

City of Keene
New Hampshire

JOINT PLANNING BOARD/
PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 8, 2025

7:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Planning Board

Members Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair

Roberta Mastrogiovanni, Vice Chair

Mayor Jay V. Kahn

Councilor Michael Remy

Sarah Vezzani

Armando Rangel

Kenneth Kost

Michael Hoefer, Alternate

Planning Board

Members Not Present:

Ryan Clancy

Randyn Markelon, Alternate

Tammy Adams, Alternate

Stephon Mehu, Alternate

Planning, Licenses &

Development Committee

Members Present:

Kate M. Bosley, Chair

Philip M. Jones, Vice Chair

Robert C. Williams

Edward J. Haas

Andrew M. Madison

Planning, Licenses &

Development Committee

Members Not Present:

All Present

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner

Evan Clements, Planner

Megan Fortson, Planner

I) Roll Call

Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. Roll call was conducted and Mr. Hoefer was invited to join the Planning Board as a voting member.

II) Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 14, 2025

Councilor Haas offered the following correction to the meeting minutes: Page 6, Line 193 – to change the word “principles” to “principals.”

Additionally, Chair Farrington offered the following corrections:

Line 238 – to add the letter “r” at the beginning of the sentence.

Line 373 – should read as “maximum height.”

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn that the Joint Committee accept the July 14, 2025 meeting minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilor Jones and was unanimously approved.

III) Public Workshops:

- a) **Ordinance O-2025-28 Relating to Zone Change.** Petitioner, Adam Wright, proposes to amend the Zoning Map of the City of Keene by changing the zoning designation of the properties located at 0 Winchester St (TMP #592-019-000), 291 Winchester St (TMP # 592-020-000), 371 Pearl St (TMP #592-021-000), 305 Winchester St (TMP #593-003-000), 363 Pearl St (TMP #593-004-000), 347 Pearl St (TMP #593-005-000), 339 Pearl St (TMP #593-006-000), and 331 Pearl St (TMP #593-007-000) from Low Density to Commerce. The total area of land that would be impacted by this request is ~2.6 ac.

Mr. John Noonan of Fieldstone Land Consultants addressed the Committee on behalf of the petitioner, Adam Wright. Mr. Noonan stated the applicant is looking to amend the zoning map and noted the applicant owns multiple lots on Pearl Street and Winchester Street. Mr. Noonan stated the applicant is planning to purchase the other lots that are included in the application. Ultimately, the plan is to either sell or merge the lots, but Mr. Wright wants to be able to change the zoning from Low Density residential to Commerce in order to increase the number of uses that would be permitted on the lots. The applicant feels this is a reasonable request.

Mr. Noonan explained that the Commerce District is located to the south of the subject parcels where there are currently fast food restaurants are located. There is a parking lot across the street that is owned by Keene State College, and with the new roundabout, this area mimics the characteristics of the Commerce zone located directly abutting to the south compared to the adjacent residential properties that are in the Low Density district along Pearl Street.

Mr. Noonan stated these properties are also different from the other lots along Pearl Street in that there is frontage along both Pearl Street and Winchester Street, especially if they are merged. He noted that both streets have municipal infrastructure for water and sewer, which is required. Liberty Gas is also available on these streets. Hence, having multiple uses could work well on these sites, which would be permitted in Commerce District.

This concluded Mr. Noonan's comments.

Ms. Vezzani asked to be recused, as some of the abutters are longtime clients of hers.

Councilor Haas asked whether other potential districts were looked at for rezoning this area, such as Commerce Limited. Mr. Noonan answered in the negative and stated they did not consider other districts because the subject parcels are located between the Low Density and Commerce Districts and these parcels would become spot zoned if a different zoning district was proposed.

Mayor Kahn asked how the applicant would interpret this relative to traffic impacts in the neighborhood. Mr. Noonan stated that with the construction of the roundabout anything that would be a commercial use would come off Winchester Street where there are two lanes of traffic traveling in either direction. There are also municipally owned sidewalks that extend around the corner onto Pearl St. He explained that if there was going to be a residential use, then they could potentially locate the residential driveways off the Pearl Street frontage of those lots.

Mr. Noonan noted the applicant has not given any thought to designs for buildings or site layouts at this time.

Chair Farrington asked how far up toward the roundabout the median exists on Winchester Street. Mr. Noonan referred to a plan and explained the median starts at the roundabout, runs just past lot 3 and ends at that location.

Mayor Kahn stated his other concern addressed in zoning is the 50-foot setback required when abutting a Residential District. Mr. Noonan added that those setbacks would affect the portion to the west where the lots would remain in the Low Density Residential District.

Staff comments were next.

Planner, Megan Fortson, addressed the Committee and stated the proposed Zoning Map Amendment includes the conversion of eight existing parcels along Pearl and Winchester streets from a Low Density zoning designation to a Commerce zoning designation. The parcels currently range in size from approximately 0.11 acres up to 0.57 acres for a total impacted acreage of almost 2.7 acres.

Ms. Fortson stated that in these rezoning decisions, the petitioner's intended use of the property should not be considered; rather, the permitted uses allowed in the proposed district should be evaluated for their suitability on the site. Additionally, the Committee should consider, in reviewing the surrounding land use and zoning patterns, the consistency of the proposed rezoning request with the current Master Plan. In addition, the existing and proposed zoning requirements and the possible resulting impacts should be considered. The existing development on the parcels range from a few undeveloped lots to a lot with an existing outbuilding only and a few single family- and two-family residences.

Ms. Fortson then provided some background regarding the surrounding land use and zoning patterns. There is a mix of land uses. Adjacent to this larger cluster of parcels, there is the Keene State College Winchester Street parking lot, which is located to the east. There are McDonald's and other commercial uses located directly to the south of the subject parcel. There is Riverside Plaza and other commercial uses are located to the south and southeast. As Mr. Noonan explained, the proposed ordinance would extend the limits of the Commerce District further to the north. Zoning districts adjacent to the subject parcels include Low Density to the north and west, and Commerce to the east and south. The Downtown Edge and High Density Districts begin approximately 500 feet to the northeast across the Ashuelot River. There is another area of High Density Zoning located about 810 feet to the west of the subject parcels further along Pearl Street.

Ms. Fortson reviewed the proposal's compliance with the 2010 Master Plan but noted that the 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan would soon be adopted.

For Community Vision, the vision focus area that is most relevant to the proposed rezoning is focus area one, which describes a quality built environment. This focus area contemplates the interconnection of the built environment and residents by focusing on specific goals that are

relevant to both. Examples include striving to provide quality housing while continuing to sustain a vibrant downtown, as well as maintaining neighborhoods while balancing growth and ensuring the provision of infrastructure. The proposed zoning change would expand the Commerce District further to the north, thereby providing an opportunity for potential developers to construct buildings containing a mix of dwelling units and commercial uses. Rezoning and redeveloping the subject parcels in this way could help provide a transition area between the existing homes in the Pearl Street neighborhood and the existing commercial amenities offered along Winchester Street. All of these uses are able to be served by the existing municipal infrastructure in this area.

In regards to its compliance with the Future Land Use Plan, the subject parcels are located in what is called the Winchester Street Strategic Planning Area of the Future Land Use Map. This area is described as having opportunities for a mix of higher density housing and provisions of retail and community services that transition to the Key Road commercial area along Winchester Street towards Keene State College and the Blake Street neighborhood.

The proposed zoning change would allow for the development of a myriad of uses on these parcels, regardless of whether they are merged or developed as individual lots. Permitted uses would include multifamily apartment buildings with commercial uses on the 1st floor, as well as, but not limited to, office, retail and restaurants.

Ms. Fortson noted this neighborhood also straddles the downtown neighborhoods, traditional neighborhoods, mixed-use and business industrial live-work areas of the Future Land Use Map. The downtown neighborhood area is identified as being best suited to accommodate carefully planned growth and density. Alternatively, the business area of the Future Land Use Map is identified as being best suited for a mix of low impact industrial and business uses, in conjunction with live-work artist space where employees and business owners live in close proximity to their place of employment or business.

Finally, in regard to the Housing Chapter, the Master Plan recognizes the community's ability to improve upon its existing housing stock and create new housing opportunities across all income and lifestyles. The plan describes that a balance of the mix of rental and owner-occupied units will continue to be a determining factor in Keene and the region's health and prosperity. Overall, housing must be conveniently located, as well as being healthy, safe and affordable. Ms. Fortson stated this proposal, given the fact that it is going from a lower impact zoning district to a higher impact zoning district, would potentially allow developers to provide new, diverse housing options at an affordable price in a location that is convenient for jobs, services and downtown amenities.

Ms. Fortson then provided a comparison between the existing and proposed zoning districts.

The Low Density District is intended to provide for low intensity single-family residential development. All uses in this district shall have city water and sewer service.

The Commerce District is intended to provide an area for intense commercial development that is accessed predominantly by vehicles. Shopping plazas and multiple businesses in one building would be typical in this district. All uses in this district shall have City water and sewer service. In the Low Density district, the only use that is permitted by right and without a Conditional Use Permit through the Cottage Court or a Conservation Residential Development includes single family dwellings, community gardens and conservation areas.

In contrast, the Commerce District has quite a few commercial, institutional, congregate living and social service, industrial and open space uses. All these categories are allowed by right.

Comparison of Requirements:

Lot Size

Low Density: minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet.

Commerce: minimum lot size is 15,000 square feet

Setbacks

Low Density: 15-foot front set back, 20-foot rear set back and 10-foot side set back.

Commerce: 20-foot front, side and rear setback with an increased 50-foot setback if a property is located adjacent to a Residential Zoning District.

Lot coverage

Low Density: Impervious surface coverage of 45%.

Commerce: Impervious surface up to 80%.

Ms. Fortson noted this would create a cluster of commercially zoned partials along Pearl Street and Winchester Street with the abutting parcels to the north, northwest and west remaining part of the Low Density District.

Any future development on these lots, if they are rezoned to Commerce, would need to be reviewed to ensure that there is sufficient capacity of sewer and water services available for the proposed development.

In regard to recommendations, there are recommended motions. For the Planning Board, if the Board finds the application appropriate, the recommended motion would be to find the proposed ordinance consistent with the 2010 master plan. For the PLD Committee, the recommended motion would be to recommend that the Mayor set a public hearing date.

This concluded Staff comments.

Councilor Remy asked how many lots are compliant with the 15,000 square feet of minimum lot size. Ms. Fortson stated she was not sure. The Councilor noted 339 Pearl Street would be on the edge of being noncompliant, 371 Pearl Street would remain as noncompliant, and there is one other lot that would become noncompliant.

The Chair asked for public comment next.

The Chair noted to communication the Board was sent from James and Patricia Wright of 344 Pearl Street who are opposed to this zoning change.

Ms. Barbara Peloquin of 308 Pearl Street stated she has lived in this property for 55 years and noted that she had concerns about this proposal. She began by stating she did not receive an abutter notification until this past Friday which made it difficult to get ready for this meeting. Ms. Peloquin questioned why the applicant himself was not present at today's meeting. She went on to say that adding the roundabout is a positive aspect for this area, but living on Pearl Street is not always comfortable when it comes to this roundabout. She stated it is dangerous to try and exit Pearl Street. She reminded the Board of a similar change requested for the end of Wood Street in 1989 for the storage unit site. The understanding was that ten trucks will enter and exit the site Monday through Friday and noted there are trucks that come to this site at 2:00 AM disturbing the neighborhood. She stated the conditions on Pearl Street are not as simple as has been presented tonight.

Ms. Peloquin stated it would be helpful to have a more defined explanation as to what is being proposed for this area. She stated she is not opposed to change but is opposed to having to close her windows and doors all summer because of the smells that travel from the restaurants close by. Ms. Peloquin stated when an entire neighborhood is being proposed to be changed, it is necessary for the neighbors to know what they can expect.

Ms. Peloquin noted the roundabout off Island Street is interesting. The street is not wide enough and access to the sidewalks are treacherous. A once comfortable neighborhood is not the same anymore. She referred to the how unsafe the sidewalk in front of Carbone's Window site is and the unsafe experiences she has witnessed.

Ms. Michelle Wright stated she lived at 344 Pearl Street as a child and now owns rental property on Pearl Street. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wright, who are 83 and 81 years old, live at 344 Pearl Street. Like many neighbors, they are aging in place in this community that they have called home for multiple decades. She stated she is before the Committee with her parents to express strong opposition to the proposed rezoning of Pearl Street from Low Density to Commercial. She felt this would negatively affect abutters, most of whom are seniors, living out their retirement in a peaceful neighborhood.

Ms. Wright went on to say Commercial Zoning opens the door to taller buildings that tower over homes, subsequently robbing residents of sunlight, views and privacy. Ms. Wright continued by addressing the below topics:

Traffic and Safety: As was indicated by Ms. Peloquin, increased vehicle trips, delivery trucks, and customer traffic within a narrow residential street will exacerbate already dangerous conditions for seniors, children and pedestrians.

Noise: Extended business hours bring constant disruption. Early mornings, late nights and weekends, especially within the parking lots. This is a problem the neighborhood has been forced to deal with since the farmland was converted to a fast-food alley on Winchester St.

Light Pollution: Bright signage and parking lot lights will spill into yards and bedrooms, disrupting rest as experienced by the location of McDonald's and the previous construction staging area the neighborhood has had.

Stormwater and Environmental Risks: More pavement and larger buildings mean runoff, erosion and potential flooding into properties. Ms. Wright noted that several times, just on Wagner Street, drains have overflowed and flooded. This area being so close to the Ashuelot River is also a problem.

Loss of Privacy: Larger buildings and more foot traffic erode the peace and safety that the neighborhood has long valued.

Property Values: The presence of Commercial Zoning in a quiet residential block reduces the value of homes and discourages future families from moving here.

Ms. Wright continued by stating the City's Master Plan lays out clear goals to support aging in place and protect the quality of life for seniors, preserving neighborhood character and ensuring new development is compatible with existing uses. In addition, the Master Plan explains the City's need to encourage new housing in locations where it aligns with infrastructure and community needs. She felt this proposal conflicts with all of those items. Creating more housing or commercial activity by disrupting a longstanding residential neighborhood does not align with the Master Plan and its growth at the expense of those who have already built their lives here.

Ms. Wright stated the neighborhood has lived through this type of change in the past, when farmland nearby was rezoned for Commerce and the neighborhood saw fast food restaurants spring up. The shift brought noise, traffic, and light pollution right to the residents' doorsteps. To move forward with the rezoning will take it right from their doorstep into their living rooms. The previous change created undue stress for the residents, and it forever changed the neighborhood character. To allow further commercial encroachment, simply for the sake of investors, is unconscionable.

Ms. Wright stated that as a realtor, she understands the urgent need for more housing in Keene and across the nation. She stated she supports thoughtful development, but it must not come at the cost of existing homeowners, many of whom are elderly and have earned the right to quiet enjoyment in their golden years. We can build new housing in ways that respect the Master Plan, protect our seniors and preserve neighborhood integrity.

Ms. Wright stated they are they are the neighborhood of Keene; the residents, the voice, the community, the very fabric of Keene the Master Plan represents and purports to protect. Neighborhoods are not simply clusters of houses. They are as alive as the people who dwell in them. They are created and sustained by individuals who believe in the ultimate American dream, the right to home ownership. That dream, though increasingly elusive across the nation, remains the heartbeat of Keene. Here, families have worked for decades to secure a modest piece of earth to build a home to raise children, to share meals at a kitchen table, to tend gardens that nourish more than just the body.

She stated that as leaders, this Committee has the rare opportunity to set a precedent to declare that Keene neighborhoods are not expendable. They are essential. Their health, stability and continuity are critical to the well-being of our City. By preserving what we have and building upon it thoughtfully, you affirm that growth does not mean erasure, and progress does not mean displacement. The voices of Pearl Street and neighborhoods like it carry generations of stories. These are stories of resilience, of floods endured, of laughter rising from porches, of children running through twilight, or elders aging with dignity in the homes they built. This is not simply nostalgia. It is the foundation of civic health. Strong neighborhoods create strong cities. When we protect them, we protect our people, our history and our shared future, and thoughtfully develop as a community.

In closing, Ms. Wright stated Pearl Street is more than an address. It is a legacy. It is proof that neighborhoods are not only where we live, but who we become. They are where the laughter of children once echoed. Where families sat down to dinner at 5:00 PM. Where neighbors looked after one another without hesitation. They are the foundation upon which Keene has built its character and its strength. She asked that the Committee see beyond maps and zoning lines. See the lives lived here. The generations who have poured their work, their love and hope into these homes and into the City. See the future that can still thrive if we honor the past. We, the residents, are not against growth. We are for community; we are for a city that remembers its people. We are for the right to age in peace in the homes we built and no pass forward. The stories and legacies of this place. The Master Plan is not just policy. It is promise. A promise to preserve, protect and nurture the very fabric of Keene its neighborhoods, its people, its soul. Let us keep that promise.

Ms. Lori Whippie of 352 Pearl Street addressed the Committee next. Ms. Whippie stated she lives right across from where a major part of this proposed change is going to be happening. She stated she, too, shares strong opposition to this change. Ms. Whippie apologized for not being prepared and added she too did not receive a letter until last minute and expressed her disappointed in the lack of efforts by the City to notify the community about this meeting.

Ms. Whippie stated she shares the same frustrations as her neighbors. The roundabout is not wide enough and is incredibly dangerous for residents to exit their street. She also added she has concerns with where the crosswalks are placed because it is almost impossible to see pedestrians. She stated the other troubling issue is the residents don't know what is going to be constructed on their street.

Ms. Whippie stated she, too, has been affected by noise and light pollution as well as the staging area for construction and stated it is disappointing the lack of attention that has been given to homeowners on this street.

Ms. Whippie stated this is her first home. Her husband is in the military and, when he retires in four years and comes back home, she does not want him to come back to a place of noise and unrest. She noted that he has earned his place of peace and is someone who has given almost 20 years to the military. She added, when they purchased their house, they never realized the amount of noise and trouble that comes from the McDonald's parking lot. She indicated it is loud

even at 2:00 AM to 3:00 AM. She stated there is constantly garbage in her yard and it is difficult to keep up with that. Ms. Whippie pointed out that they live very close to the river and have experienced flooding in the basement, causing a lot of property damage. She felt a commercial property would devalue her home and cause more issues than what she is experiencing.

Mr. James Wright stated he has lived in his residence for 60 years. Mr. Wright stated he has lived through two flooding events, but this is his home and wants to continue to live here. He referred to two properties the City has ignored for many years on Pearl Street for over 30 years. He talked about the difficulty in living so close to a roundabout. Mr. Wright stated he has heard the applicant is intending to construct a restaurant on Pearl Street. He talked about the effort he has put into trying to get a speed sign on this street but has not been successful.

Councilor Jones stated to the public they would have another opportunity to address the full council in about a month. He further stated this Committee cannot be project specific but can dictate the types of uses that can be located.

Ms. Peloquin addressed the Committee again and stated she understands the process. Ms. Peloquin stated she does not want to be in another situation with the kind of use that already exists on Pearl Street where large trucks travel by her house and talked about the issue she is already having with large vehicle causing her house to shake and windows that have cracked due to these vehicles driving by her house. She stated they have no recourse for this, but if they had known what was going to happen, they could have raised objection. Ms. Peloquin pointed out that she has also learned that a commercial use in a neighborhood could decrease property value. Councilor Bosley stated the responsibility of this Committee is to deliberate what they feel is the best use of this property and all the uses that can be located on this property. The Councilor stated someone could approach the City and say, for example, they were going to construct a beautiful greenhouse, and they could sell that concept to the neighbors. On that information, the City could change the underlying zoning. However, because the zoning is now changed a car dealership can be located in that zone, and at that point, there will be no recourse to stop any of the permitted uses in that zoning district. She stated, hence, it is better the Committee doesn't know so that they could evaluate the most potentially harmful use that could be located if the zoning was changed

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

Councilor Remy stated, in looking through the list of potential uses, while the Master Plan is very broad, it talks about some important uses, which have been highlighted. This particular zone, as Staff have called out in their report, is a "call out zone" and is in the Winchester/Marlboro Street Strategic Planning Area. He referred to the following language: *the intent was there are opportunities for a mix of higher density housing and provision of retail and community services that transition to the Key Road commercial area along with Winchester Street towards Keene State College and the Blake Street neighborhood in the direction of Main Street.* The report goes on to address Marlborough Street on the other side. He felt that from a Master Plan perspective, the uses meet that definition. Whether it aligns with the neighborhood on Pearl Street is something that would need to be discussed.

Councilor Bosley stated, on the surface of this, she would tend to disagree with Councilor Remy. She stated during the meeting she has been driving up and down Pearl Street on Google Maps because she wanted to get a feel for what the neighborhood is like. She stated she agrees there is potential for some commercial zoning but did not feel it needs to go this far down Pearl Street. She stated there is a really nice residential neighborhood here that needs to be protected; she stated with the recent changes to the commercial district, we could see a six-story building with housing on the upper floors and commercial on the lower floor and did not feel this would be in keeping with this neighborhood. She continued by stating the myriads of other uses that would be allowed in Commerce may not align. The Councilor stated she would be amenable to looking at the front four lots that are directly adjacent to the roundabout, which could serve a commercial purpose, but the three lots at the rear belong to the neighborhood.

Councilor Jones felt the City has already set a precedent with change of zoning on Pearl Street 10 years ago, in which it would have changed from a lower impact to a higher impact. At that time, it was determined that the other end of Pearl Street, where it meets West Street, is a failed intersection, and that the City should not be moving to a higher impact. The Councilor noted nothing has changed at that intersection, it is still a failed intersection and added moving to a higher impact is not the right thing to do at this time.

He went on to say, as Ms. Whippie had stated, there is the potential for flooding and now we are going to be taking an area and almost doubling the impervious surface from 45% to 80% and stated he disagreed with this as well. Councilor Jones stated this is not the right idea for this neighborhood. The Committee can't look at projects, but can look at commercial uses, and some of those uses as outlined on the list provided to the Committee don't fit in this neighborhood.

Councilor Madison stated he agrees Councilor Jones and stated he, too, was looking at Google Maps and noted this is a residential street; it is not meant for a lot of traffic. Looking at the commercial uses that could potentially go into these lots is concerning because of the traffic that would be introduced by those uses onto Pearl Street. He felt traffic would turn around on to people's driveways or turn around onto the other two streets off of Pearl Street. He did not feel Pearl Street was designed for this type of traffic.

Mayor Kahn asked Staff what the options the petitioner has to scale back his application. He asked whether this was under the Committee's purview. Ms. Brunner, Senior Planner, stated that at the public workshop phase, the Joint Committee could modify the zoning proposal. It is a legislative decision, and the Board has the leeway to make such a change.

The Mayor asked whether it would be a denial of this initial request, but with a message that the petitioner could come back with a revised petition. Ms. Brunner stated if the Committee modified the proposal and if it is impractical for any development to happen, it could be considered a denial or it could be considered a modification.

Councilor Bosley stated she would like to leave a portion of it as a change and noted she couldn't see anyone wanting to live in those lots on that roundabout; specifically, the two lots that directly abut the roundabout. Anything further back would be disrupting the residential neighborhood.

She stated her preference would be to consider that, but would be amenable to strike the entire conversation, if that's direction the Committee wants to proceed.

Councilor Remy asked Councilor Bosley if she was proposing to include 363 and 305 Pearl Street. He felt 371 and 291 Pearl Street would be challenging. Councilor Bosley stated to create continuity you would need 363 and 305, which was her original suggestion, but stated her preference would be to divide 363 in the center. Councilor Remy stated his comments around the Master Plan was regarding the lots being discussed now but would not apply to the lots in the rear.

Councilor Haas stated it is unfortunate that we are locked into the definitions of zones and their permitted occupancies. He felt the City should explore opportunities to accommodate these transitional zones; to accommodate small residential neighborhoods as they move up against a commercial zone.

A motion was made by Councilor Remy that the Joint Committee amend the proposed ordinance to remove 331 Pearl Street, 339 Pearl Street and 347 Pearl Street so that the only remaining properties would be the City's property at 0 Winchester Street, properties at 291 Winchester Street, 305 Winchester Street, 363 Pearl Street and 371 Pearl Street.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Bosley.

Councilor Haas explained, with the amendment, the petitioner could withdraw the petition, or it would move to a public hearing on the amended proposal.

Mr. Hoefer stated he would be in support of the amendment.

Councilor Jones felt that unless the petitioner had requested an amendment, it is not something the Committee should be proposing. Ms. Brunner stated what the Committee is doing right now is creating an A version, which would not require a continuance of the public hearing. The notice of the public hearing would reflect the A version, and the neighborhood would be provided with a change to the ordinance.

The Mayor felt this was a reasonable accommodation for the petitioner and the neighborhood.

The amended motion made by Councilor Remy carried on a 10-2 vote, with Councilors Jones and Madison voting in opposition.

A motion was made by Councilor Jones that the PLD Committee request the Mayor set a public hearing on Ordinance O-2025-28-A. The motion was second by Councilor Williams and carried on a unanimous vote.

A motion was made by Councilor Remy that the Planning Board find Ordinance O-2025-28-A consistent with the 2010 Master Plan. The motion was seconded by Armando Rangel and carried on a unanimous vote.

- b) **Ordinance O-2025-29 Relating to Cross Site Access Exception from the Parking Lot Pavement Setback.** Petitioner, City of Keene Community Development Department, proposes to amend Sec. 9.4.2.A of the LDC to create an exception to the parking lot pavement setback requirement to allow for cross-site access drive aisles across property lines.

Mr. Clements addressed the Committee and stated this ordinance proposes to amend Section 942 Dimensions and Siting, Subsection A - Setbacks to create an exception to the parking lot pavement set-back requirement to allow for cross-site access drive aisles across property lines. The intent of this change is to promote vehicular traffic movements between commercial properties without the need for vehicles to travel from one property to the next on the public right-of-way.

Evan Clements, Planner, stated this change will reduce the number of short hops from one plaza to the next as patrons travel to nearby stores. This change will also create flexibility for businesses that operate across multiple parcels and are looking to create internal connections to each side of the operation. The proposal includes some requirements for cross access connections, including size, location, access agreements and planning review. Mr. Clements stated the article in the Committee's packet outlines onsite parking requirements based on zoning and driveway design standards.

Section 4 of the article outlines the requirements of parking lots within the city, excluding single and two family uses.

Table 9-2 is the travel and parking surface setback requirements. This is based on parking lot size and impervious surface setback from the edge of the property to where the pavement ends. The idea is that this requires some kind of permeable green space around the perimeter of parking lots to promote green infrastructure and smart stormwater solutions.

In the Downtown Districts, with the form-based codes, there are a different set of rules related to parking lots. This proposal is more for the traditional landform.

Cross site access, Mr. Clements stated, is a form of access management, which is one of the aspects of land use management and one of the Planning Board site development standards in Article 21 of the Land Development Code. Access management involves the planning and coordination of the location, number, spacing and design of access points from the public right-of-way onto adjacent property. This allows for efficient control of vehicle movements by reducing conflicts and maximizing the traffic capacity of roadways. Well-planned access management systems facilitate safe access to land along roadways, while promoting and supporting an efficient street system and unified access and internal site circulation for development.

A cross-site access is the continuation of a parking lot drive aisle across a property line that allows vehicles to travel from one property to another without having to re-enter the street system. These connections can have a one-way or two-way traffic flow, with examples of these connections currently existing throughout the City. They are especially prevalent along existing

major commercial corridors, such as West Street. Mr. Clements provided an example of this from a rendering of the West Street Plaza.

The core function of this proposal is to provide an allowance for these design elements to happen naturally as part of a site plan design review and development process. Currently, if a property owner wanted to create an access point, there is no allowance in our zoning code outside of the downtown. An applicant would need to get a variance. He noted Planning Staff have had, within the last year, at least two proposed developments for this type of change. He noted this conflict existed in the previous zoning code as well.

Mr. Clements felt this proposal is almost a cleanup, meaning it is a common-sense approach to how things should be done. This concluded Mr. Clements' presentation.

Councilor Haas stated if there are two separate properties but the same owner, the solution was simple. If there are different owners, they would need to have an agreement. He asked what happens if one of those properties is sold and one of those owners doesn't want to continue with this. He asked whether deed restriction would be required. Mr. Clements stated there is a provision for cross access agreements when they are necessary. He added the property owner would either need to negotiate with the new property owner to continue that cross access or abandon it.

Mr. Clements stated the general intent is for safety. The first recommendation is 22 feet wide for two-way, and 11 feet for one-way, which is just about in line with current regulations are for drive aisles in parking lots. Connections shall be far enough from the front property line to promote vehicular and pedestrian safety.

He added Staff did not want to establish a distance that would be uniform so that parcels of different sizes could be accommodated and a property owner is not being forced to apply for a variance to meet the distance required by the City.

Ms. Brunner referred to page 31, item F, which says planning review shall be required per Section 26.12.3, which includes administrative planning. It does not mean a full site plan review.

There was no public comment, as there was no public present.

A motion was made by Councilor Remy that the Planning Board finds Ordinance O-2025-29 consistent with the 2010 Master Plan. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn and was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Jones that the PLD Committee request the Mayor set a public hearing on Ordinance O-2025-29. The motion was seconded by Councilor Madison and was unanimously approved.

IV) New Business

None

V) Next Meeting – October 14, 2025

There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 9:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner
Emily Duseau, Planning Technician