happens to the perennials and infrastructure that already exists, which is not something that has been addressed. Ms. McIntire pointed out that she did not believe gardeners who have more knowledge of what it takes to start a garden have been included in this new plan.

Ms. Tammy Adams stated she understands the Board cannot address any of the gardening issues as they have to work within the Board's purview, but this does not mean the Board cannot send a strong message to the City Council. She felt the Council needs to hear that the tenants that the City had an agreement with for the gardens have property still on that land. There needs to be some sort of accelerated plan for these individuals to get their plants off that lot before July 1st—before the solar array construction begins. Ms. Adams stated she does not see a reason why the City cannot remove some of that rich worked topsoil and move it over to the adjacent plot. She felt this was a serious problem. Solar is great, but hungry people can't eat solar—they can eat food from a garden plot.

Ms. Toni Barker of 8 Russell Street stated she has been a gardener at the community gardens for about nine years. Ms. Barker stated that for the five years, they have produced over 600 pounds of cherry tomatoes, peas, green beans, potatoes, onions, etc. for the Keene Community Kitchen. Without the garden this year, this would be a huge void the Kitchen is not going to be able to fill, especially in today's economic times. Ms. Barker stated she feeds her family from this garden. She questioned how she is supposed to supplement her food source this year when they are just finding out that they are not going to have a garden. She asked the City to consider either moving

it this year and being able to open it with the help from the gardeners or moving the solar panels back to where they were originally supposed to be located.

Ms. Sarah Harpster of 32 Old Walpole Road stated she worked at the Community Kitchen and saw produce that was coming in from this community garden. She stated this community garden has a special longevity and a social capital that some of the other projects weren't able to create and sustain. She stated she is concerned about the food security that people are going to experience going into this year. She stated the numbers at the Kitchen are going up by 40% over 2023, and they are seeing, day by day, news of slashed funding. Meanwhile, the price of food in the grocery store is 25% more than it was pre-pandemic. For people to lose the opportunity to garden in 2025 would be a tragedy, and it would also be sad for the Community Kitchen to lose some of the best produce that was put on their tables.

Ms. Tia Zendauer of 287 Elm Street stated she too supports solar and Cedarcrest but does not want to be displaced from the community garden. She questioned if there was public notice or does there have to be public notice in the City of Keene that a piece of land was being sold. Was it open for bids? She felt the community garden could perhaps have purchased this land given the opportunity.

Amanda Littleton of 20 Horseshoe Road in Chesterfield addressed the Board next. Ms. Littleton stated she is here in the capacity as the Conservation District Manager for Cheshire County. She thanked the City for their support with community gardens. She stated, as Mr. Hansel suggested, it would be great to find a solution to retain the garden in its current location and place the solar array in an alternate location. She noted that the Conservation District and many community partners who have linked arms with the Monadnock View Community Garden to support community self-reliance and food security and the wise use of natural resources in the City. Over the past two years, they have received two grants to work with the Monadnock View Community Garden and invested about \$15,000 in garden infrastructure equipment and supplies. This includes a shed, water spigots garden tools, pollinator habitat, native plant hedgerow, and more.

She added they are only one partner. These funds have been significantly leveraged by the investments of other partners, including Benson Wood, Antioch Community Garden Connections, the New England Grassroots Fund, and other regional nurseries who have donated significant plants for this effort as well. These public and private community partners do see value in what is happening at the community garden and the individuals here have a deep passion.

The priorities at the conservation district are about supporting soil health, efficient water management and wildlife habitat, including for native pollinators. The gardeners at the Monadnock View Community Garden have implemented these practices to demonstrate these priorities in action and invested much of their own time, money and effort into this as well.

Ms. Little stated this site is a center for community education, not just for the gardeners who are involved, but also for the larger community. She thanked the City again for the decades of support, but encouraged the City to consider the impacts of the move on the gardeners and the financial investments that have been made. She felt it would take significant City resources to be

able to create a new site as well as the time and resources of the gardeners. She stated she would like to encourage the City to collaborate with the gardeners on a solution and keep a transparent and respectful process moving forward to consider how we could work together to craft a new plan.

Mr. David Morrell of Mechanic Street stated he would like to first express his frustration with the lack of transparency of this project. He stated one of the main stakeholders, the gardeners, were left out from the beginning and not consulted on this plan. As for the importance of the community gardens, others have pointed out that the City's goals regarding community gardens are clear and explicit throughout the master plans. Community gardens are important for food security as well as climate change, resilience and mitigation.

