

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

**MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, June 10, 2025**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Harold Farrington, Chair  
Alex Henkel, Vice Chair  
Councilor Michael Remy  
Cody Morrison  
Leatrice Oram  
Joshua Meehan  
Alexander Von Plinsky, IV  
Kenneth Kost, Alternate (Voting)  
Councilor Catherine Workman, Alternate  
(arrived at 6:05 PM, Voting)  
Mayor Jay V. Kahn, Alternate (Voting)

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Megan Fortson, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Elizabeth Wood  
Emily Lavigne-Bernier  
Dr. Joseph Perras  
Joe Walier  
Juliana Bergeron  
Councilor Philip Jones, Alternate

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

**2) Adoption of Meeting Minutes – May 6, 2025**

A motion by Ms. Oram to adopt the May 6, 2025 minutes as presented was duly seconded by Mr. Meehan and the motion carried unanimously.

**3) StoryMap Survey Results**

Chair Farrington asked if the verbatim StoryMap results were listed in the agenda packet and Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, said yes. Ms. Brunner thought there were a lot of good, long responses from the survey to share with the Committee from the 27 total responses. She said it

seemed many of them were not involved with the Master Planning process to date, so it was nice to reach new people. Committee members said they would read through the good ideas in the responses in-depth on their own time.

Chair Farrington said he found the first reply very interesting, discussing the landmark of the City as Central Square (referred to in the survey response as “City Square”). He wondered if they provided any ideas to make it more of a landmark than today. Chair Farrington said he was also struck—not surprisingly—throughout this whole process that many community members think the Mayor has more power than they do, as evidenced in some survey comments.

Ms. Brunner thought there were a lot of similar themes in these responses as in the earlier community survey and throughout the whole project: the rail trails, biking, roadway safety, economic resilience, and recruiting businesses. Nothing surprised her and she thought there were many thoughtful responses with good ideas. Chair Farrington liked the comment asking what a “Pillar” was and said that would be up to the consultants to answer because it was their terminology.

#### **4) June 3 Future Summit Debrief**

Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, summarized the June 3 Future Summit, which was the last formal public engagement opportunity associated with the drafting phase of the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). The adoption phase would also have a formal Public Hearing, but the Future Summit was intended to feel somewhat celebratory, and she thought it did. Ms. Brunner reported that 110 community members attended, which she called great, considering the event was competing with Awards Night for Keene High School, Southwest Region Planning Commission’s Annual Meeting, and a School Board meeting. Ms. Brunner said the Future Summit was fun and she was excited to see how many new people attended, including one getting their first introduction to the community. Some followed up the next day with additional questions and hoped to see the materials. All materials from the Future Summit are available on the Master Plan website. Chair Farrington said he met someone who flew into Keene from Atlanta, GA, because they were interested in moving here and saw the Future Summit was happening, attended, and was thrilled about what was going on in Keene and the future ideas.

Discussion ensued briefly as the Mayor (off-mic) described talks about Keene State College (KSC) at the Future Summit, and challenges with getting students to see the campus as a part of the City. Ms. Oram agreed, noting that to some, KSC is considered centrally isolated. Councilor Workman mentioned this being New Student Orientation week at KSC, so she was out talking to families during the Resource Fair. She shared that the top things she heard were that students chose Keene for its downtown accessibility, general curb appeal as a City, and safety.

Discussion ensued about how great the 2025 Taste of Keene Food Fest was despite the rain.

Ms. Brunner noted that there was feedback at the Future Summit about including KSC's campus as being a part of the downtown. So, the consultants amended the Future Land Use (FLU) Map to extend the Downtown Character Area to encompass the Keene State College campus. Ms. Brunner wanted to ensure that change made sense to the Steering Committee. She displayed the amended FLU Map on the screen, noting it was basically the same as what they saw before but extended to include the campus and had some color changes. A lengthy discussion ensued about the FLU Map and the definition of its boundaries.

Councilor Remy asked what was defining the western boundary of the downtown, pointing to a few streets and different properties, and asking why the map lines were defined as they were. Ms. Brunner said the consultants' intent was for the FLU Map to be parcel unspecific, which is counter to what Councilors Remy was just doing—identifying which properties are in and which ones are out. Whereas the consultants were striving to make it vaguer, with more flexibility. Ms. Brunner explained that the FLU Map is not meant to be like a zoning map. Councilor Remy said that depending on how the City uses this FLU Map, it could end up being like a zoning map. Mr. Meehan agreed, questioning the practical implications of the boundary of something being Downtown versus Downtown Neighborhoods.

Mr. Kost saw the map presented as fuzzy math and “soft” as he heard it referred to. He asked if there would still be a “hard” Zoning Map, too. Ms. Brunner said the old Zoning Map was still in effect and would continue to be pending an update, and she thought it would make sense for the City Council to take a look at the Zoning Map and update it after the CMP. Mr. Kost said the Zoning Map would be based on property lines and this FLU Map would be a picture. Ms. Brunner agreed. Mr. Kost asked what would come with the Downtown designation in the FLU Map, because some are form-based code (i.e., building against the streets, glazing, etc.). So, he wondered if KSC would want to be a part of that. Ms. Brunner said this was a discussion about five years prior when the form-based codes were created and KSC expressed interest in being included in the downtown. So, a form-based district was made specifically for KSC called “Downtown Institutional Campus,” with a very unique built form compared to the rest of the downtown. She agreed that it would not make sense to have the same rules for the rest of Main Street applied to the KSC campus. The section of the KSC's campus right along Winchester and Main Streets was already in a Downtown District and the rest of the campus zoned as Residential because that is what it was before it became the College campus. Technically, however, Ms. Brunner explained that the College is exempt from all land use regulations, and it is up to KSC whether to follow those rules or not. Councilor Remy said it costs the City money to develop regulations for the College to not have to use them. He stated that is not KSC's intent and added it is a State of NH institution.

Chair Farrington asked if the Committee needed to vote on the amended FLU Map. Ms. Brunner did not think so, as it would be included in the final CMP to be adopted if the Committee felt the Map was acceptable. She did not see any harm with including the College campus Downtown because the FLU Map is more of a guiding document rather than a regulation. Chair Farrington asked if other Committee members had strong feelings about the amendment.

Mayor Kahn thought the FLU Map needed definition. He explained that some people would read the map and seek landmarks, like CVS. He compared shapes on the map to amoebas and suggested more logical geographical boundaries, like Beaver Brook and the Ashuelot River, north-south. He was glad that neighbors who expressly did not want to be a part of the downtown were not included. He reiterated that there should be some specific and logical definition applied to the FLU Map displayed. Chair Farrington asked for the consultants' input. Ms. Brunner said the consultants heard this comment at the Future Summit and asked Staff, who felt it was a good suggestion based on the fact that KSC had expressed an interest in being considered a part of the downtown's form-based zoning in the past. She said one of the main selling points of Keene State College is its proximity to the downtown and easy access to it. In the Adaptable Workforce Task Force, one of the meetings focused on how to connect the community and KSC campus together more. So, when this arose at the Future Summit, it made a lot of sense to Ms. Brunner to amend the Map for the Committee to consider. She said she heard everything the Steering Committee was saying about more specificity, and she understood the inclination in working with the Zoning Map herself. However, she reminded the Committee that the FLU Map is more of a visual picture of and guide to the overall community vision. It is not regulatory, which is why it appears more organic, with atypical flowy lines.

Councilor Remy suggested that this FLU Map could be used as a definition for the 79-E program. He stated that a "downtown" description within an intent statement of a zoning district is all that is being used to determine if a zone is eligible for 79-E. He asked for clarification for whether, in theory, the FLU Map would expand what is defined as the Downtown District, or actually contract it in a couple of spots (e.g., part of Water Street would no longer be a Downtown District). So, he said 79-E was a program being discussed in Keene with a relatively undefined downtown district and now this map existed. To Ms. Brunner's point, Councilor Remy stated the Map was not intended to be regulatory. He continued by stating he might have a hard time debating what is considered the "Downtown" if a person called this Map's boundaries into question.

Ms. Oram knew the KSC campus had long been considered a Residential District but said it had not been residential for a long time, especially based on how integral the College and the City are together for accountability, transparency, and communication. If this amendment did not occur and KSC was not included in the Downtown District, Ms. Oram asked if the campus could be a more considered district than in a loose residential definition. She continued by stating she thought it would be an omission for KSC not to be included in the downtown and she was glad people advocated for the college to be included.

Mr. Morrison said although this map was intended for informational purposes and for a more general audience memorialized in the Master Plan, he could see the FLU Map being confused with a regulatory zoning map. For that reason, he wanted to ensure there could not be a situation in which a particular address would straddle two zones. Ms. Brunner said this FLU Map is meant to draw a picture of what the community wants the future of Keene to look like, not to show

what rules apply to different properties or different areas of the City. So, she thought part of the reason for the non-precise, non-exact lines was to avoid people looking at the map as a regulation instead of just a guide, which it is. Ms. Brunner thought the existing 2010 CMP did well explaining that in the text around the map and said there would be verbiage this time as well. Councilor Remy agreed that a FLU Map is not meant to be regulatory and should be undefined, but the shapes around Water and Marlboro Streets looked very intentional and defined to him. Ms. Brunner did not think that was intentional. Mr. Meehan suggested additional verbiage in the Map title indicating that it is a future vision and not a current regulation so no developer would read it incorrectly.

Mr. Kost said he had seen maps like this on master plans that were a combination of both precise and squishy. He suggested more of an image of what Keene actually looks like. He wondered if there was something the consultants could do to address some of that. Ms. Brunner showed a different map. Chair Farrington noted there were no straight lines. Mr. Kost understood the intent of the FLU Map, but thought people could become confused.

Mr. Von Plinsky heard the Mayor mention more definitions on the Map but in looking at the key, Mr. Von Plinsky felt the definitions were very clear (e.g., river, lake, pond). He was only unsure about the definition of “Working Landscape.” Did it mean agriculture, sustainable timber harvest, a solar field, etc.? He understood Ms. Brunner’s point that this was not meant to be rigid, but said certain things should be clear, noting that the definitions of most other things were. Ms. Brunner displayed the StoryMap to help the Committee visualize the different Character Areas. At the bottom of the StoryMap, there was a portion explaining the different Future Land Use Areas, with photos; Ms. Brunner demonstrated. She read the existing language for “Working Landscape,” noting the concept was more like agriculture and timber harvesting: *“Maple sugaring, forestry, farming, and agritourism can be found along tree-lined roads and stone walls. Areas encompass the rural outskirts of town, where low-population density residential uses and agricultural uses are permitted. Open fields with livestock and farmstands selling farm produce are common uses.”* Councilor Remy agreed that he found that last sentence on page 84 of the CMP. Ms. Brunner described this FLU character area as a blend of the existing Rural and Agriculture Zoning Districts. The Character Areas also include Conservation and Low-Impact Recreation, which are areas where the priority is not agricultural use or residential use. Councilor Remy suggested eliminating the Marlboro Street leg on the Downtown map and making it round so it did not look targeted. Vice Chair Henkel agreed.

Mr. Kost referred to the map on page 74 of the draft CMP. He spoke about it being interesting that, in the CMP, these definitions (i.e., Downtown) were called Character Areas, whereas elsewhere, in City documents and plans (e.g., Land Development Code), they were called Land Uses. He thought it might get to the heart of this discussion—the FLU Map does not represent regulatory land uses, but Character Areas. He thought the introduction of that phrase was interesting to think about. Councilor Remy pointed out a June 2024 date at the bottom of pages in the 2025 CMP. Councilor Remy preferred Character Areas to sound less like zoning and planning language, though Chair Farrington pointed out that *land use* was in the RSA.

Ms. Brunner asked for any other feedback on the Future Summit. Councilor Remy said it was fun and well done. Ms. Brunner said it was a lot of work, but Staff had fun talking to people. She said people seemed to understand the Character Area concept when engaging with the FLU Map and StoryMap. Ms. Brunner liked the Committee's suggestion to make to map "squishier" in terms of eliminating the arms at Water and Marlboro Streets and making the Downtown rounder. She would take that feedback to the consultants.

Mr. Von Plinsky's only potential concern was the recreational corridor and that a bubble around the Downtown would encompass the buffer areas around the Ashuelot River, Beaver Brook, or Branch River that the City wants to conserve. He wanted to be careful. He understood all the arguments for the FLU Map to be squishier or less squishy but urged caution regarding those buffer areas. Chair Farrington thought it was a good point and said when it comes to development, there were a lot of protections in place for waterways regardless of the district.

In summary, the feedback for the consultants included the following: make downtown more rounded but stretched to Marlboro Street, make the map more organic and squishier overall, and ensure waterways stay as they are but with boundaries and buffers around them.

## **5) Population Growth Goal Discussion**

Chair Farrington recalled the Committee had raised the issue of a population growth goal several times. The Committee received a two-page memo from the consultants on various sources of Keene's population projections, which the Chair described as a tight range of outcomes in the next approximately 15 years. He focused on the overall growth rate of -2.7% to +4.6% over 15 years. Chair Farrington asked the Committee to focus on where they thought the City should target, or if there should even be a target.

Councilor Remy said he felt strongly that Keene needs to grow if it wants to maintain being able to have employees while still being a community that is lovely for people to retire into. He said the population cannot stay flat. The percentage of people that are retired is growing as a percentage of the population, which means no additions to the workforce to support the businesses needed. Councilor Remy stated the City would need to be thoughtful to make up for that and ensure at least the working population stays as large as it is, if not grows as a percentage. Chair Farrington thought it was an interesting angle—it is not just overall population, because our population is aging, but a stable working age population. He knew some of the discussions, actions, and goals were focused on attracting workers. So, the Chair wondered if *keeping a stable working population* could be stated as a goal.

Mayor Kahn said it would be devastating if that did not happen. He thought the entire trajectory of the Master Plan is to be collaborative and to be aspirational, and he thought they should find an aspirational goal. He was grateful to have the numbers in the memo, but he wondered if they were representative. It made him think of Councilor Remy's comments about when the census

did not mean anything because it was taken in a snapshot in time during Covid and when KSC was out of session. The Mayor used the example to point out that if the base is wrong, then the projections would be wrong too. So, he thought trying to have an aspirational goal that is an approximate number would be better than picking the highest number.

Mr. Kost referred to findings in the last paragraph on page one of the population memo, which he found interesting. He said it listed statistics but then stated the figures were merely projections and that actual population growth could vary considerably based on future market forces and economic conditions. It went on to say Keene has the opportunity to be in the driver's seat of growth and future residential development; the community's appetite for growth is a primary factor. As Mr. Kost read it, it said the City could drive population growth by encouraging people to come and by what the City does with housing, businesses, and everything else. So, he thought the City would need a role in growth, but was always concerned with being too aggressive, stating the City did not want to become Manchester. Whereas being too conservative would not accomplish anything. He questioned what percentage to name. He agreed that there should be something to track, and he thought the workforce angle might be a way. He questioned whether the City would have sufficient infrastructure, capacity, etc., to support an increased population. Would the City have to build a new water treatment plant, for example? Mr. Kost questioned whether there would be a way to drive population growth without costing the City that much money, noting that new residents would bring revenue.

Mr. Von Plinsky preferred the idea of a number goal vs. a percentage goal because it would provide a finish line. Also, he said not every new resident is created equal, so to speak, meaning retirees do not contribute to the workforce and kids do not contribute to the workforce in the short term. He said a number vs. percentage would be more concrete; for example, 25,000 professional working age citizens vs. assuming every citizen the City tries to attract is as impactful and expensive as any other. Whereas, Mr. Von Plinsky said a percentage would keep the goal moving down the line. Councilor Remy said he liked 25,000. He continued by stating that 30,000 might be a good goal, but not quickly; it would have to be intentional. Mr. Von Plinsky did not agree with 30,000. Councilor Remy said he loved that Keene is a place where people want to retire and enjoy the rest of their lives, but the City must be thoughtful of that, so the retiree population does not outgrow the rest of the community by too much.

At this time, Ms. Brunner said the consultants left a placeholder in the CMP for this population growth goal if the Steering Committee developed a specific goal. She referred to the fact that over the prior 10 years, Keene's population remained relatively stable, while the rest of New Hampshire grew by 5%. Ms. Brunner heard Committee feedback that there should not be a percentage, but in her mind, she said 5% was on the upper range of what the City could expect in the projections. She asked if 5% growth over 15 years would get to 25,000. Mayor Kahn said no. He mentioned the problem with picking a goal without justifying what the goal is. He thought more important here was what this goal would represent: the desire of the City to be attractive to a working age group as well as retirees.

Ms. Oram was unsure what data from the population memo was germane to Keene. While the rest of NH was growing at 5%, she imagined there were towns that grew 10% and others that grew -2%, for example. If those places were Salem, Hooksett, and Manchester, then she said those would not be patterns of growth Keene was interested in. So, Ms. Oram said 5% could actually be a nebulous target and she doubted whether the City should be keeping up with the growth across the rest of NH.

Mr. Kost said if the consultants still had funds and bandwidth, perhaps they could describe the City's growth aspiration as a range between 20,000–30,000 people as well as a smaller target, like 3,000 people. They could talk about what that goal means to the City, whether there are places to build (horizontally and vertically), the proper districts, etc. Mr. Kost said it would probably require a discussion of what growth means because throwing out an arbitrary number could make things better or worse. Ms. Brunner said that sounded like a standalone study that would be needed. In speaking anecdotally with the Public Works Department and School District, Ms. Brunner said there were other factors, like places for people to live and infrastructure, which would make it a more involved study than could be accomplished at the end of this CMP update. Though, in general, she thought the City could state in the CMP that it can absorb more population without it being exorbitantly expensive, like not building a new Wastewater Treatment Plant. Councilor Remy thought that would be a good problem to have, with people moving to the City at such a rate that new buildings were needed; not all at once, of course. He said the hard part would be getting the critical mass to build it.

Ms. Oram noted a typo on page two of the population memo under methodology and data sources in the second paragraph. It listed an increase of 1,074 residents between 2025–2024 and she imagined it was supposed to say 2040 instead of 2024. She was unsure if the whole memo was being included in the CMP.

Mr. Meehan was unsure about the best population growth number and was hesitant to try and pick one. He thought about the capacity of the City's infrastructure and land available to build and at what density/height. He said the best return on investment, if thinking about the municipality as a business, would be people putting taxes into a concentrated place where there is already infrastructure. To Councilor Remy's point, if people started moving to Keene, there would be greater investment in the community. Mr. Meehan said there was evidence related to zoning that density downtown is a good way to support new people moving to town and increase revenue for the City. Mr. Kost added that such density would attract working age people downtown. Mr. Meehan agreed. Chair Farrington agreed, recalling one of these Steering Committee meetings approximately one year prior when he felt cautionary about other towns in NH, like Dover and Salem, that were turning all their green space into apartment complexes. That was not his vision for Keene, which he said might be holding back progress; he was unsure. He said he would be very happy with increased density downtown, but not with turning Stonewall Farm into 300 apartments, for example.



Vice Chair Henkel referred to the first projection in the memo that states *about 500 new households over 15 years*, which he said would mean bringing online 35 new housing units per year on average. Therefore, if in a given year, less than 35 were built, more than 35 would need to be built in other years. The Vice Chair wondered if that provided guidance about how fast the City could bring new housing units online. Ms. Brunner added that the City did a Housing Needs Analysis with Camoin Associates, who estimated the City would need to build 140 housing units per year just to meet current and projected demands, based on the population staying stable; the City was actually seeing an increase in households, even when the overall population was staying the same. Ms. Brunner said if the City wants to grow, it would need to add even more housing units than that, stating that 140 units per year is aggressive. She agreed with the consultants' statement in the memo that the housing supply is the greatest constraint on the City's ability to grow.

Councilor Remy clarified that his comment was largely that the household sizes were dropping dramatically, with single and two-person occupancy four-bedroom houses and not much turnover. He said it is about having the right sizes and the right options for everyone. He was unsure how to properly incentivize people to downsize so the people in need of the larger homes could use them.

