

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager
Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney

Members Not Present:

All Present

Chair Bosley called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

1) Mark Rebillard - Use of City Property - Series of Small-Scale Downtown Festivals During Downtown Construction Project

Chair Bosley welcomed Mark Rebillard, Chair of the Keene Downtown Group. Mr. Rebillard explained the Downtown Group was founded for the vitality, vibrancy, and economic well-being of downtown Keene. The nonprofit and all volunteer Keene Downtown Group has over 20 years' experience with downtown festivals (e.g., Art Walk, Keene Ice and Snow Festival, the Music Festival, and Monadnock Buy Local, which eventually became another fully separate nonprofit). The Downtown Group Board is made up of downtown business owners and property owners: Mr. Rebillard, Cindy Giannetto of Chapters Café, Roger Weinreich of Good Fortune Jewelry, and Justin Somma from Hannah Grimes Marketplace, among others. Mr. Rebillard explained that the Downtown Group was very interested in doing what it could to help mitigate the downturn it was expecting for businesses during the downtown reconstruction periods of 2026 and 2027. So, he said the Group had been working diligently on a plan. He said the Board would seek added advice from business owners, property owners, citizens, community members, and City officials on the plan the group has developed.

Mr. Rebillard continued that when he had organized the Keene Ice and Snow Festival, the group measured the amount of traffic coming through downtown. He had recently used a software demo that would otherwise be too expensive for the Downtown Group to afford. As a part of the demo, he could model daily traffic downtown based on cell phone data, which showed spikes during the downtown festivals. The Downtown Group polled the downtown merchants to learn about the economic impact of the festivals. Merchants reported increases of 30% to 300% over normal Saturday sales during festivals. Mr. Rebillard said the goal of the Downtown Group's plan was to imagine those increases more often during the downtown project. Next, Mr.

Rebillard explained the three phases of the Keene Downtown Group's plan, in partnership with The Colonial Theater.

Phase 1 – “Show”: The Downtown Group was seeking a blanket license from the City for six festivals to be held throughout the year on dates that were still being decided but would not interfere with other festivals already happening downtown. These would be completely separate events. Mr. Rebillard said “events” would be a better word to describe these because they would not be full-scale festivals with large street closures, for example. The goal would be to keep traffic open as much as possible. If there were road closures, he expected Railroad, Lamson, Church Streets, and the like; so, most of the traffic would still be flowing. Mr. Rebillard said The Colonial already applied for a grant for a mobile stage, and he thought there was a good chance of receiving it. Then, there would be a mobile stage—with lighting and a generator—stored at The Colonial. The idea was for all these festivals to culminate with a performance.

Phase 2 – “Dough”: A community currency platform, in which the Keene Downtown Group would seek donations from large employers and other interested parties to afford a pool of small sized gift certificates. He compared it to a relief effort during Covid organized by the Chamber of Commerce, which provided gift certificates in increments of a meal, encouraging people to spend three times that amount at local restaurants. Mr. Rebillard said this plan would allow for that on a much grander scale, ensuring every downtown merchant is a part of this program and could easily be reimbursed without the Downtown Group having to really maintain that system.

Phase 3 – “Go”: Once the petitioners have promoted the festivals, brought people downtown, and given them a reason to keep coming downtown, Mr. Rebillard said Phase 3 would be to collect that information and invite them to upcoming events. Every store would have an opportunity to take part in these events, with sales or things of their own making (e.g., scavenger hunts). The Keene Downtown Group hoped to get people into the habit of adapting to the challenges of coming downtown and finding parking throughout reconstruction, to normalize the process, and keep inviting people back.

Mr. Rebillard concluded that the Keene Downtown Group was asking the City as the licensor for expenses that are inherent to a Festival, which was his experience with the Ice and Snow Festival. This would include City resources like Fire and Police Department officials, barriers, and perhaps City vehicles for a Touch-a-Truck event (non-construction). Mr. Rebillard said it was not a monetary donation request, but an in-kind request, which he said the City typically donated to new festivals for the first two years.

