ADOPTED

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Monday, September 29, 2025 **6:30 PM** **Council Chambers, City Hall**

Members Present:
Mayor Jay V. Kahn
Councilor Michael Remy
Sarah Vezzani
Ryan Clancy
Kenneth Kost
Michael Hoefer, Alternate
Stephon Mehu, Alternate
Joseph Cocivera, Alternate

Staff Present:
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Evan Clements, Planner
Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:
Harold Farrington, Chair
Roberta Mastrogiovanni, Vice Chair
Armando Rangel
Randyn Markelon, Alternate
Tammy Adams, Alternate

I) Call to Order – Roll Call

Senior Planner, Mari Brunner, stated the Chair and Vice-Chair were not present today and asked that the Board nominate a Chair Pro-Tempore. She indicated she had contacted Councilor Remy, and he has agreed to act in this role. Stephon Mehu was invited to join the session as a voting member.

A motion was made by Ryan Clancy that the Planning Board nominate Michael Remy as Chair Pro-Tempore for today's meeting. The motion was seconded by Kenneth Kost and was unanimously approved.

Chair Pro-Tempore Remy called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and a roll call was taken. The Board welcomed the new Alternate, Joseph Cocivera.

II) Minutes of Previous Meetings – August 25, 2025 & September 8, 2025

A motion was made by Kenneth Kost to approve the August 25 and September 8 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mayor Kahn and was unanimously approved.

III) Final Vote on Conditional Approvals

Chair Pro-Tem Remy stated as a matter of practice, the Board will now issue a final vote on all conditionally approved plans after all of the conditions precedent have been met. This final vote will be the final approval and will start the 30-day appeal clock. He asked Staff whether there were any items ready for final approval.

Ms. Brunner stated there were two applications that are ready for final approval this evening. The first one is PB-2025-16 for 124-126 Eastern Avenue and 130 Eastern Avenue. This is a boundary line adjustment application. This project had four conditions precedent to final approval, which includes the owner signatures appear on the proposed BLA plan, submittal of two mylar copies of the plan, submittal of a check to cover recording fees, and inspection of the lot monuments. All conditions have been met.

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn that the Planning Board issue final site plan approval for PB-2025-16. The motion was seconded by Kenneth Kost and carried on a unanimous vote.

The second application is PB-2025-15 for 429 Elm Street. This is a Cottage Court development application. There were two conditions precedent, including the owner's signature appears on the site plan and submittal of five paper copies and one digital copy of the site plan. Those conditions have been met.

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn that the Planning Board issue final site plan approval for PB-2025-15. The motion was seconded by Kenneth Kost and carried on a unanimous vote.

IV) Public Hearings

a) Appeal of Decision on Street Access Permit Exception Request – 15 Crestview St – Applicants and owners, Christopher Jager & Brittany Hill, are requesting an appeal of a denied Street Access Permit exception request from Section 23.5.4.A.8 of the Land Development Code related to the allowed driveway width for single- and two-family homes. The parcel is 0.22-ac in size and is located in the Low Density District.

A. Board Determination of Completeness

Planner, Megan Fortson, stated the applicant has not requested any exemptions from the submittal items as part of this application. Planning Staff recommend that the Planning Board accept the application as complete.

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn to accept this Application as complete. The motion was seconded by Stephon Mehu and was unanimously approved.

B. Public Hearing

Mr. Chris Jager of 15 Crestview Street addressed the Board with reference to a street access exception. Mr. Jager stated his proposal is to the south side of the garage where he is proposing an extension of the driveway. He stated this is to provide for another parking spot when the winter snow ordinance goes into effect. He noted the extension will be kept within the property line.

Mr. Clancy noted that staff are recommending that this section be squared off and asked why the applicant is requesting that it be angled. Mr. Jager stated he had submitted a few different proposals; for example, his first proposal was to go to the left of the driveway, but there were certain zoning issues with that proposal. The angle design was based on the City Engineer's thoughts at one point, but he added he was not opposed to squaring off that section. He added with squaring off that section, there was also a concern with a right-of-way in the section.

The Mayor felt the three-foot side set back seems narrow and asked for the applicant's comment.

Mr. Jager stated the boundary line is further back from where they are planning to locate the driveway, which would approximately be six feet from the property line.

Staff comments were next. Planner, Megan Fortson, addressed the Board and stated the Board, under State Statute, has the authority to review driveway permit applications. In Keene, this is referred to as "Street Access" or "Curb Cut" applications. A number of years ago, this authority was delegated to the City Engineer for single-family and two-family homes, along with curb cuts that are approved for temporary use. The applicant has submitted a Street Access Permit application for widening his existing driveway to the north, in between where the house and the breezeway are located. Ms. Fortson stated this application had a few issues with it; for example, it did not comply with the necessary zoning requirements under Article 9 of the Land Development Code. It also was not approved by the City Engineer's office, because they did not feel that it complied with the Street Access Standards in Article 23 of the Land Development Code. Hence, this is the reason the applicant is before the Board tonight. The applicant has decided to appeal the decision in accordance with Section 27 of the Land Development Code.

Ms. Fortson went on to say the parcel itself is located at the corner of Crestview Street and Phil Lane and is about 0.22 acres in size. The parcel is located in the Low Density District. The existing parcel is developed with a single-family home, a breezeway and a structure on the southernmost part that was formerly a garage, which the prior property owner converted into what is now an enclosed porch.

The specific standard that the property owner is requesting an exception from is to allow for a driveway that is wider than 20 feet at the property line. Ms. Fortson explained this is where the parcel intersects with the road. Ms. Fortson stated the applicant is requesting this review before the Planning Board, and the Board will be reviewing it as though it is a completely new application.

With respect to regional impact, this is something the Board will need to deliberate. The only departmental comments received relevant to this application were from City Engineering Staff. The City Engineer has pointed out that the proposal doesn't comply with the relevant width standard and did not feel the proposal met the specific exception criteria, which is similar to someone requesting a waiver. One of those criteria is that there has to be some sort of unique characteristic or hardship of a property that is being used as a reason to grant this exception. The City Engineer did not feel that was demonstrated as part of this proposal and it will be up to the Board to make that determination.

With respect to the specific driveway design standards under Article 9 of the Land Development Code, the driveway design standards an applicant is required to be able to cite is an 8-foot wide by 18-foot parking space and that parking spot has to be at least three feet from the side property line. That standard appears to be met.

The other requirement that has to be met as part of the standard is that the parking space has to be located either behind the front setback,15 feet in the Low Density District, or behind the front building line. The applicant is proposing to start the parking space directly adjacent to his enclosed porch. That standard appears to be met.

The surface material is proposed to be asphalt or some other equivalent material, and the applicant would finalize this once a contractor has been hired.

There are no grading or drainage measures proposed. That standard is not applicable.

The driveway is shorter than 300 feet in length and less than 15% in grade. Hence, the long driveway and steep slope standards are not applicable.

Ms. Fortson continued by addressing Article 23 of the Land Development Code. Ms. Fortson noted these are the standards specific to public infrastructure. The standard states that if the driveway is going to cross a sidewalk, that sidewalk has to be reconstructed to City standards. There is no disruption of an existing sidewalk proposed. This standard is not applicable.

Street Access – The standard states the street has to be placed so as to ensure that vehicles have a safe sight distance of 200 feet in all directions. This standard is not applicable because the applicant is not proposing a new driveway.

Drainage – None is proposed, hence there is no concern with respect to blocking the flow of drainage, gutters, drainage ditches or pipes.

Ms. Fortson noted the most applicable standard falls under Section 23.5.4.A.8 of the Land Development Code, which states that you can have an up to 20-foot wide driveway at your property line and then closer to the road it can be up to 30-feet wide. The property owner is looking to add 2 feet of pavement to his existing 28-foot-wide driveway, in which it intersects with the road, and then extend it to about 41 feet wide, where the new parking space will start. The City Engineer has requested that the driveway be squared off so that cars are not trying to go into the driveway and then make a turn. His concern is that cars will drive over grass and damage that area of grass that is not paved off.

Ms. Fortson referred to Section 23.5.6:
The issuance of the exception shall not adversely affect the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles using adjacent streets and intersections.

The issuance will not adversely affect the efficiency and capacity of the street or intersection.

There are unique characteristics of the land, which present a physical hardship to the requestor.

In no case shall financial hardship be used to justify the granting of the exception.

Ms. Fortson stated the hardest criteria to meet is trying to identify if there are really unique characteristics of the land, which presents a physical hardship. She asked that the Board consider the fact that one of the parking spaces was taken away by a previous property owner when the garage was converted into livable space. Another thing to think about is the fact that when this house was constructed, the house was located on a diagonal, which limits the number of locations where you can locate another curb cut that complies with the zoning ordinance. This concluded Staff comments.

Mr. Hoefer noted the parking space has to be 18 feet long and asked if this could be in the right-of-way. Ms. Fortson answered in the negative. She stated this is already non-conforming and the applicant is trying to make it more conforming, which is why he is proposing to widen the parking space to south, so he can get into the driveway that complies with the requirement and locate the parking spot next to his garage.

The Chair Pro-Tem asked for public comment next.

Mr. Bradford Hutchinson addressed the Board and noted he is a candidate for the 2025 Mayoral race. He stated he is always interested when a resident wants to improve their property. He apologized to the applicant on behalf of the City for additional hardship he felt the City was imposing on Mr. Jager. He referred to the aerial view and noted this is a corner property and the house is constructed at an angle and the garage appears to have been added long after the house was constructed. He felt this is an unusual layout.

Mr. Hutchinson stated his issue with zoning are all the rules that are imposed on a property owner. He felt there was too much red tape for property owners to maneuver through and asked Staff to try and work with this property owner. With no further comment, the Chair Pro-Tem closed the public hearing.

Mr. Clancy stated, in addition to the unique characteristics of this property and the property also being a corner lot, he appreciated the applicant working with City Staff and moving that driveway away from the intersection.

The Chair Pro-Tem noted to a letter from a neighbor acknowledging the distance at this location.

Mr. Kost stated he likes that the driveway is narrower at the curb, which provides for less paving and was also relieved that the neighbor was is support of this request.

The Chair Pro-Tem noted the other side of the house has a steep drop down to the road, which is another condition that makes it difficult to park a car on that side.

Mr. Hoefer stated he was in support of this application and added this is exactly what the process is supposed to be. The City has standards, and a homeowner always has the ability to challenge a decision.

The Chair Pro-Tem stated Staff is required to be very literal with respect to their translation and the intent of this Board is to help understand where those lines are supposed to be.

C. Board Discussion and Action

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn that the Planning Board grant an exception from Section 23.5.4.A.8 of the Land Development Code to allow for a driveway width greater than 20' at the property line.

The motion was seconded by Stephon Mehu and was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn that the Planning Board approve the Street Access Permit for the expansion of the driveway at 15 Crestview Street with the following condition:
1. Following the completion of construction, a final inspection shall be performed by the City Engineer, or their designee, to ensure that all work was completed in accordance with the driveway design standards in Article 9.3 of the LDC, Street Access Standards in Article 23.5.4.A of the LDC, and all other applicable City of Keene regulations.

The motion was seconded by Stephon Mehu and was unanimously approved.

The Chair Pro-Tem noted this is a condition subsequent.

b) PB-2025-18 – Major Site Plan – Change of Use – Key Road Plaza, 109-147 Key Rd – Applicant Anagnost Companies, on behalf of owner Key Road Development LLC, proposes to convert ~ 61,526-sf of existing retail space in the Key Road Plaza development into a charitable gaming facility for Revo Casino & Social House. The parcel is ~5.8-ac in size and is located at 109-147 Key Rd (TMP #110-022-000) and is located in the Commerce District.

A. Board Determination of Completeness

Planner, Evan Clements, stated this application is a proposed change of use within an existing 61,526 square foot retail building; however, the proposed change of use is only going to be approximately 15,000 square feet.

With respect to completeness, the applicant has requested an exemption from submitting separate existing and proposed condition plans, elevations, drainage report, soils, screening, architectural and visual analysis, historic evaluation, and other technical reports. After reviewing each request, Planning Staff have made the preliminary determination that granting the requested exemptions would have no bearing on the merits of the application and recommend that the Board accept the application as complete.

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn to accept this application as complete. The motion was seconded by Stephon Mehu and was unanimously approved.

B. Public Hearing.

Chair Remy noted that this project received a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment and asked for Staff comment on that item. Mr. Clements stated this project received a variance from the Zoning Board Adjustment for the use to be located within 250 feet of the property line of a residential use.

B. Public Hearing

Applicant Dick Anagnost, CEO of Anagnost Companies, addressed the Board. He stated he was also the manager and owner of Key Road Development LLC, a partner, and a tenant as well. Mr. Anagnost stated they have been in the charitable gaming business for approximately 27 years in New Hampshire and in Keene for a little close to 20 years. They also have facilities in Lebanon, Conway, Manchester, Dover and soon to be operating in Berlin.

He stated they have their own security company and they are a voluntary 21 and older facility. State law provides for 18 and older access, but based on the liquor laws, they have voluntarily converted it to a 21 and older facility. Security checks all IDs at the door to make sure this is enforced. All entrances to the facility, for security reasons, are through the front door. There are no other access points, other than exits for fire purposes, within the facility.

He noted employees, as well as owners, undergo thorough security check by the Lottery Commission and Attorney General's Office. Everybody has ID badges that have to be current. State law in New Hampshire provides no complimentary alcohol served in these facilities, which he felt was an issue. Mr. Anagnost stated they are often called a casino because they approach the industry in the same manner as a casino, but, technically, this is a charitable gaming facility. They do not have a gambling license, but rather they are facilitators and have an operator’s license. The operator’s license allows them to affiliate with charities that would actually have the gaming license and would benefit significantly from the operation that goes on.

Mr. Anagnost stated the State requires them to have state-of-the-art security systems. They have accounting and auditing systems and are checked regularly by oversight, which is the Lottery Commission. He noted that they have served countless charities in Keene: Keene Kiwanis, Keene Montessori School, Keene Baseball Club, Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forest, Keene Senior Citizens, Keene Lions Club, Keene Rotary. With that he turned the presentation over to their engineer, Chad Brannon.

Chad Brannon from Fieldstone Land Consultants addressed the Board. Mr. Brannon stated they are before the Board seeking a site plan approval for a change of use to permit a charitable gaming facility over tax map parcel 110-22. The portion of the plaza that this charitable gaming facility is proposed to be located is at 133 Key Road. This proposal would relocate Revo Casino and Social House from their current downtown location at 172 Emerald Street to this Key Road location where the current Toy City businesses is located.

He noted the subject property, and all abutting properties, are situated in the Commerce District, where charitable gaming is a permitted use. Key Road is also one of the few roads in the City that charitable gaming is permitted. Mr. Brannon went on to say that the subject property consists of about 5.8 acres of land and is currently a fully developed site. It is a Plaza consisting of about 61,526 square feet of building space with associated site improvements. The property is currently occupied by a number of tenants; for example, The Department of Health and Human Services Keene District Office, Keene Cinemas, Toy City, Sherwin-Williams Paints, Enterprise Comics, and Oriental Rug Works. He noted a majority of the surrounding uses are commercial, such as Brown Computer Solutions, Hampton Inns and Suites, and Autex Mazda dealership. There is also the commercial shopping plaza to the east, where Staples is located, as well as a number of other tenants. There are multifamily residential buildings situated to the north, behind the commerce district.

Mr. Brannon stated part of the code, which was revised in around 2023, is Section 2.3.2.I2. The section deals with use standards relative to charitable gaming facilities. Mr. Brannon felt this facility meets all the use criteria within that section and specifically with the zoning relief they were able to obtain earlier this month.

Mr. Brannon explained the proposed gaming facility will have a gaming floor space that exceeds 10,000 square feet, which is one of the requirements. The change of use in total is about 15,000 square feet in size, but it does include a restaurant component, storage and office areas.
The charitable gaming facility will not be located within 500 feet of another facility. It will not be located within 250 feet of a place of worship, child day care center, or a public or private school. The facility will also not be within 250 feet of a residential zoning district. He noted they are situated within 250 feet of a residential property, which did require relief under a Subsection 2.C2, and the applicant was able to successfully obtain that relief at the Zoning Board meeting on September 2, 2025. He added this relief was required because the existing building is situated approximately 65 feet from the closest adjacent property line where there is a residential property—a multifamily development. He noted the charitable gaming facility would be located approximately 170 feet from the existing multifamily residential building at the rear. The main entrance of the facility is furthest away from the residential property. Hence, the majority of the site activity will be buffered by the existing building.

Mr. Brannon went on to say a change of use inherently comes with some site plan modifications to accommodate the use and some upgrades to the existing features on site. It is changing from a retail use to a mixed-use that includes charitable gaming facility with about 180 gaming stations. The footprint for the gaming facility would be over 10,000 square feet. There is also a planned 75-seat restaurant located within that 15,000 square foot area, and 1000 square feet of storage and office area.

To accommodate this change of use, the applicant is proposing some minor modifications to the site. They are looking to re-stripe some of the existing paved areas. They are not proposing any pavement expansion. The improvements consist of restriping about 45 parking spaces. In addition, the applicants propose upgrading some of the existing lighting along the rear of the building where there will be only employee parking permitted. The upgrades would consist of installing about seven building mounted lights under the current lighting plan.

The applicant is also proposing improvements to screening along the rear of the building, and they are proposing a 190-foot vinyl stockade fence at the rear of the site, which will be adjacent to the parking area. The loading dock will also be screened. Mr. Brannon stated, because they are adding 45 parking spaces to the site, landscaping improvement has to be incorporated. The applicant is proposing five oak trees on the site to address that criteria.

Mr. Brannon next addressed the Planning Board Development Review Standards. The applicant feels they meet all applicable criteria. He added they have no objections to the conditions of approval out lined in the Staff Report.

Mr. Clancy asked about the three oak trees in the parking lot area; specifically, he called attention to the tree in the middle and expressed concerns about viability. Mr. Brannon stated the trees in the parking lot along Key Road were located in the existing landscape island, considering the existing utilities on the site. He added they are 5 feet off the edge of pavement and felt they should be successful. He continued by stating the applicant has to provide a bond for the landscaping as part of the project.

The Mayor asked for the length of the fencing. Mr. Brannon stated the fencing will run from the northwest corner of the property and extend about 190 feet. The fencing will go beyond the existing loading dock area and create a contiguous fence line along the back of the property. He added there is an existing fence that is located at the end of that proposed 190-foot fence to the west. The Mayor asked for the purpose of this additional fencing. Mr. Brannon stated it was a request from Staff to screen the loading area.

Mr. Hoefer asked, compared to the existing site, how much larger this new location will be. Mr. Anagnost stated the current location is around 7,000 square feet and the new site will be around 15,000 square feet.

Staff comments were next. Mr. Clements addressed the Board and stated this is a fully built out Plaza and the applicant is not making any real material changes to the exterior of the site. He added there is no regional impact from this application. Mr. Clements stated drainage, sediment, erosion control, snow storage, water and sewer, filling and excavation, surface waters and wetlands, and hazardous and toxic materials standards don't apply to this project. This is a fully developed site with no changes.

Landscaping – As the applicant described, the proposed 5 parking lot trees are required for the addition of 45 parking spaces. Staff are recommending, as a condition of approval, a financial security be reviewed and approved by the City Engineer. The security is to be held for one year to ensure that this new landscaping does survive and thrive.

Screening – A 6-foot solid stockade fence is proposed along the rear property line. Mr. Clements noted there are several different standards in the Land Development Code that do require screening, including use standards for the charitable gaming facility use itself, from residential properties. This standard appears to be met.

Lighting – Mr. Clements stated the initial proposal was to install two wall-mounted light fixtures approximately 15 feet off the ground. These fixtures would be full cut off, dark skies compliant, and consist of a color-rendering index of 80 and a color temperature of approximately 3,000 Kelvin. This proposal has been since revised to include the replacement of five existing wall packs along the wall with the same fixtures that are currently being proposed. Those existing lighting fixtures are not compliant with the current regulations. The applicant has voluntarily decided to replace those fixtures as well. He noted this should reduce the amount of glare from the lighting to the residential property.

Mr. Clements stated the applicant's initial photometric details were incomplete and added it is hard to complete a full photometric analysis to the City's specifications when you are only affecting a portion of the site. One of the things the City requires is referred to as a uniformity ratio and it cannot be more than a 5:1 between the average and the minimum of the lighting intensity. The requirement is intended to make sure that the parking lot doesn't have any hot (light) and cold (dark) spots. The initial submitted photometrics had too many zeros in it, which made it difficult to calculate the average. The applicant has since submitted revised photometrics that meet the standards. Mr. Clements indicated the condition of approval to request revised photometrics is no longer needed.

Traffic and Access Management – The applicant states, in their narrative, that all traffic access will be from the existing street access points along Key Road. There are no proposed changes to the location or orientation of traffic access or vehicle circulation throughout the site as part of the application. The applicant proposes to create those 45 new parking spaces within the Plaza. Of those 45 spaces, 25 spaces are proposed within the existing rows of parking throughout the site. The remaining 20 spaces are being proposed to the rear of the charitable gaming facility and adjacent uses near the existing loading dock. Mr. Clements stated one of the concerns that the zoning board had was access to the rear of the building for employees or the adjacent residential use. Staff is requesting that the Board discuss that matter. Mr. Clements stated that the applicant did address this item. To reiterate, the applicant stated that all access to the use is going to be from the front of the site and that those parking spaces are going to be for employees only. The applicant's representative has stated to Staff that employees who park there will be required to navigate around the building to come into the front access. There is not going to be a special access to those parking spaces.

Mr. Clements noted the applicant has also included a traffic study prepared by a professional engineer. It is indicated that the daily weekday traffic volume for the entire plaza is approximately 5,416 trips, and the change of use shows a net increase of 13 peak hour trips.

The existing weekday total trips is 818, but the proposed change of use is at 1,770 for a net increase of weekday daily trips of 952. The PM peak hour is 99 existing trips, and with 112 trips for the proposed change of use, the net increase is 13 trips during peak hour.

Mr. Clements stated the International Traffic Engineer and NH DOT threshold for significant impact to adjacent roadway systems is 100 trips per peak hour. The applicant's net increase is only 13 peak hour trips, which is significantly lower than the threshold of 100. It appears this standard has been met.

Noise – The applicant states in their narrative that the noise generated by the proposed use would be minimal, as the use would be conducted inside. They anticipate that the use would generate noise comparable to a movie theater or other similar uses. This standard has also been met.

Architectural and Visual Appearance – Mr. Clements stated the applicant is not proposing any changes to the exterior of the building, except for signage, which is not under the purview of the Planning Board. Hence, the architectural and visual appearance standards are not applicable.

Mr. Clements reviewed the conditions of approval as outlined in the Board's packet.

This concluded Staff comments.

The Chair Pro-Tem noted Code requires 10,000 square feet of gaming floor and asked if this needs to be outlined in the conditions or if this is something that is required of the applicant. Mr. Clements stated this is an item that would be verified through the zoning review for the issuance of the building permit. Staff did request the applicant's representative confirm this issue and there is an e-mail from Fieldstone indicating that the floor space is approximately 10,009 square feet.

The Chair Pro-Tem asked for public comment.

Mr. Bradford Hutchinson addressed the Board felt this site was an appropriate location for this use. He hoped that Toy City would be able to move its location to a different site and be as successful as they have been at this site. Mr. Hutchinson felt this is a much better location for this use but encouraged the petitioner to work with Toy City.

With no further comment, the Chair Pro-Tem closed the public hearing.

Mr. Kost referred to the process the Board went through to designate allowed locations for gaming facilities in the City and felt this is the result of that. He stated he could not see anything in the code that would go against this application.

Mayor Kahn stated this change of use is something that was forecasted by the City when it went through the zoning change and stated he supported this application.

Chair Remy agreed there is no regional impact as a result of this application. He noted this is one of the properties that the City did not want to see a casino located in, but the zoning board has issued a variance for the use to be located here.

C. Board Discussion and Action

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn that the Planning Board approve PB-2025-18 as shown on the plan identified as "Site Plan Exhibit" prepared by Fieldstone Land Consultants, PLLC at a scale of 1 inch = 40 feet dated August 22, 2025 and last revised September 15, 2025 with the following conditions prior to final approval and signature of the plans by the Planning Board Chair:
1. Prior to final approval and signature by the Planning Board Chair, the following conditions precedent shall be met:
  A. The owner's signature shall appear on the plan.
  B. Submittal of security for landscaping in a form and amount acceptable to the City Engineer.
  C. Submittal of five full-size paper copies and one digital copy of the final plan.

The motion was seconded by Kenneth Kost and was unanimously approved.

V) <u>City Council Referral: R-2025-26 Relating to an Amended Return of Layout for a Public Right-of-Way Known as Grove Street</u> – City Council has requested Planning Board review and recommendation regarding a proposal to return ~257 sf of land from Grove Street to the adjacent parcel located at 0 Grove St. (TMP #585-057-000).

Public Works Director Don Lussier addressed the Board. Mr. Lussier stated this item is an amendment to the Grove Street layout. In 2014, the City was in the in the midst of redeveloping railroad land. As part of that proposal, an event space was proposed to the land area north of Grove Street. However, because of the traffic anticipated as a result of that venue, it was decided that a second northbound lane was needed at the Grove Street approach to Water Street at the Community Way intersection. Today, there is a left turn lane and a right turn lane for northbound traffic heading onto Water Street.

In 2014, the City acquired 430 square feet from the owner of this property in order to accommodate the roadway widening for that extra lane. That intersection widening was completed. However, the venue never came to fruition. Staff has looked at traffic conditions as it exists today and have notice two lanes for northbound traffic is not warranted based on today's traffic volumes. At the same time, there has been numerous requests from the public to simplify this intersection as this extra lane creates some confusion.

Approximately six months ago, the City sold that parcel to a new developer, Habitat for Humanity, and they have requested the City release some of that land back to this property, which could make the difference between, for example, a single family home on the property or duplex on the property without having to go through a variance process.

Mr. Lussier stated the City is not proposing to release the entire 430 square feet that was acquired and noted to the area that is going to be released and the area that is going to be retained by the City, as well as an easement for the hydrant that would be remain on the released property.

All other public infrastructure would be within the right-of-way. This conclude Mr. Lussier's comments.

There was discussion about the location of a sidewalk and it was noted there is a sidewalk on the opposite side of the street.

There was no public comment.

A motion was made by Mayor Kahn that the City Council approve a petition to amend the layout of Grove Street in the vicinity of Water Street.

The motion was seconded by Stephon Mehu and was unanimously approved.

VI) <u>2025 Comprehensive Master Plan – In accordance with NH RSA 674:4 and NH RSA 675:6, the Keene Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the City of Keene 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan. The plan is available for review at KeeneNH.gov and at City Hall in the Community Development Dept.</u>

Ms. Brunner, Senior Planner, addressed the Board. Ms. Brunner stated this was the last step in the Master Plan process, which is a process that started over two years ago. The process started with City Council approving a budget for the project. The City hired a consultant team who began working with the Planning Board and the Mayor to form a Steering Committee. The consultant team hired to lead this process was Future IQ from Minnesota. They also worked with JSNA, an economic development firm, and WGI, a community development and planning team. Ms. Brunner also recognized the project Steering Committee who played a critical role in this project consisting of a good cross section of the Community.

The first phase of the project focused on data gathering and gathering public input through a wide variety of means. There was a community survey, which was a detailed survey that took an average of 24 minutes for people to complete; specifically, 648 people completed the survey. Ms. Brunner stated another highlight was the Think Tank workshop, which consisted of two half day sessions held in May of 2024. Fifty community members participated in these workshops, and they developed a framework for exploring the community's preferred future through a scenario planning process. The sessions were facilitated by the consultant team. The outcome of that workshop was the identification of what the workshop participants thought was the preferred future. After which time, a variety of visioning sessions were scheduled to test the identified preferred future with the larger community, and 17 visioning sessions were held.

Phase 1 wrapped up in October with the Future Summit event. Attendees learned about the process and the strategic pillars were unveiled at that time.

<u>Phase Two</u> – While the first phase focused on identifying and building a consensus around a shared community vision, the second phase was dedicated to articulate and identify the goals and action steps as well as the priorities to make that vision implementable. To accomplish that, six task forces were created (six new groups). In total, 60 people participated in this process facilitated by the consultant team, and they worked on reviewing data, past work and case studies. As a result, draft goals and actions were created and brought back to the Steering Committee for vetting. The process eventually created the Future Land Use map. The draft plan,

including an implementation matrix and the Future Land Use map were presented to the community at a second Future Summit event on June 3rd. Ms. Brunner stated the final version has changed slightly within the plan, but the June 3rd version is substantially the same as what the Board has before it today.

The outcome of phase one was the development of a community vision. The goal with this effort was to develop a data-informed consensus that reflects the shared values of the community and referred to a graphic to illustrate that.

Each step on this illustration narrows the focus down more to a point of consensus that the community could rally behind. Next, Ms. Brunner referred to a slide that summarizes what that vision for the future of Keene is, according to the Master Plan. The first version of this was developed during the Think Tank workshop, in which the participants identified four potential future scenarios that could become a reality. The participants explored those four scenarios and were asked to pick one which they preferred. People want to see Keene grow to be a safe, welcoming and vibrant place to live with good living options, access to nature and high-quality jobs. They also want the City to proactively invest in infrastructure in neighborhoods as well as implement housing solutions.

<u>Themes</u> – Ms. Brunner noted, throughout this process, residents and the Steering Committee brought forward specific topic areas, or themes, that were not specifically called out in the pillars as to what makes Keene "Keene;" specifically, what the values are that are essential for the community to hold on to in order to maintain Keene's distinct culture and personality. The values are as follows: sustainability, education, lifelong learning, accessibility, public health collaboration and leading by example.

<u>Strategic Pillars</u> – The strategic pillars were developed by the Steering Committee leading up to the first Future Summit and were further defined by the strategic pillar task forces that met in January, February and March of 2025.

<u>The First Pillar is Livable Housing</u>, and the main objective of this pillar is to expand enticing housing options for current and future community members. The topics that were developed for this pillar include the following goals: boost infill development and redevelopment, remove barriers to housing development, promote sustainable and healthy housing standards that align with the community's character, increase the diversity of housing options in price points, and address the housing needs of all residents – current and future.

Ms. Brunner noted that each of these goals contains an associated list of action items, which the Board can find in the implementation section.

<u>The Second Pillar is a Thriving Economy</u> with an objective to grow a dynamic economy of the future. This economy would span local to international. The goals are to encourage and recruit businesses and targeted industries, prioritize economic sustainability and resiliency, attract and grow Keene businesses of all scales (from entrepreneurs to businesses that span internationally), strengthen Keene's position as an economic development leader, and foster an inclusive economy.

The Third Pillar is Connected Mobility with an objective to build regional and local connectivity, transportation and recreation networks. The goals for this pillar are to create connected and accessible networks of multimodal transportation infrastructure, prioritize vulnerable road users and infrastructure design operations and maintenance, expand and promote environmentally sustainable mobility options that are convenient and attractive, and expand Keene's connectivity to support economic growth.

The Fourth Pillar is Vibrant Neighborhoods. The objective for this pillar is to support vibrant community neighborhoods that reflect their unique identity. The goals for this pillar include to support a built environment that encourages social connections and interactions, foster community relationship building and collaboration, ensure safe and efficient movement around town, foster a high quality of life for all residents, and create opportunities to encourage the creation of neighborhood businesses.

The Fifth Pillar is Adaptable Workforce. The objective for this pillar is to foster a future ready, abundant and adaptable workforce. The goals are to attract talent, grow Keene's workforce, expand credential pathways and skill development opportunities, play a proactive role in de-siloing efforts, broaden partnerships and increase collaboration between partners that serve and support Keene's workforce, meet quality of life needs and reduce workforce barriers–housing availability, childcare and transportation–and prioritize workforce and community health and wellness.

The Sixth Pillar is Flourishing Environment. The objective for this pillar is champion environmental stewardship and climate action. Goals for this pillar are to promote smart land use and development, prioritize environmental protection and sustainability, integrate green technologies and best practices in Keene's built environment, expand community and infrastructure development, and strengthen Keene's local leadership and collaboration to build resilience at the regional, state and wider levels.

Mr. Mehu stated one item he did not see mentioned is curbing the number of corporations that are coming in and buying up housing and increasing prices that bar current residents from staying where they are. Mayor Kahn noted this has to do with affordability of housing both locally, which is a dynamic, and nationally. He continued by stating throughout our State and Keene, the community is part of one of the highest costs of housing markets in the nation. He felt this is a barrier to the cost of housing. He felt Mr. Mehu's question is how we recognize that in this plan.

Chair Remy stated, when reading through the details and goals for the livable housing pillar, creating housing address that but doesn't describe what Mr. Mehu is referring to.

Neighborhood groups, facilitating collaboration between Keene Housing and City committees, expansion of affordable housing in Keene by utilizing zoning and code enforcement mechanisms. Diversity of housing options, from small ADU's to high end housing.

This language covers somewhat what Mr. Mehu is referring to, but to say something specific in a plan, such as “no to out of state corporations buying up housing” would be difficult.

Mr. Mehu noted you can build all the housing that you can build, but it is very finite. The Chair Pro-Tem agreed the City is doing everything it can to increase the supply of housing with the hope that the demand won’t out-pace the housing needs.

Mr. Kost asked whether this was actually a problem in Keene in which large corporations are buying up huge properties. The Mayor stated Keene has one example: the Colony Mill. The property was purchased by a large out-of-town company, but he added Keene has been pretty fortunate with some of the developments that we have had, which are local. The City Council, through Keene Housing, has approved 200 units in the last two years. Mr. Kost felt that to build according to the scale Keene is looking for, it might require attracting out-of-town developers. The Mayor referred to the reconstruction of the Middle School, which attracted an out-of-town developer to create 170 units.

Mr. Hoefer commended Ms. Brunner and her efforts with this plan. He asked what the Board’s role was tonight. The Chair Pro-Tem stated this is a public hearing, but there is also a motion to adopt the master plan.

Mr. Clancy stated “livable housing” is wording he was not in favor of, and he preferred the plan emphasize it is discussing housing that people in this community will be living in. Also, he stated the plan emphasizing this point could act as a protection to make sure that the houses in this community are for this community. He felt this is not a document that has items Keene is required to do, but it is a guide for this community and felt the plan is doing that.

The Chair Pro-Tem clarified that the Joint Committee conducts its votes based on consistency with the Master Plan, and the 2025 Master Plan will be used in that context once it is adopted.

Ms. Brunner next addressed the Future Land Use Map. She discussed a slide and explained it contains an illustration of the community’s desired land use patterns, given the aspirations, goals and strategies that have been expressed throughout the planning process.

Ms. Brunner indicated there are seven generalized land use categories, or character areas, to identify the desired character for existing and future areas of growth and change. She noted this is not a regulatory map, like the zoning map, but more of an organic map designed intentionally as such. It is not meant to dictate what a person can do with their land on a parcel level. Rather, it is conceptual guide as to how the community wants to see the City of Keene develop and grow into the future. The character areas include 1) downtown, 2) residential neighborhoods, 3) neighborhood business nodes, 4) corridor-oriented commerce, 5) conservation and low impact recreation, 6) rural, residential and working landscapes, and 7) production and innovation.

Ms. Brunner indicated the different character areas are focused more on the feel of the place and less on the permitted uses. The community expressed a desire for more mixed-use development through Keene, and there is much more of a focus on the actual identity of the place expressed through the map.

<u>Implementation and Next Steps.</u> Ms. Brunner presented a chart that describes the results of the prioritization surveys. From the results of the survey, an implementation matrix was created. For each goal, the pillar is one page, and then under each goal, there are the set of actions and for each action it is categorized as a priority level of high, medium or low. This is based on the prioritization survey, as well as the role the City plays. Would the City be the lead or is the City just a participant with someone else being the lead.

The next steps in the process would be to use the matrix to identify actions to start working on now in which the City is the lead. Then, the City would work with community partners where the City is not the lead.

Further on, the City would discuss how to keep the momentum going and to keep the plan fresh. Going forward it will also be up to Council to align the budget, CIP, and policy decisions, keeping in mind the Master Plan goals.

Chair Remy thanked all who participated in this process and stated a lot of work has gone into this process. He went on to say, in accordance with New Hampshire RSA 674:4 and New Hampshire RSA 675:6, the Keene Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the City of Keene 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan. The plan is available for review at keenenh.gov and at City Hall, Community Development Department.

The Chair Pro-Tem then asked for public comment.

Mr. Forrest Tull of 36 Red Oak Drive addressed the Board. He stated a lot of effort has gone into creating a holistic, strategic and inspiring vision with realistic action steps to get there. He stated what stands out for him is that this is a massive plan that is going to take a lot of effort, which would require community engagement and regional partnerships. He stated he hoped the City does not feel they are alone in trying to accomplish this. He stated he was very excited about this project.

Mr. Clements agreed this was a collaborative project but commended the efforts Ms. Brunner put into the Master Plan update. The success of this project was in a large part her doing, and the results of the plan would not have been as successful without her leading the project.

Ms. Brunner thanked all those who participated in this project. She also thanked Mr. Clements, Planner, Ms. Fortson, Planner, and Ms. Marcou, Administrative Assistant, who assisted with this work.

Mr. Cocivera extended his appreciation to Staff as well.

A motion was made by Mayor Jay Kahn that the Planning Board adopt the 2025 City of Keene New Hampshire Comprehensive Master Plan.

The motion was seconded by Stephon Mehu.

The Mayor stated he hoped the City would be reminded not to wait 15 years to update the plan and that the City would update it more often, even if it is not on this scale.

The motion was unanimously approved.

A Certification of Adoption was circulated for Board signature.

VII) Staff Updates
a) Site Plan Review Thresholds
b) Correspondence

Ms. Brunner referred to correspondence regarding an Ordinance that was recently adopted. There were concerns raised in this correspondence regarding the Medium Density District, including a request for Site Plan review for projects that involve a certain number of residential units.

She stated she has also received communication from members regarding site plan review thresholds. Staff is planning to set a public hearing for the October 27 Planning Board meeting to discuss these thresholds. The first would be for the Board to adopt the changes and then send it to Council to include into City Code. Staff also recommends this be discussed at the October 14 Joint Committee Meeting.

VIII) New Business

Mr. Clancy felt there was a lot that was learned through the G2 Holdings application. He stated he had some procedural concerns leading up to the final decision, but not necessarily the final decision. He felt the procedural things are things that could be questioned and suggested review of this for the next meeting; not only the RSA but also the Board's statutory requirements. For example, a mention of who an Alternate is covering. The Chair Pro-Tem agreed the Alternate component is a good item that needs to be discussed.

The Mayor asked whether the Board has passed the appeal deadline for the G2 Holdings Application. Ms. Brunner stated the Board has passed the appeal deadline for RSA 155:E (10-day), but the Board is not passed the 30-day deadline for any interpretation the Board might have made in terms of the zoning ordinance. From the date of September 26, there was another 10-day deadline for an appeal up to the Superior Court.

IX) Upcoming Dates of Interest

• Joint Committee of the Planning Board and PLD – Tuesday, October 14th, 6:30 PM
• Planning Board Steering Committee – October 14th, 12:00 PM
• Planning Board Site Visit – October 22nd, 8:00 AM – To Be Confirmed
• Planning Board Meeting –October 27th, 6:30 PM

Ms. Brunner stated if the Board has a better time it would like for site visits to let Staff know as there should be a quorum at site visits.

X) ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Remy adjourned the meeting at 8:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Emily Duseau, Planning Technician