Mr. Morrell stated he knows renewable energy is also included in the master plan, but trading farmland for solar panels is not a plan for sustainability. Solar panels belong on roofs, above parking lots. They don't belong on land more appropriate for growing food. In addition to the issues of food security and climate change, community gardens are an important part of a resilient City, especially during disasters. Community gardens help strengthen social interactions, relieve stress and build social capital that is needed when a disaster strikes. Planning and establishing community gardens, prior to a disaster, help increase community resilience in the event of a significant disaster, whether natural or human-caused.

Mr. Morrell stated gardens should be designed with features that encourage social interaction and group gardening activities to enhance feelings of control and normalcy and reduce stress. They should be managed to support appropriate community building activities and events. In short, we need more, bigger and thoughtfully-designed community gardens, not fewer small gardens squeezed in where they are deemed out of the way. They need to be valued, not disregarded, for the expedience of another project.

With respect to security concerns, he felt the police should be consulted. He added that he grew up in Maple Acres and recalled cutting through that pathway from the church, through the community gardens and would be surprised to hear that it is not being used as a through way.

Mr. Andy Holt of Forest Street felt it was a mistake not to include the gardeners in today's decision. He stated the gardeners were not at the Zoning Board due to lack of communication. He felt this project should not move forward with all the input that has been received. He felt the people who use the gardens should be included in this plan and the City should be working on correcting that.

As far as the location of the solar, Mr. Holt stated there was talk about setbacks needing to be 50 feet and trying to comply with that. The location of the garden is better for the setbacks. He felt it is a matter of what the City's priorities are—setbacks and the zoning or the existing use of the land. He reiterated the difficulty of moving the garden. He pointed out that there seems to be a lot of discussion about fencing, but the Board is not discussing the garden and the impact it has on the community.

Ms. Sandy Hunt of 33 Barker Street felt the City should make it work in its original location so that there is less disruption on the community garden. She stated she is a supporter of solar and asked if the project could work in its original location.

Heidi Bukowski of 58 Eaton Hill Gilsum read the following letter for the record:

Dear members of the Planning Board. I am here today on behalf of my gardening friends to help support their plea to allow the Monadnock View Community Garden to remain where it is currently located and so that another location can be chosen for the Cedarcrest Solar Energy system to be utilized. I am also a Planning Board member and I was asked to be on a committee that is called Soul Smart that is run by the Clean Energy New Hampshire. I do support solar and alternate energy sources. What I feel has occurred in this situation was miscommunication and misunderstanding of a piece of land where the Monadnock View Community Gardens are located. This group of gardeners who are being asked to move are upset for a number of reasons, which I will not get into because they all have. But what I feel we need is to compare the benefits for the positive aspects of both the community garden and the solar array.

The two things I need you to realize is that mental health and food insecurity are a part of community gardens. Did you know that working in the soil and digging in the earth can improve your mental health? It has been proven time and time again that having people who feel isolated, depressed, insecure can benefit from their outdoor time in the sunshine and working the soil. This also has a huge benefit to the gardeners, their families and the people that are gathering at the Monadnock View Community Garden from which we heard from Michelle, her son, learning about growing their own fruit, sharing their knowledge with others as the young and the old intermix. It is a beautiful, healthy thing to have right here in our own community of Keene.

Next are facts I gathered from the Feeding America website. Did you know that over 8000 community members in Cheshire County are food insecure. Specifically, 13% of all the Cheshire County children are also suffering from food insecurity. Monadnock View Community Garden is doing a huge service to the Keene community where it has provided additional healthy vegetables to be brought to the community kitchen. I know this first-hand, because I was an employee at the Community Kitchen and the extra vegetables from other community gardens have always made the clients attend the community kitchen who are in need of these weekly boxes that are so happy to receive these freshly grown items.

There is a need for the garden to continue doing what it has been doing. It is a great community connection between those that are giving and those that are in need. I also wanted to mention there are plots being used by gardeners who are providing their own families with food as we've heard to allow their monthly food budget to go further. We all know the grocery store costs have been increasing and community garden allows people to use their time, energy and knowledge to prevent more food insecurity from occurring in the City of Keene.

Now to the benefits of solar, it can be a better environmental resource to save on the use of fossil fuels. Yes, it can allow Cedarcrest to offset their cost of energy and yes, it's a great idea; however, please allow the Monadnock View Community Garden to do their beneficial projects and good while Cedarcrest locates to another location for their own solar benefits.