Chair Bosley applauded Mr. Rebillard and the Keene Downtown Group for this amount of coordination and effort. Chair Bosley thought that everyone knew it was going to take a community of people coming together to support the downtown through this project. She thought it was incredible that the Group had gotten this far, with these many ideas.

Chair Bosley requested comments from City staff. City Manager Elizabeth Ferland was excited that the Keene Downtown Group was working with The Colonial to step up and ensure the downtown area would be active during the construction phase of this project. The City Manager thought the City could carry out the request, which was one license for all the different events

during each construction season; one for the first season and return the second season for any needed adjustments based on what worked and what did not. The City Manager and staff saw no issue with the proposal at this time. She asked the Committee to refer this to the Protocol Committee for more in-depth conversations about what this would mean for the City and how the City might participate. Chair Bosley asked about the funding process: should they work with a group who already received Community Events funding or work with the Finance, Organization and Personnel (FOP) Committee? The City Manager thought it made most sense to go through FOP but said the City services needed would be worked out at the Protocol meetings. Chair Bosley suggested that depending on the response from FOP, the Keene Downtown Group might be amenable to working with the Let It Shine group, which hosts the annual Pumpkin Festival. Mr. Rebillard recalled the Keene Downtown Group hosted the annual Ice and Snow Festival, so this would not be its first festival process. When pitching this idea to the FOP Committee for funding, Chair Bosley suggested reiterating the Downtown Group's longevity.

Vice Chair Jones thanked Mr. Rebillard, who never ceased to amaze the Vice Chair over the years. Vice Chair Jones really liked this idea and thought it could happen, noting the City had waived its policy relating to City funding beyond two years in the past for special circumstances and that might be able to happen again. He said this proposal was similar to what he called "retail triage," which he asked the original Downtown Group for before the downtown project went to Council. It meant doing things that would help the downtown retailers, such as pop-up stores in empty storefronts or tent sales in a City Park or in a parking lot. Vice Chair Jones thought this proposal fit well with that line of thinking. So, he thanked Mr. Rebillard and looked forward to working with the applicants.

Councilor Haas noted his involvement with the Keene Downtown Group, although he was not a Board member and stated that he had no financial stake. He said, "I just lend a shoulder to their wheel." Councilor Haas did not think it was a basis to recuse himself but asked the Committee's opinion. Hearing no objections from the Committee, Chair Bosley did not see a reason for Councilor Haas to recuse himself.

Councilor Madison thought this was a great idea to get people downtown. He recalled before that, "Keene is a City of Festivals," with one occurring almost every month of the year, even the Ice and Snow Festival in the doldrums of February. He cited the recent Pride Festival that brought hundreds of thousands of dollars downtown and the upcoming Pumpkin Festival that would bring even more money. So, Councilor Madison called this proposal a great idea to get people downtown. He said the City got through past challenges by coming together and finding ways to work together and he thought that would be how the community would get through this one and future challenges. Councilor Madison thanked Mr. Rebillard for the great plan. The Councilor was happy to see people coming out, finding ways to build community, and developing solutions. Councilor Madison said that would be the way to get this done. Mr. Rebillard agreed that there was a key social fabric nature to this that could not be put into words; with invaluable connections that last long beyond the festival occurrences. He appreciated the Councilor recognizing that.

There were no public comments.

The following motion by Councilor Williams was duly seconded by Vice Chair Jones.

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends the Use of City Property – Series of Small-Scale Downtown Festivals During Downtown Construction Project to be put on more time to allow protocol meetings to occur.

2) Direct Referral to Committee: Keene Sno-Riders - Requesting Permission to Run Snowmobiles in the Right-of-Way along Krif Road from Ashuelot Rail Trail to Winchester Street

The petitioner was not present. Chair Bosley recalled that the Keene Sno-Riders requested this permission from the Council to use part of the trail system annually. Vice Chair Jones agreed that the Sno-Riders had been maintaining this trail and other parts of the trail for years.

Chair Bosley requested City staff comments. City Manager Elizabeth Ferland said the request was the same as in the past and staff had no concerns.

There were no public comments.

The following motion by Vice Chair Jones was duly seconded by Councilor Haas.

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends the Keene SnoRiders be granted permission to use the following locations on City property for a snowmobile trail: the right-of-way along the north side of Krif Road from Krif Court to Winchester Street; City property identified by tax map numbers: 115- 023-000-000-000; 109-027-000-000-000; 204-001-000-000-000; the crossing of Winchester Street at Krif Road; and the crossing of Production Avenue approximately 200 +/- feet south of NH Route 9. As well as access to the Class VI Portion of the Old Gilsum Road starting approximately one mile from the Gilsum Town Line and going north, (“Premises”) for the following purpose: for a snowmobile trail, and under the following conditions: Said use shall commence on December 15, 2025, and expire on March 30, 2026, and is subject to the following conditions: the signing of a revocable license and indemnification agreement; and the submittal of a certificate of liability insurance in the amount of \$1,000,000, naming the City of Keene as additionally insured. In addition, the Keene SnoRiders, Inc. will be responsible (including all associated costs) for furnishing, installing and maintaining of all signage/markings; which shall be furnished and installed in accordance with the Snowmobile Trail Standards published by NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs and the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD); all signage/markings installed shall be removed from the City right-of-way and City property when there is no longer any snow cover; no structures, including but not limited to buildings, shelters, lights, displays, walls, etc. shall be permitted within the City right-of-way or on City property; no parking of motor vehicles or trailers and no catering servicing activities of any kind shall be permitted within the City right-of-way or on City property; grooming shall not extend outside the right-of- way of Krif Road; snow windows shall be groomed to provide adequate sight distances in conformance with AASHTO Standards and a gentle sloping approach at all road and driveway intersections; no part of the City Street (paved surfaces) may be used by off- highway recreational vehicles (OHRV) or their operators for any purpose, other than direct crossing; and

that Keene SnoRiders, Inc. shall be responsible for the repair of any damage (including costs) and the City right-of-way and property shall only be used when there is snow cover. All crossing of public right of ways shall be made and maintained as perpendicular with the right of way being crossed.

3) Direct Referral to Committee: The Perch - Request for Permission to Serve Alcohol - Sidewalk Café

Chair Bosley welcomed the applicant, Warren Steinberg of 36 Concord Hill Drive, owner of The Perch at 82 Main Street. Mr. Steinberg explained that the restaurant could not serve liquor at this time but had received its State of New Hampshire Liquor License. Mr. Steinberg requested permission from the City to serve liquor outside on the sidewalk café. Chair Bosley appreciated the applicant's effort to open the business and ensure there is another wonderful, vibrant location on Main Street. She noted that the applicant would only need to appear before the Committee this first time. Once approved by the Council, the applicant would only be responsible for reapplying annually for their sidewalk cafe license through the City Clerk's Office and following the Liquor Commission rules that are included in the City Sidewalk Café License. Mr. Steinberg confirmed that was his understanding.

Councilor Haas thanked Mr. Steinberg for opening the hot new party spot in town that was rocking every time the Councilor walked by. Chair Bosley agreed and thought Mr. Steinberg would benefit after the recent closure of some fun spots.

The following motion by Councilor Haas was duly seconded by Councilor Madison.

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that The Perch be granted permission to serve alcoholic beverages in connection with their Sidewalk Café License, subject to the customary licensing requirements of the City Council, compliance with the requirements of Sections 46-1191 through 46-1196 of the City Code, and compliance with any requirements of the NH Liquor Commission. This license shall expire on March 1, 2026.

4) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Bosley adjourned the meeting at 6:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker

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