Discussion ensued about the proper process, at this point, to articulate the Steering Committee's population growth goal in this CMP update. Chair Farrington noted there was no consensus on a goal at this point and asked if the consultants would suggest a placeholder. Ms. Brunner thought the consultants were very cautious about articulating a goal themselves. She said throughout the whole CMP process, Staff and consultants heard the desire for Keene to grow in general and the number one goal under the Adaptable Workforce Pillar was to grow the workforce. So, Ms. Brunner thought the idea was already captured in the CMP generally. If the Steering Committee wanted a specific goal in the Plan, they could, but Ms. Brunner did not suggest anything above 5% because it would be hard to reach and might be more aspirational given the projections. Chair Farrington thought that without a goal, the City would never get there. Ms. Brunner said it was true but thought back to an example to caution that there could be a number at which changes start happening for the sake of rapid growth (e.g., 14%) that the community is not comfortable with. She was unsure about the line.

Discussion continued. Chair Farrington suggested giving the consultants guidelines of 25,000–30,000 with a focus on increased density downtown and keeping the working age population. Mayor Kahn thought 30,000 was very unrealistic and Chair Farrington agreed but was trying to provide guidelines. Mr. Kost said with time until 2040, a lot could happen; for example, with proactive marketing, etc., businesses and people could come to Keene and the City could reach its goals. He supported an achievable goal, so the environment the City wants to build—a dense downtown, etc.—would not become like other towns (e.g., Bedford). Mr. Kost said it would not happen if the City did not work toward it actively and assertively. Mr. Morrison agreed that 30,000 was unrealistic because of the lack of developable land within Keene and the extensive cost to expand the infrastructure needed. He noted that several thousand more housing units

would be needed for that to happen. He said most of Keene's development potential was due to infill vs. greenfield development. He said even if the City acquired some large companies—minus significant infill development—most of the population growth would happen in communities like Swanzey, Marlborough, and Chesterfield. So, if seeking an aspirational goal, he thought it would have to be arbitrary and suggested 1,000 more than what the consultants projected. He thought 30,000 was a stretch too far based on Keene's developable land and infrastructure constraints. Councilor Workman agreed with a range or an additional 1,000. She thought a range of 25,000–28,000 would be more achievable and aspirational; it would be a smart goal for the consultants to work on.

Mr. Kost referred to the first Action Item under Housing, which is to map Keene's developable lands and environmental lands. He said having that understanding of development potential along West Street, Kingsbury, and strip malls, for example, could help identify and quantify the unused and squandered housing potential. He said there were plenty of places to build. He thought the first Housing Pillar would be the best place to quantify it. Ms. Brunner said they could do something, but it might not be what Mr. Kost was talking about, which was quantifying the maximum amount of units attainable from every property in Keene, like a max build-out analysis. What Ms. Brunner thought might be more attainable was a GIS map based on development constraints to make it simple and clear for developers to understand the rules for different properties in Keene. Mr. Kost clarified that he was interested in the big, underused lots that could be developed and could attract developers, not every infill site between every house; he thought there was huge potential in the larger developments.

Mayor Kahn thought Vice Chair Henkel made a good point that the most important note on the population growth memo was the ratio of households needed per 1,000 additions. The Mayor reflected on the math that would be applied, stating that 3,500 households in Keene would be a wild goal, but he was eager to see the next iteration. Councilor Remy said it gave him a good idea to create a heat map for the Planning Board with a big gap between the infill factors. For example, Medium Density allows three units, and they could compare how many units were being used in all the Medium Density Zones. He said it might not be needed for this, but it is an exercise to help determine the types of lots allowed to maximize certain things where and why.

Ms. Brunner summarized that the Steering Committee recommended no specific population growth goal other than wanting population growth (and a stable or growing workforce), wanting the growth concentrated in the downtown and commercial areas on West Street, and prioritizing infill.

## **6) Review of Draft Comprehensive Master Plan**

The Committee did not review the whole draft Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) at this meeting. There was higher level discussion and comments on some of the early sections before the Committee separated to review in detail. Committee members could email Ms. Brunner with more specific issues before the next meeting. General discussion ensued to start.

Mr. Kost thought Mayor Kahn's letter in the Forward was the best part of the whole CMP. Councilors Remy and Workman noted their names were spelled differently throughout the CMP and they preferred "Michael Remy" and "Catt Workman." Mr. Kost asked the due date, and Ms. Brunner explained the consultants were on retainer until July, but the adoption process would likely take longer; Staff could make minor changes after the consultants leave the InDesign files. Any substantial changes would require the consultants' help while there was still time, so Staff wanted to know any major concerns from the Steering Committee at this time. The adoption process would start whenever this body felt comfortable recommending it to the Planning Board and City Council. Councilor Workman did not read the CMP in detail yet but had not found the Middle School Eighth Grade environmental presentation, whereas she saw other presentations hyperlinked and wanted to ensure that one made it in too; She mentioned it to the consultant at the Future Summit because it is important information to include as they would hopefully live in Keene in 15 years, so their perspectives should be in the Plan. Ms. Brunner asked about posting their presentation on the website and linking it in the Plan. Councilor Workman agreed and referenced the presentation minutes and video too; Councilor Remy cautioned hyperlinking outside the document and Chair Farrington said it would be fine if there were a link to the City website. Ms. Oram said overall, having gone through it section-by-section, the CMP was a visually striking, impressive document, and seemed consistent in style with diverse graphics. However, she said there was a lot about it they would have to take a look at in her opinion—it was a lot longer than she thought it was going to be at 125 pages. She thought it was beautifully designed. Councilor Workman agreed that for the length, the formatting allowed for a fairly quick high-level overview that was accessible and digestible to the everyday person trying to read and understand it.

#### **A) Planning Process & Public Engagement**

Mr. Kost had skimmed through the Plan several times and felt that it was excellent. He thought it was dedicated a lot to the Planning situation and documenting process, before getting to what—to him—is the most important part of the CMP, the FLU Map, Pillars, goals, and Implementation Matrix. He had a lot of questions to discuss later in the Implementation, especially priorities for when things happen because some things seemed long term and too late, while other things seemed like they could happen later. He also questioned when all the things in the Implementation Plan would happen, and said all the items under each goal would be very important. He recalled asking the consultant whether the City would be tracking the progress of these goals in some way (e.g., on the website). For example, he cited a meeting with the Monadnock Housing Collaborative (formerly the Resource Alliance), which could take on some of these items as a group; he said some other groups could, too.

Ms. Brunner heard everyone needing more time reviewing the draft CMP before feeling comfortable to vote. Due to the timing with the consultants, she asked Committee members to submit comments to her within one week so edits could be incorporated for the next Steering Committee meeting. After that, any minor edits would be made by Staff. Discussion ensued as

the Committee came to agreement with this course of action, noting they had seen the majority of this material before, and it was doubtful any of them would recommend wholesale changes.

## **B) Pillar Chapters**

Chair Farrington asked if the Implementation Priorities were a recap of the goal/actions from the Pillars. Ms. Brunner said yes, the Implementation Priorities were the results of the Prioritization Survey and the StoryMap, so all the goals that came out of the Task Forces. Chair Farrington said they were just ordered differently in the Pillar section and Ms. Brunner agreed.

## **C) Implementation Plan**

Mr. Kost asked if the short-, medium-, and long-term items in the Implementation section came from the Prioritization Survey or if there was an algorithm; were they flexible? Chair Farrington noted that when the Pillars were published, quite a few people participated in an open survey to prioritize the Actions. Mr. Kost confirmed that prioritization of the Actions was based on public involvement, participation, and interviews. He said some things in the Implementation Plan seemed really important and the City should not wait 10 years as recommended. He asked if there was an opportunity to adjust them to be more rational. Chair Farrington said he would entertain specific examples. Mr. Kost did not want to take anything away from public involvement and the Chair said this Steering Committee could adjust the Plan. Ms. Brunner displayed a pivot table that was generated from surveys that were very helpful. She pointed out that under one of the Pillars, there are 40 different actions, which is impossible. So, the Prioritization Survey looked at the urgency in implementing actions, the relative importance of the actions to each other, as well as what people thought was really bold vs. not as bold. Ms. Brunner believed it was those Survey results in addition to the Task Forces and their input for each of the individual Pillars that resulted in the short-, medium- and long-term. Not everybody took all of the surveys because they were so long; some only took the survey for the subject matter they were most interested in. Ms. Brunner ultimately said yes, she thought the Committee had the discretion to adjust things.

Mr. Meehan circled back to agree that it was a wonderful document, reflective of the work. He also commented on its length, citing 140 pages. He agreed with Mr. Kost's comment about tracking progress for this Plan for 2040 that might inform new zoning work and land use reform. That was the only thing that stood out as missing from the CMP to Mr. Meehan relative to the goals established. Chair Farrington said Implementation would not be in this Steering Committee's or the Planning Board's purview, it would be informative for the City Council, and they have to prioritize it each time they create their Budget. Mr. Meehan said the community generated the CMP and he questioned the obligation of a body—not necessarily this Steering Committee—to reflect back to the Community at some point how the CMP is affecting our economic development. He wanted to memorialize that feedback loop somehow in the CMP. Ms. Oram agreed that service is very important and suggested an easy solution within the Implementation section to include a narrative stating, *What Happens Next?* It should explain

where this document is going and how it would be enacted. She referred to the Keene State College Strategic Plan, which had a sense of accountability to get things done fast. She said the CMP was a larger scale plan not written the same way. She and Mr. Meehan agreed that one concise statement about how to check-in on the progress of the plan would be good. Mr. Kost thought this was the most important discussion and looked at it as an example. He said residents spent a lot of time and effort contributing all of these action items and would value knowing what the City is doing about them. He agreed with Mr. Meehan that there should be a clear feedback loop.

Ms. Brunner was excited about this conversation because staff had preliminary discussions about what comes next after this CMP update, noting the planning process usually energizes the community. It brings so many different people together, gets great ideas flowing, and builds a lot of excitement and enthusiasm. Often immediately following a planning process, residents reach out to the City interested in starting projects. For example, Ms. Brunner explained that staff had already started talking with the High School about doing a high school job fair as a result of the CMP engagement work with Keene High. However, she said the activity around the CMP would likely diminish in a few years, so staff thought of ideas such as an annual “State of the Master Plan” event. She recalled the Community Development Department Ward Optimization Weeks (WOW) that were very well received in 2024, so she suggested one in the fall could be a community wide event talking about progress on the Master Plan. Ms. Brunner reiterated these were all preliminary discussions and must go through the Planning Board, which is the keeper of the Master Plan, along with the City Council. She recalled a five-year check-in event for the 2010 CMP that she attended. So, Ms. Brunner was glad to hear talk about this because it would help to keep the energy going. Chair Farrington agreed.

Mr. Kost asked if there would still be opportunities for public comment before the CMP was adopted by the City Council. Chair Farrington thought most public input opportunities had passed. Ms. Brunner replied that at this point the public input was less organized. Members of the public continued submitting emails and comments, which was great, and Ms. Brunner passed those to the consulting team, while still available. During the formal adoption process, there would be an open Public Hearing for anyone to speak. So, she said there was still time for Monadnock Housing Collaborative to comment.

Mayor Kahn wanted to point out that if Regional Magnetism is the vision for the six Pillars, he only saw it mentioned a few times and thought it could have more focus throughout the CMP. Chair Farrington agreed and said even in Housing, stating he did not know if it was a bad thing for the other towns in Cheshire County to be bedroom communities for Keene. Mayor Kahn said he was trying to define it from multiple perspectives, and he kept returning to the City’s Vision Statement. The Mayor thought it would be very helpful to use the Master Plan to find what the vision of Regional Magnetism really means. The Mayor thought the point was how Keene was comparing itself to lot of towns around it that all have heart and being distinctive.

Mayor Kahn returned to his unhappiness with the word choice of *flourishing* in the Flourishing Environment Pillar. He did not think it was the right label and felt it was an imposed word from someplace else. The Committee had discussed it a few times. The Mayor said the environment is important and significant to him, but after 37 years in Keene, it was impressed upon him that the environment was not the first reason everyone came to Keene; it was one reason, but not the first. So, he wanted a better word to capture that, like *Natural*. Chair Farrington agreed, noting he discussed this issue with City staff and could not decide on a better work. Mr. Meehan said he also had been sitting on his displeasure with the word *Enticing* in the Housing section this whole time.

**D) Future Land Use Map**

**E) Other Feedback**

**7) New Business**

None presented.

**8) Next Meeting: Date to be Determined, if needed**

The Committee scheduled its next meeting on Tuesday, July 15, 2025 at 6:00 PM.

**9) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 8:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker  
June 17, 2025

Reviewed and edited by,  
Emily Duseau, Planning Technician and Mari Brunner, Senior Planner