Thank you for listening. I am a concerned and active citizen, which at the bottom you'll see all the things I'm involved in who cares about this procedural process and I hope that this situation will have a positive outcome with accepting all the positives of the Monadnock View Community Garden as one to be preserved and applauded, while also working to find a better, more reasonable location for the solar system to benefit Cedarcrest.

Mr. Rowland Russell stated he wanted to clarify some statistics regarding the plots that are not being used by gardeners at the community garden. The cost for six of them have been graciously covered by the City of Keene, so that we can grow for the Community Kitchen. Four of them are long standing pollinator plots that were part of another project. There are two other plots that they are allowed to use. The garden has been fully subscribed for the last two years with a waiting list.

Mr. Mike Miller of 365 East Surry Road stated they have a solar array on their house. He questioned some of the locations on the map. He asked why the array could not be separated and moved to different location so the garden does not have to be moved. He asked whether Cedarcrest could provide their comments on this proposal.

Mr. Jim Yannizze, Finance Director for Cedarcrest, stated they have been working with ReVision for quite some time on this project. Their intention is not to disrupt anything, but rather to offset their electric costs. Cedarcrest provides medical and educational care for children with disabilities. As the Director of Finance, they have a very high electricity cost in the summertime and are trying to figure out how to offset some of those costs. Solar energy is certainly a viable path forward for them. They have looked at the other options and this seemed to be the option.

Ms. Ulin stated it was always their plan to co-exist with the garden and expressed appreciation for Staff time for developing a relocation plan. As far as some of the questions that were raised, they have thoroughly looked at the options for Cedarcrest on this parcel and this location is the best path forward to having both the garden and solar in this area.

With respect to noise, the Land Development Code specify 60 decibels during daytime operations. This is included in the spec. sheets that were submitted and the array would be enclosed by a barrier that will dampen noise.

Ms. Nikiforakis addressed the Board and stated her understanding is that in the manufacturing world anything above 35 decibels requires ear protection. She indicated with the buffers it might not be severe, but you are supposed to be 5,200 feet away from solar panel noise.

Mr. Bohannon addressed the committee again. He stated Staff will confirm numbers related to garden plots. He stated the two grants that the City received went through the City Council process. He stated Staff did meet with Mr. Russell and, based on that meeting, revised the initial drawings drawn up by the engineering department. He stated he recognizes the biggest challenge this group is facing is with soil quality and stated this is one of the things Staff will be following up with Mr. Russell. He stated the garden beds will be laid out this spring covered and cultivated for 2026 and can certainly work with the gardeners related to skimming the soil that is there now, cultivating that within a pile or placing it in beds to prepare the soil for 2026. He stated they had

requested gardeners to remove their belongings in early November. Some gardeners had asked for the winter planting of garlic and the City accommodated that. He felt there was a strong plan for 2026.

With no further comment, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

C. Board Discussion and Action

A motion was made by Roberta Mastrogiovanni the Planning Board approve PB-2025-05 as shown on the plan identified as boundary line adjustment prepared by Huntley Survey and Design PLLC, at a scale of 1"= 60 feet on March 6, 2025 with the following conditions precedent.

Prior to final approval and signature of the plans by the Planning Board Chair:

1. Owner's signature appears on the proposed BLA plan.
2. Submittal of four full-size paper copies and two mylar copies of the plans.
3. Submittal of a check in the amount of \$26 made out to the City of Keene to cover recording fees.
4. Inspection of lot monuments by the Public Works Director or their designee following their installation or the submittal of a security in a form and amount acceptable to the Public Works Director to ensure that the monuments will be set.

The motion was seconded by Armando Rangel.

Mr. Hoefer clarified a positive vote on this would transfer property to Cedarcrest and asked whether there was a financial component to the transfer. Ms. Brunner stated any sale of City property has to go through City Council for approval, and then once City Council approves it, it would be up to the City Manager to negotiate the sale. She stated she believes the City is selling the land but wasn't sure of the exact amount.

With respect to how property transactions work, the Mayor stated those can be confidentially taken up in non-public session by the City Council with empowerment to the City Manager to then negotiate terms and see if that can happen. Regarding why it was not publicly noticed. He stated no property transaction is ever publicly noticed until after a sale has occurred.

Mr. Kost asked once the Board approves the transfer, and the land is no longer owned by the City, does the City have less input into the site development. The Chair stated if the boundary line adjustment is not approved it would not make sense to move forward with the site plan approval. Mr. Kost stated there has been a lot of discussion about alternatives. He felt perhaps the Board should think about a little grace on the 50-foot setbacks and place this into a smaller footprint. Mr. Kost stated he wanted to make sure the Board was not precluding that discussion. Megan Fortson Planner stated she wanted to clarify that things like setbacks are requirements that live under the zoning code, and this ground mounted solar array is considered a structure that is subject to the setbacks for the conservation district in which it is proposed to be located. If the applicant proposed a setback that was less than 50 feet, that is something that would need to go to the Zoning Board for approval, this is not under the purview of the Planning Board.

Ms. Mastrogiovanni stated as a Planning Board, they do not have a choice to change what is happening tonight as a gardener and as a supporter of the Community Kitchen encouraged the City to work with the gardeners, but stressed as a Board their hands are tied.

Mayor Kahn stated he would like to have a review as to the reason this site was selected. Mr. Bohannon addressed the Board and stated the site was selected because the City had originally planned on the side where the community gardens are proposed for 2026. Looking at that parcel, it became evidently clear to the City working the negotiation between the City and ReVision Energy, that property tax exemption and the boundary line adjustment was very complicated. It was not going to benefit Cedarcrest in a way that was beneficial for a solar array on their property. It would have to be a lease, which really complicated the matter.

The entire parcel in the very rear portion of the site is not desirable for future cemetery improvements. To meet zoning requirements, the location needed to be moved to this location and to provide Cedarcrest with the tax benefits that were to come with solar.

Mr. Hoefer asked what the public process would be for this project after a vote today. The Chair stated for Planning Board decisions, there is a process where there is a period where abutters have a chance to appeal decisions.

Ms. Brunner added, due to a recent change in state law, the only people who legally can appeal a decision need to have “standing.” If you are an abutter, in which you live within 200 feet of the property boundary, you are automatically considered to have “standing” and you can appeal within 30 days of the final decision. Otherwise, Ms. Brunner stated she thinks someone would have to appeal the court to get abutter status and then can appeal. Ms. Brunner went on to say the Planning Board’s decision tonight is whether the proposal meets Board standards. This project did require a variance, which is also a decision that can be appealed. Although Ms. Brunner believed that the appeal period of 30-day appeal time has mostly lapsed. The appeal would be from the date of final approval. What is happening tonight is what is called conditional approval. The 30-day appeal clock doesn’t start until final approval is issued for the application.

Mayor Kahn stated he finds himself thinking about three topics that are coming together here. Keene has an amazing facility with Cedarcrest. As Mr. Hansel stated, solar aligns with Keene’s community energy goals and the community is moving forward in those directions. Then there is the community garden, and the City could have some conflict if there isn’t a satisfactory plan going forward. He stated he was encouraged when he learned Mr. Bohannon and Ms. Fisk-Hennessey tried to put forward a forward-looking plan but is learning tonight there are some potholes in this plan. He agreed this was a difficult decision, but the decision tonight is whether the site plan is in compliance with the City’s land use codes and based on the testimony, he can support that, recognizing there is still one project that still needs to be resolved in a better way.

The motion to approve the boundary line adjustment carried on a unanimous vote.

A motion was made by Roberta Mastrogiovanni that the Planning Board approve PB-2025-04 as shown on the plan set identified as “Cedarcrest Inc.; Solar Site Development” prepared by

Horizons Engineering at varying scales in February 2025 and last revised in March 2025 with the following conditions:

1. Prior to final approval and signature of the plans by the Planning Board Chair, the following conditions precedent shall be met:
 - a. A note shall be added to the proposed conditions plan to state that the access road to the cemetery shall be upgraded with additional gravel to support construction vehicles as determined necessary by the City of Keene.
 - b. Owners' signatures appear on the title page and proposed conditions plans.
 - c. Submittal of five (5) full sized paper copies and a digital copy of the final plans.
 - d. Submittal of a security in a form and amount acceptable to the Community Development Director or designee to cover the cost of sediment and erosion control measures and site stabilization.
 - e. The lot line adjustment PB-2025-05 shall receive final approval.
2. Subsequent to final approval and signature of the plans by the Planning Board Chair the following conditions shall be met:
 - a. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the submittal of documentation demonstrating that the City of Keene has granted Cedarcrest the right to use the Monadnock View Cemetery for temporary site access during construction.
 - b. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the required 50' setback line shall be pinned by a surveyor licensed in the State of NH and prior to the commencement of site work, verified by the Community Development Director, or their designee.
 - c. Prior to the commencement of site work, all sedimentation and erosion control measures including the temporary construction access through the cemetery shall be improved as necessary and inspected by the Community Development Director, or their designee.

