

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Kate M. Bosley, Chair
Philip M. Jones, Vice Chair
Robert C. Williams
Edward J. Haas

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager
Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney
Paul Andrus, Community Development
Director
David Hickling, Airport Director

Members Not Present:

Andrew M. Madison

Chair Bosley called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

1) Keene SwampBats - Request to Discharge Fireworks - July 25, 2025

Chair Bosley welcomed the applicant, Kevin Watterson, Keene SwampBats President. Mr. Watterson explained that the SwampBats initially planned to request three nights of fireworks in 2025 as they have during some years in the past, typically on opening night, Independence Eve, and the last game of the season. However, it is a small town, and they learned the Council might have felt the SwampBats were over-requesting fireworks displays. In deference, Mr. Watterson said they are only requesting two display dates this year. In addition to their Independence Eve event, they would request fireworks for the last Friday of the season as usual, which is a big night for the SwampBats when they recognize host families, so they think fireworks are appropriate.

Chair Bosley appreciated the SwampBats following the Council's conversation about fireworks and she knew the Council saw the SwampBats annually. Chair Bosley explained the Council was working on an Ordinance putting parameters around the discharge of fireworks in any one location in an attempt to not fully burden one City District, while still allowing more than three displays in the municipality. Chair Bosley knew there was another request for fireworks at this location later on the agenda, so this would leave room for that.

Chair Bosley requested staff comments and the City Manager, Elizabeth Ferland, said there were no staff concerns with this request.

Councilor Williams thanked Mr. Watterson, stating it was very thoughtful to leave space for others. Councilor Williams asked if Mr. Watterson had feedback on the City's fireworks

permitting process (e.g., challenges, areas to improve). Mr. Watterson said in terms of permitting, he could not praise the Fire and Police Departments more. The Departments were instrumental in ensuring the SwampBats completed all licensing aspects appropriately with Atlas Fireworks, and Mr. Watterson added that the Departments are great at the events. Councilor Williams was glad to hear it, noting how proud the City is of its Fire and Police Departments.

Vice Chair Jones thought he might be the only one in the room who remembered that the Elm City Rotary previously ran the Independence Day Celebration. Mr. Watterson agreed. When the Rotary could unfortunately no longer secure volunteers and the City thought there would be no more Independence Day fireworks, Vice Chair Jones said the SwampBats picked it up and ran with it, calling it a tremendous comeback for celebrating Independence Day. Vice Chair Jones thanked Mr. Watterson for it. Mr. Watterson said it spoke to who the SwampBats are, citing their tagline of “community wrapped in baseball”—they spend 80% of their time on community and 20% on baseball, and he said baseball is easy. So, he appreciated the Vice Chair’s comments. Chair Bosley noted her teenagers were excited for the season, which Mr. Watterson was glad to hear.

There were no public comments.

Councilor Williams asked about the first game. Mr. Watterson explained the players would arrive on May 31, 2025, and their games would begin on June 3, 2025. They play six nights per week for a total of 44 games. In 2024, nine SwampBats were drafted in the Major League Baseball draft, of which they were very proud. However, Mr. Watterson thought they were probably proudest of gathering 5,000–6,000 people for Independence Eve, calling it a special night. Councilor Williams loves the opportunity to call Keene a baseball City.

Councilor Williams made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Vice Chair Jones.

On a vote of 4–0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the Keene Swamp Bats be granted permission for the discharge of display fireworks on Friday, July 25, 2025 on Alumni Field at no later than 10:00 PM, and reserving a “rain date” to be determined in conjunction with City staff in the event of inclement weather. Said permission is subject to following conditions: the signing of a revocable license and indemnification agreement; that the Keene Swamp Bats provide a certificate of liability insurance with the City of Keene listed as additional insured in the amount of \$1,000,000; that the fireworks vendor also provide a certificate of liability insurance with the City of Keene listed as additional insured in the amount of \$1,000,000; submittal of a signed letter of permission from SAU 29 for use of their property; and obtainment of a State Fireworks permit. In addition, the petitioner agrees to comply with any recommendations of City staff. The Petitioner agrees to absorb the cost of any City services provided. Said payment shall be made within 30 days of the date of invoicing.