The motion was seconded by Armando Rangel.

Mr. Mehu noted, while it's not a legal document, does the master plan give any legal standing to take into consideration cultural resources or agricultural resources. Ms. Brunner stated the master plan is not a regulatory document. The Planning Board regulations do take that into account and come up more under the Subdivision Regulations, but it is something the Board can consider with the review of the application.

The Chair asked if anyone wanted to address regional impact. Mr. Rangel stated this project does not have a regional impact as defined.

Chair Farrington stated he was empathetic to the gardeners and stated he and his wife are fortunate to have room on their property for gardening. On the other hand, if an individual who owned this property was not the City, they grew food but now decided to sell the property and wanted to build houses, is that better or worse for the community. He stated it could be looked at in both ways. However, by the time this proposal came to the Planning Board, the Board's purview would only be around the houses that were being built. This is the process we are in; by the time it comes before the Board it is difficult to re-engineer the plan.

Mr. Hoefer agreed with the Chairman and stated he would vote in favor.

The motion to approve the site plan carried on a 7-1 vote with Mr. Mehu voting in opposition.

VI. Master Plan Update (www.KeeneMasterPlan.com)

Ms. Brunner stated the Master Plan project is underway and it is in the midst of going through the task force meetings. Four task forces met last week for the third and final time and the other two are meeting this week, which will wrap up the task force portion. Behind the scenes, the consultants are working with Staff to develop draft chapters and work on much of the actual writing of the document. There was a recent meeting with the steering committee and a great presentation from the Chamber of Commerce about an initiative called Magnified Monadnock that talks about trying to build the workforce in our area. Ms. Brunner encouraged the Board to read those meeting minutes.

The next step would be the Steering Committee meeting next week. There will be a presentation from the 8th graders of Keene Middle School regarding their recommendation with respect to the Environmental Pillar of the master plan. There will also be a presentation from Southwest Regional Planning Commission regarding regional transportation planning initiatives. The Steering Committee is going to be given an opportunity to provide their input into how they would like to see Keene developed in the future.

Following that, there will be the launch of an online story map, which will summarize much of the input that was received from the task forces. This will be put out to the broader community with a short questionnaire that goes along with it. The online discussion boards will continue to be open through the end of March. At the end of April, there will be another component added to the story map to show the draft of the future land use map. There will be a prioritization survey sent to the Planning Board, City Council and other City senior leadership to try and prioritize some of those strategies. The last item would be the June 3rd Future Summit. This event is when the City will unveil the draft plan to the public and get another round of feedback before it enters the formal adoption phase.

VII. Staff Updates

None

VIII. New Business

a) Planning Board Updates on Administrative Approvals

Ms. Brunner stated at the last Planning Board Steering Committee meeting there was a discussion about the possibility of having more regular updates on administrative approvals. She reminded the Board under their Site Development Standards, there are two sections. One is in the Site Development Standards and Subdivision Standards and the other place is in Article 26, in which it outlines application procedures. Article 26 of the Land Development Code is where it specifies the different thresholds for different levels of planning review. Above a certain

threshold, a project comes to the Board as a major site plan. There is a middle tier, which goes to the Minor Project Review Committee, and below that threshold, it gets reviewed administratively by Staff. This is something the Board has delegated to Staff and Staff have been reporting out on those administrative approvals once a year, which is usually at the end of the calendar year. She asked whether this frequency was sufficient for the Board.

Ms. Brunner noted the Historic District Commission has requested quarterly updates, however, in practice it has turned out to be more like once every six months because they don't meet every month. The Chair stated the other question would be are the thresholds set correctly.

Ms. Mastrogiovanni felt it would be prudent to have a report out more than once a year – perhaps once every six months.

Ms. Brunner stated they could bring back an in-depth review for next month.

IX. Upcoming Dates of Interest

- Joint Committee of the Planning Board and PLD – April 14th, 6:30 PM
- Planning Board Steering Committee – April 8th, 12:00 PM
- Planning Board Site Visit – April 23rd, 8:00 AM – To Be Confirmed
- Planning Board Meeting – April 28th, 6:30 PM

X. MORE TIME ITEMS

- a) **Training on Site Development Standards – Snow Storage, Landscaping, & Screening**

XI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 10:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Emily Duseau, Planning Technician

Additional edits by,
Katriona Kibler, Clerk's Office