**2) Jim Coppo/Jimmy Tempesta - Request to Discharge Fireworks - First Responder
Appreciation Community Day - August 24, 2025**

Chair Bosley welcomed the applicant, Jim Coppo, who noted his co-applicant, Jimmy Tempesta, could not attend. Mr. Coppo explained this would be the second year of the event honoring police, fire, and all other first responders. The event would include a softball game (a big hit the first year), touch-a-truck, music, and the public showing appreciation to the first responders. There was a large, blue carpet event at Mr. Tempesta's business—Tempesta's Restaurant—promoting this, with 330 police officers (86 from Keene) and their families, Mayor Kahn, Governor Ayotte, senators, and a congresswoman. Mr. Coppo explained that he and Mr. Tempesta go above and beyond on Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas annually to feed all the police officers who are working. This led to them establishing the First Responder Appreciation Community Day in 2024, when they feed all first responders in the City and counties who attend and have the “battle” games (e.g., softball) between the City and various counties and inter-counties, as well as fire vs. police. In 2024, the Fitzwilliam Police Department had a car show, and there were 200 exotic cars and trucks on display. The event ended with the fireworks, and Mr. Coppo said it was special, with colors and music themed for the first responders. In 2024, the event was August 18, but in speaking with Mr. Watterson (SwampBats President), the organizers wanted to help spread their events out more, so they requested August 24 instead. Mr. Coppo hoped for better weather this year.

Chair Bosley knew the first responders, and the City appreciated the great first event in 2024. Councilor Haas appreciated the organizers' flexibility with the date, saying it was nice to spread things out, and added that it would be nice to have an end-of-August fireworks display before school starts. Vice Chair Jones also expressed appreciation for having attended and enjoyed the first event. The Vice Chair thought this event said a lot about Keene and thanked the organizers.

Mr. Coppo stated he and Mr. Tempesta only did it because they could and wanted to. They both have great pride, citing their many family members who were first responders, including Mr. Coppo's son (police officer), daughter (emergency services), and brother-in-law (Fire Department). The event is an opportunity to shake all their hands and thank them for their service. Mr. Coppo expressed emotion, citing the day-to-day realities first responders face, which he was aware of as a family member, so the point of the event was to allow them and their families to relax for a day. Chair Bosley said the organizers' care showed, noting it likely took a whole year to coordinate, and she thought the Council was excited to support it again. The City Manager keeps the Council aware of the Fire and Police Departments' hard work. Chair Bosley was glad the counties were included, too. Discussion ensued about the excitement surrounding the competitions between the City, counties, and fire and police, but all would be in good fun.

Regarding the fireworks, Mr. Coppo stated that they were very mindful of the noise, and the display was intended to add something special. Everything was arranged with the SAU, Police and Fire Departments, and Atlas Fireworks. He said they wanted to keep the event in the City of Keene. Mr. Coppo hoped every community member would come to thank the first responders.

Councilor Williams asked if Mr. Coppo had any feedback on the permitting process (e.g., challenges, areas for improvement). Mr. Coppo noted he was unfamiliar with the process in the first year and therefore behind on things, so this year they were able to have everything in place in advance. They were also cognizant of the dates, as mentioned. He shared in 2024, there were \$1 million worth of corvettes, police and firefighters, NH Police on motorcycles, a BearCat, and more highlights. Mr. Coppo reiterated that the thanks belonged to the first responders, not the organizers, but he appreciated the support.

There were no public comments.

Vice Chair Jones made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Councilor Haas.

On a vote of 4–0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that Jim Coppo and Jimmy Tempesta for the First Responder Appreciation Community Day, be granted permission for the discharge of display fireworks on Sunday, August 24, 2025, on Alumni Field at no later than 10:00 PM. Said permission is subject to following conditions: the signing of a revocable license and indemnification agreement; that Jim Coppo and Jimmy Tempesta for the First Responder Appreciation Community Day, provide a certificate of liability insurance with the City of Keene listed as additional insured in the amount of \$1,000,000; that the fireworks vendor also provide a certificate of liability insurance with the City of Keene listed as additional insured in the amount of \$1,000,000; submittal of a signed letter of permission from SAU 29 for use of their property; and obtainment of a State Fireworks permit. In addition, the petitioner agrees to comply with any recommendations of City staff. The Petitioner agrees to absorb the cost of any City services provided. Said payment shall be made within 30 days of the date of invoicing.

Chair Bosley reiterated her appreciation, noting the Fire and Police Departments appreciated it too, and she was sure Mr. Coppo's son did as well.

3) Keene Family YMCA - Request for Road Closure - Summit Road - June 8, 2025

Chair Bosley welcomed the applicant, Kelly Fleurette, Senior Program Director for Keene Family YMCA. Ms. Fleurette indicated they are requesting closure of Summit Road on June 8, 2025 for the fourth YMCA Youth Triathlon. Ms. Fleurette anticipated 80–100 kids for the 2025 event. Chair Bosley recalled that Vice Chair Jones lived in this neighborhood and in past years, the Vice Chair mentioned the YMCA communicated the road closure well to all neighbors, which Chair Bosley assumed was happening again this year. Ms. Fleurette said yes. Chair Bosley said the City never received feedback in past years that neighbors were inconvenienced or struggled, so she appreciated the YMCA's efforts.

Chair Bosley asked the City Attorney if there were other instances of regular road closure requests like this in the City, for which at some point City Council extended the ability for the Clerk's office to administratively approve the annual request. The City Attorney, Amanda Palmeira, said it was something staff could explore, and she wanted to compare to past instances

for her own context. The Attorney was mindful that NH statute places management of roads and road closures in the City Council's hands, so it would automatically be the Council's responsibility to create a structure delegating it to staff. The City Attorney wanted to ensure it could be a sound system staff could check in on about it regularly going before the Council.

Chair Bosley asked for other staff comments on this application. City Manager, Elizabeth Ferland, reported from the Protocol Committee that the Public Works Department recommended soft barriers to facilitate closure at Summit Road by the YMCA entrance. The barriers would be delivered Friday before the event. The Police Department would provide an officer and cruiser for the duration of the event. The City Manager said the licensee was required to request police coverage by completing and submitting an outside detail request form and verifying the soft barriers are appropriately placed for the bike race portion of the event. Runners must stand on the sides of the road and not attempt to stop, block, or control vehicle traffic along the race route. The City Manager said everything was in order and there were no concerns from the Protocol Committee. Ms. Fleurette noted the footraces occur on the YMCA property (grass) and only the bike portion would be on the roadway.

There were no public comments.

Councilor Haas made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Vice Chair Jones.

On a vote of 4-0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the City Council grant permission to the Keene Family YMCA to sponsor a youth triathlon on Sunday, June 8, 2025 from 8 AM to 11 AM, including the closure of Summit Road just after the YMCA entrance and Summit Ridge Drive where it intersects with Summit Road subject to the following conditions: the signing of a revocable license and indemnification agreement and the submittal of a certificate of liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000 listing the City of Keene as an additional insured. This license is conditional upon the petitioners providing an adequate number of volunteer race marshals to ensure runner safety along the course, providing advance notice of the race to impacted residents, and subject to any recommendations of City staff. The petitioner agrees to absorb the cost of any City services provided. Said payment shall be made within 30 days of the date of invoicing.

4) Lease of Airport Property - Avanru Development

Chair Bosley welcomed Airport Director, David Hickling, and Jack Franks from Avanru Development Group. Mr. Hickling explained the City had been trying to develop Airport property. In summer 2024, the City placed a request for proposals, and the one respondent was Avanru Development. City staff has negotiated a lease per the Airport Land Leasing Policy, including language needed to comply with all grant assurances. Mr. Hickling thought it was a good lease and that this development would help the Airport and the community by providing increased revenue from the lease and fuel sales, increased viability from activity at the Airport, and more money from the State of NH due to more based aircraft.

Mr. Franks thanked the City Manager and Airport Director for their time, energy, and effort getting this lease to a point that worked for everyone. Mr. Franks said his company was growing and they needed to travel, so a hangar in Keene would allow them to travel quickly to multiple projects around the state, and now RI and NJ. He said this was a really big opportunity for Avanru Development and would allow them even more growth and scalability to other states, getting there quickly to help with the housing crisis across the nation.

Chair Bosley called it an exciting opportunity and requested staff comments. The City Manager, Elizabeth Ferland, agreed it was an exciting opportunity and the more activity at the Airport like this hangar, the better. The City Manager agreed it would bring additional lease revenue for the City of Keene and additional tax revenue for the Town of Swanzey, as well as activity for the local businesses and the Airport Fixed Base Operator, Monadnock Aviation. There were many benefits, and the City Manager was excited.

Councilor Haas asked if the lease agreement incorporated the 3% escalator clause and Mr. Franks said yes. Mr. Haas gave staff credit for getting that moving forward. Councilor Haas also recognized Avanru Development Group pursuing new materials in construction and new techniques to make construction less expensive going forward. The Councilor called it the key to the future and Avanru a leader in that area. Mr. Franks appreciated that perspective, stating we could not spend our way out of the housing crisis we are in. Mr. Franks said we need to engineer better paths forward, which Avanru Development had done for 12 years, allowing them to now build housing twice as fast for less money, which he called more energy efficient than anything else available. Mr. Franks stated with collective effort, great ideas, and cities wanting to expand their housing and opportunities, Avanru was in a great position to help.

There were no public comments.

Councilor Williams made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Vice Chair Jones.

On a vote on 4-0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to execute a land lease at the Keene Dillant-Hopkins Airport to Avanru Development for the construction of an aircraft hangar.

Chair Bosley expected the Council to support this and see it move forward.

5) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Bosley adjourned the meeting at 6:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker

Edits submitted by,
Terri Hood, City Clerk and
Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk