

A regular meeting of the Keene City Council was held on Thursday, December 4, 2025. The Honorable Mayor Jay V. Kahn called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Roll called: Kate M. Bosley, Laura E. Tobin, Randy L. Filiault, Robert C. Williams, Edward J. Haas, Philip M. Jones, Andrew M. Madison, Kris E. Roberts, Jacob R. Favolise, Bryan J. Lake, Catherine I. Workman, Bettina A. Chadbourne, Thomas F. Powers, and Mitchell H. Greenwald were present. Having declared that a quorum was physically present in the Council Chambers, Mayor Kahn recognized that Councilor Michael J. Remy requested to participate remotely due to work travel. Councilor Remy was calling from a hotel lobby, where others could be present. Hearing no objections from the Council, Mayor Kahn granted the remote participation. Councilor Workman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES FROM PRECEDING MEETING

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt the December 4, 2025 meeting minutes as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Powers. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor called tonight “Giving Thursday,” and encouraged all Councilors to contribute to the City of Keene United Way Campaign. He provided pledge forms and instructions to donate as a part of the “Workplace Campaign” for the City of Keene organization. The payroll deduction paper forms could be completed and returned to the City Clerk. The Mayor said the City wanted to be a good participant in the Campaign and encouraged those who were able to donate to do so. Mayor Kahn added that Monadnock United Way appointed their Housing Coalition Program Manager, Rebecca Levy, beginning January 5, 2026.

The City Clerk had posted a list of current vacancies on the City Boards and Commissions webpage. Mayor Kahn said that anyone interested in learning more should go to the City website. An online volunteer submittal form is always available to show interest in serving. Councilors should encourage members of the public to fill vacancies.

The Mayor announced important December 2025 City events:

- Keene State College (KSC) Academic Showcase: Friday, December 5, 2025 from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM, at the KSC Student Center. City Councilors were invited and the Mayor called it a good way to show support for the College and students.
- The City of Keene Employee Recognition and Holiday Luncheon: Thursday, December 11, 2025 from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM, at the Blastos Room. Councilors were encouraged to attend. The employees would be sponsoring a food drive during the luncheon and the Mayor encouraged bringing a non-perishable food item to support The Community Kitchen. There would also be a 50/50 raffle.
- City Council Holiday Party: December 18, 2025 immediately after the Council meeting. The Mayor noted that the location had changed and provided an invitation.
- Free Holiday Parking in the City: December 18–25, 2025 and on January 1, 2026. Time limits would still apply. The City hoped this would encourage people to visit downtown for their holiday shopping and dining.

- City of Keene Holiday Closures: Thursday, December 25, 2025 and Thursday, January 1, 2026. The City would be open for business on the Fridays following each of these holidays.

Mayor Kahn noted that the Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee meeting scheduled for December 24, 2025 was canceled. The Finance, Organization and Personnel Committee meeting scheduled for December 25 was rescheduled to December 23, 2025. The City Council's Inauguration Ceremony would be held on January 1, 2026 at noon (12:00 PM) in the Council Chambers.

Lastly, the Mayor led the Council in honoring City Attorney Amanda Palmeira's birthday.

PRESENTATION - SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

Mayor Kahn welcomed Todd Horner, Executive Director of Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC), to provide an update on their current projects and activities. Mr. Horner explained that SWRPC is a public nonprofit organization formed by municipalities for municipalities. With 33 member municipalities in the Monadnock region, Mr. Horner said those members are entitled to a certain number of Commissioners based on population size. These Commissioners oversee the SWRPC's work, approve its budget, and appoint its Board of Directors. At this time, SWRPC included three Commissioners from Keene: Mayor Jay Kahn, Ken Kost (Planning Board member), and Michael Conway (active with Habitat for Humanity). Mr. Horner explained that SWRPC advises, it does not regulate; the organization assists communities with things like zoning but does not engage in regulatory actions itself. SWRPC also connects member communities with resources, whether funding or information, from higher levels of government (e.g., state agencies or a federal delegation). SWRPC also connects member communities together, helping them learn from one another. Mr. Horner said SWRPC works across municipal boundaries to tackle shared issues because many challenges that communities face do not start/stop at the town line (e.g., water, housing markets, labor markets, and the transportation network). SWRPC also assists communities with a wide range of public policy issues: transportation, economic development, natural resources, hazard mitigation, planning, and more. During this presentation, Mr. Horner focused on three of SWRPC's program areas: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Brownfields, and the 10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan.

Mr. Horner began with the *CDBG Program*, which he said bears special relevance to the City of Keene. CDBG is a federally funded program, aiming to support projects that benefit low- and moderate-income people. Projects need to be sponsored by a municipality; funds often flow to a subrecipient, but a city or town needs to serve as the grantee. Mr. Horner said SWRPC has a long history of working with the City of Keene as an awardee. SWRPC develops CDBG funding proposals and helps subrecipients with administration (e.g., the compliance issues that often come with federal funding). Mr. Horner reviewed four specific CDBG projects underway in the City of Keene at this time:

- The Roosevelt School Project on Washington Street: Two CDBG grants supported this project: (1) to retrofit the existing school building in the attached new Roosevelt East wing that would include 30 affordable housing units and (2) the new Roosevelt West

building right next door that would include another 30 affordable housing units (60 units total). Roosevelt East was expected to be finished in April 2026 and Roosevelt West in 2027.

- The Base Hill Cooperative on Base Hill Road: A resident-owned, manufactured housing park. A \$500,000 Public Facilities CDBG was awarded to the City of Keene and sub-granted to the Base Hill Cooperative to replace its drinking water system, which Mr. Horner said needed a lot of work. The residents were paying unaffordable water bills. Mr. Horner was glad to report that the Cooperative's new water system was operational at this time, and he called it a successful project that would preserve more than 50 naturally affordable housing units in the City.
- Monadnock Peer Support on Vernon Street: SWRPC worked with Cheshire County to sponsor Monadnock Peer Support (MPS) as subgrantee of a \$750,000 CDBG to assist with a number of improvements to their building (e.g., HVAC, asbestos removal, accessibility improvements, alterations to the floor plan for improved programming, lift on the building-front, roof improvements, window replacements, and exterior returned to original brick and repaired). Mr. Horner called MPS a really important organization, without any similar services in the region. Most improvements were completed or near completion, and he expected the project to wrap up at the end of December 2025.
- Cedarcrest Center on Maple Avenue: Cedarcrest provides pediatric care and educational services to 28 children and young adults with complex medical and developmental needs. Cedarcrest was awarded a \$25,000 CDBG to do the planning work for HVAC and other interior improvements. Mr. Horner said Cedarcrest was working with an engineering firm to determine the load bearing capacity of the roof remodel and the bathing facility area. He said this project showcased how the CDBG Program supports not only construction, but also the soft costs that lead to something being built or improved.

Mr. Horner also highlighted two *potential* CDBG projects in Keene at this time:

- Keene Day Care Center on Wood Street: Mr. Horner said SWRPC was working with Cheshire County to sponsor Keene Day Care Center, a longstanding facility, as a subgrantee. He said it would affect Keene residents. The Day Care had 70 childcare slots and Mr. Horner said they hoped to open 20 more. This CDBG would fund HVAC improvements; at this time, the Day Care was running year-round without air conditioning. The scope of work also included fire sprinklers and replacing single pane windows. Mr. Horner said anticipated submitting the CDBG a proposal in January 2026.
- The Community Kitchen on Mechanic Street: Mr. Horner said this CDBG proposal would also be submitted in January 2026 to install a generator and a lift to the second floor at The Community Kitchen. At this time, the facility had no backup power generation, which is not ideal for an organization with a lot of cold storage space. Additionally, when receiving food on pallets, they had to break the pallets down, load them onto a conveyor belt to the second floor, and load everything back onto pallets. Mr. Horner hoped the lift to the second floor would save the organization a lot of time and labor.

Mr. Horner concluded about the CDBG Program, noting that SWRPC was really trying to get out there and help organizations who could benefit from this funding to be aware of it. He said CDBG is not the most accessible application process, so SWRPC tries to shepherd applicants

who really need this funding through that process, so they can bring this funding to the City of Keene and the region.

Second, Mr. Horner discussed SWRPC's longstanding *Brownfields Program*, through which SWRPC assists member municipalities in performing environmental assessment work on sites with known or suspected contamination. He said this program helps pave the way for redevelopment and addressing public health issues. SWRPC has worked with the City of Keene on a number of sites historically, including the former railroad land that is now home to the Monadnock Food Co-Op, the Courtyard by Marriott, Railroad Square Senior Housing, and more. At this time, Mr. Horner said SWRPC had two current Brownfields sites in Keene, where assessment work was either underway or planned.

- 0 Optical Avenue: at the former drive-in movie theater, SWRPC had just completed a Phase II Environmental Assessment focused on two things: (1) testing for potential groundwater contamination and (2) soil samples from an area on the southern boundary where some illegal dumping occurred right off of New Hampshire Rt-101. There was concern about volatile organic compounds on site, but the environmental engineers did not find that in their groundwater sampling, so the good news was that no further groundwater assessment would be necessary. Mr. Horner reported that soil samples found some elevated levels of lead and asbestos, and the consultant recommended excavation and offsite disposal. He said the contamination site was relatively limited, so the estimate for that cleanup work was \$50,000 to \$75,000, which Mr. Horner noted is not as bad as it could have been. He called this a really important, clear, and relatively clean site. So, he said hopefully this Environmental Assessment work would help move it one step closer to being put to good use.
- 0 Gilbo Avenue: This dirt lot just underwent a Phase I Environmental Assessment, which entailed reviewing historical records, municipal files, historic maps, some site reconnaissance, and other activities to help the City and others understand the site history and any known storage or release of hazardous materials on site. Mr. Horner said the funding was committed to this work and SWRPC was awaiting the landowner's authorization to proceed.

Third, Mr. Horner described SWRPC's *10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan*, which is the capital improvement plan for the State of New Hampshire's transportation system; it is updated every two years. Each Regional Planning Commission across New Hampshire plays a role in development of the Plan by facilitating a process, whereby regional priorities are identified and nominated for inclusion in the Plan. Unfortunately, Mr. Horner reported that the headline from the most recent update cycle was that there is not enough revenue to support the projects already in the 10-Year Plan, let alone new submissions; he cited a \$400 million shortfall over the 10-year period. So, certain projects that had been in the 10-Year Transportation Improvement Plan were removed in the proposed draft but none of the removed projects were from the City of Keene. However, some City of Keene projects were delayed anywhere from one to two years:

- Corridor Improvements to West Street
- New Hampshire Rt-10 from New Hampshire Rt-101 to Market Basket
- New Hampshire Rt-101 and Intersection at Swanzey Factory Road

Overall, Mr. Horner thought this was a relatively good result for the City compared to some of SWRPC's other member municipalities. In response to this situation, Mr. Horner said SWRPC was doing some things to help member municipalities take part in the process as the 10-Year Plan was being developed: alerting communities to the revenue shortfall and helping them understand (whether they saw projects removed or not) that they need to make their voices heard, so the Governor, Executive Council, and New Hampshire Department of Transportation understand how important these regional projects are; he knew City staff had been diligent doing so. SWRPC was also drafting a summary write-up to share with member municipalities, summarizing the revenue shortfall, potential solutions to fill that gap, and information to use when communicating with the Legislature if municipalities think the state should act on resolving the shortfall.

Mr. Horner ended his presentation on the topic of a fun collaboration between the City of Keene and the Southwest Regional Planning Commission. SWRPC worked with the City of Keene, Pathways for Keene, and the Monadnock Regional Rail Trail Collaborative to develop trail maps for the Cheshire Rail Trail network. The trail maps were distributed in local bike shops and at the Chamber of Commerce, as well as posted on SWRPC's website. Mr. Horner called them a useful promotional tool for marketing one of the City and the region's most valuable recreational assets. He shared some copies of the trail maps with the Council.

Councilor Roberts noted that the State of New Hampshire was short of so much money, and he thought this fiscal position was the best it would be for a while; he said it would only get worse. He asked Mr. Horner what he thought about the future of Community Development Block Grants and whether they would be at risk to lose money. Mr. Horner replied that SWRPC was reasonably confident that the CDBG Program would be sufficiently funded in the January 2026 funding round, but he could not say beyond that. The last he saw budget bills going through Congress, CDBG seemed to be flat funded, noting that it was a popular Program on a bipartisan basis.

Mayor Kahn and Mr. Horner agreed that SWRPC would have a CDBG application before the City Council on December 18, 2025. Mr. Horner provided his business cards to the City Council in addition to the Rail Trail maps.

PUBLIC HEARING - ORDINANCE O-2025-34-A - PETITION TO AMEND THE ZONING MAP - 1.24 ACRE PORTION OF 62 MAPLE AVENUE - INDUSTRIAL PARK TO MEDIUM DENSITY

Mayor Kahn opened the Public Hearing at 7:33 PM and the City Clerk read the notice of Hearing. The Mayor welcomed Senior Planner Mari Brunner and Planner Megan Fortson to present Ordinance O-2025-34-A on behalf of the Community Development Department.

Ms. Fortson explained that Ordinance O-2025-34 was introduced to City Council for first reading on October 2, 2025 and referred to the Joint Planning Board/Planning, Licenses and Development (PB/PLD) Committee, who reviewed it on October 14. At the October 14, 2025 meeting, the PB/PLD Committee created Ordinance O-2025-34-A, taking it from just proposing to rezone a 1.25-acre portion of the Cheshire Medical Center parcel to actually rezoning the

entire 50-acre parcel, as well as five other parcels; four of the parcels are along Maple Avenue and two parcels have frontage along Rt-9. Ms. Fortson said the Joint Committee sent Ordinance O-2025-34-A forward to Council, with the PLD Committee recommending the Mayor set a public hearing date and the PB finding the Ordinance consistent with the 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan. When it was sent back to City Council on November 6, 2025, Mayor Kahn set this Public Hearing date. After this Public Hearing, Ordinance O-2025-34-A will go back to the PLD Committee for their consideration and final recommendation to the City Council.

Mayor Kahn opened the Hearing to public comments.

Christopher McLean of 122 Water Street asked for clarification about what kind of building plans could happen on a Medium Density Lot compared to an Industrial Park Lot. Ms. Brunner explained that in general, the Industrial Park District is an industrial zoning district, so there would be larger industrial uses allowed. Medium Density is a residential zoning district, which would contain mostly single-family, two-family, three-family, and a few smaller multi-family homes; more like a residential neighborhood. Ms. Brunner said the Industrial Park District historically had one industrial use that no longer exists, none of the parcels zoned Industrial Park at this time were being used for industrial purposes, and some had residential uses. Ms. Brunner said these were some of the reasons City staff recommended changing the zoning designation to align with the surrounding area and the desired development for that area of Keene.

Councilor Favolise wanted to confirm that this was as simple and straightforward as he thought it was. For the City owned parcels in this area—unless the City would want to build a day care center, a data center, or something like that—he said the City would have to rezone this. Ms. Brunner said she believed so, if she understood the Councilor’s question. At this time Ms. Brunner said the City did not own land in this location yet, but if the City were to purchase land there, then Councilor Favolise would be correct.

Councilor Bosley asked the Community Development Department to address Maple Avenue being one of the City’s designated “Institutional Streets,” where institutional uses are allowed. Ms. Fortson agreed that Maple Avenue is on the City’s list of Institutional Streets, where certain uses that do not comply with the underlying zoning district are allowed regardless. For example, the hospital facility and Trinity Lutheran Church and School on Maple Avenue; she said those uses would not be allowed in the Industrial Park or Medium Density Districts but would be on Institutional Streets. Mayor Kahn referred to a convenient reference page in the meeting packet on the kinds of uses permitted beyond residential. He called Industrial Park a very flexible zone for other kinds of low density, low impact uses.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Kahn closed the Public Hearing at 7:38 PM, except that written comments would be accepted up until 1:00 PM on Tuesday, December 9, 2025. Ordinance O-2025-34-A would be on the December 10, 2025 Planning, Licenses and Development Committee agenda for a final recommendation to City Council; no public comments would be accepted on this item when it is before PLD.

A true record, attest: 
City Clerk

PUBLIC HEARING - ORDINANCE O-2025-28-A - RELATING TO AMENDMENTS TO THE ZONING MAP - LOW DENSITY TO COMMERCE - INTERSECTION OF PEARL STREET AND WINCHESTER STREET

Mayor Kahn opened the Public Hearing at 7:39 PM and the City Clerk read the notice of Hearing. The Mayor welcomed Senior Planner Mari Brunner and Planner Megan Fortson to present Ordinance O-2025-28-A on behalf of the Community Development Department.

Ms. Fortson said this application had been in the works for a while. The Ordinance was submitted to Council for first reading on August 21, 2025 and referred to the Joint Planning Board/Planning, Licenses and Development (PB/PLD) Committee for a public workshop on September 8. The original Ordinance involved the proposed rezoning of eight parcels along Winchester and Pearl Streets, for a total of about 2.6 acres. On September 8, 2025, the PB/PLD Committee voted to create an "A" version of the Ordinance, which removed the three of the eight parcels from the proposal. Ms. Fortson explained that Ordinance O-2025-28-A included five parcels, which were shown in blue on the map she displayed for the Council. The PB voted to find that Ordinance O-2025-28-A was consistent with the 2010 Master Plan (used at that time) and the PLD Committee voted to recommend that Mayor Khan set a Public Hearing on the Ordinance. Ms. Fortson said Mayor set a public for September 18, 2025, when Mayor Kahn sent Ordinance O-2025-28-A back to the PB/PLD Committee for another public workshop at the applicant's request; many community members had expressed concern about the potential zone change from Low Density to Commerce. When the applicant returned to the PB/PLD Committee for a second public workshop on October 14, 2025, the applicant proposed the same "A" version of the Ordinance that the PB/PLD Committee created. Ms. Fortson reported that four members of the public spoke in opposition to the proposed zone change at the September 18, 2025 PB/PLD Committee and six spoke in opposition at the October 14, 2025 meeting. She said Mayor Kahn set this Public Hearing during the November 6, 2025 City Council meeting, given that the applicant had revised the proposal to comply with what was approved by the PB/PLD Committee.

Ms. Brunner added some things about the five parcels proposed for rezoning, which were displayed on a map for the Council. She explained that the City's Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP), which is used to evaluate the Ordinance, changed part way through this Ordinance review process. At the PB/PLD Committee's first public workshop, they used the 2010 CMP and at the second public workshop, they used the updated 2025 CMP. Ms. Brunner reviewed what the updated 2025 CMP's Future Land Use (FLU) Map says for this specific area. She showed the Pearl Street neighborhood, which is very historic, with a really well-established neighborhood identity and fabric. She also showed an area zoned Commerce that was also historically a part of that same Pearl Street neighborhood and over time, had transitioned for the parcels along Winchester Street to be more commercial. Ms. Brunner said that the 2025 CMP's FLU Map showed the area along Winchester Street as a "Corridor-Oriented Commerce," which is a specific Character Area, meaning it is focused a little less on the uses and more on what the character of the area actually feels like. Ms. Brunner described the land development pattern, area identity, and means of transportation envisioned for the Corridor-Oriented Commerce

Character Area, “Efficient use of space and development patterns serve as a transition between car-centric places to higher-density, interconnected spaces. Tend to be clustered along major thoroughfares, such as West Street, Winchester Street, and Route 101. Mixed-use regional magnet – A combination of residential, such as multifamily developments, commercial spaces, and low-impact light industrial uses. Area is a regional magnet for chain developments, workforce, and consumers (i.e., Panera, Home Depot, Old Navy, Starbucks, Aroma Joe’s, Burger King, Walmart). Multimodal – Accessible by multiple modes of transportation, including biking, public transit, and pedestrian walking infrastructure. It is easily accessible by car, but without congestion or major safety issues. Serve as connectors between downtown and the outskirt areas.” Ms. Brunner said that is what the 2025 FLU Map envisioned for this area of Keene along Winchester Street.

Mayor Kahn welcomed the petitioner, Adam Wright, and his representative, John Noonan of Fieldstone Land Consultants. Mr. Noonan noted that Mr. Wright also owned property where the Ordinance proposed to rezone. Mr. Noonan said Ms. Fortson fully explained all the iterations of the Ordinance that resulted in the final five parcels proposed in Ordinance O-2025-28-A. Mr. Noonan explained that the original Ordinance O-2025-28 was contentious because of proposed boundary line adjustments for some Pearl Street properties. He said O-2025-28-A proposed using the existing property boundaries as the zoning, maintaining three of the lots in the Low Density District, and rezoning the corner of Pearl and Winchester Streets as Commerce. He said there were a mix of residential and commercial uses at the properties situated along the corner of Pearl and Winchester Streets at this time. The applicant’s intent was to own and develop the land as a commercial use or a mixed-use. Mr. Noonan stated that the residential homes on these lots had been vacant for years and fallen into disrepair. He said the location of these properties did not serve the residential Low Density District very well, as the roundabout vehicle traffic and adjacent fast-food restaurants hinder the appeal of residential homes at the intersection. Based on feedback from the PB/PLD Committee, he said Mr. Wright amended his request to these three lots in the Low Density District (the zoning line would follow the existing property boundaries as depicted on the map). He said the location of the properties on Winchester Street would be better suited to be zoned Commerce, which would allow for a broader range of uses, including many types of commercial businesses and multi-family housing. Mr. Noonan said the many uses permitted would make the properties much more marketable to potential investors and developers. The lots could be developed to include a mix of commercial, multi-family residential, and single-family residential uses—providing a transition zone between the existing commercial and residential uses from Winchester Street to Pearl Street. The applicant thought the frontage of the properties along Winchester Street would provide ideal visibility and access for commercial businesses because there are two lanes of traffic on each side of the divided roadway. Mr. Noonan said the location of these parcels is south of the new roundabout, which allows for heavier traffic along Winchester Street and is typical of the Commerce District, whereas the double lanes are not typical of the residential zones, specifically the Low Density residential zone and the surrounding neighborhood along Pearl Street. During the PB/PLD Committee hearings, Mr. Noonan noted that many concerns were mentioned, mostly about stormwater and floodwater from the Ashuelot River. He said the Site Plan Review process for developing these lots would require review of stormwater and floodwater management, and to ensure there are no impacts. Mr. Noonan added that the residential uses on the land at this time

did not have stormwater management systems and home renovation would not require addressing these concerns.

Mr. Noonan continued, stating that the City of Keene did a lot of work and City staff did a good job on an updated Comprehensive Master Plan. He said the City also has a Land Development Code (LDC) that includes all of the Site Development Standards, which address a lot of the concerns that abutters addressed on stormwater management: questions about impervious areas increasing, how to handle stormwater management and floodwater because this area is the 100-Year Floodplain of the nearby Ashuelot River, safety with vehicle/pedestrian traffic, lighting, and landscaping/screening. Mr. Noonan said all these things were outlined very well and thoroughly in the LDC, noting they all must be reviewed and meet the City's standards when these lots are inspected. Specifically for floodwater, and typically in commercial developments, Mr. Noonan noted that these properties would appear before the Planning Board for a thorough review to ensure any fill in the floodplain is offset with an engineered design that is reviewed by Building Code and the City's Floodplain Administrator. Mr. Noonan said there would also be major compliance with the Planning Board for stormwater management when submitting for any development, so the applicant would provide a Stormwater Management Plan, designating how these sites would handle no increased rainwater outfall. He also referred to the Site Development Standards for traffic, noting that regardless of the type of development at this location (i.e., multi-family or commercial use), the applicant would have to demonstrate the increase of traffic—whether pedestrian or vehicles—and how it would be offset and managed on these sites. If anything commercial was developed, Mr. Noonan said a Lighting Plan would be required. So, he said these things would be reviewed; the applicant believed most of the concerns raised were outlined in the LDC already as to be reviewed by the Planning Board, meet zoning regulations, and would address abutter concerns. Mr. Noonan said the petitioner was asking the City Council to realize that the City has a lot of these standards in place to protect the bodies of water and landowners around developments. He noted that land consultants work very hard to ensure they address those standards and that there are no impacts to abutting properties. Mr. Noonan reiterated that City of Keene staff had done a great job creating a comprehensive Land Development Code that outlines each of these development concerns, which each must be addressed during the Planning and Community Development review and Site Plan application. He said that would be the case regardless of the development type on these lots, whether it is a residential multi-family or commercial type of use.

Mr. Noonan concluded his presentation, noting that if approved, the Pearl Street neighborhood would be maintained by the amended zoning: residential uses would remain and the corner lots on Pearl and Winchester Streets would provide a transition zone into the existing commercial uses along Winchester Street. He stated that the rezoning to Commerce would not eliminate the residential use, it would only expand the types of use that could be developed in this area of the City. Mr. Noonan called the rezoning very much in line with the new CMP, recalling that the CMP changed throughout the hearings on this application. He reiterated that Ordinance O-2025-28-A was approved by the PB/PLD Committee and Mr. Noonan believed it met the intent of the applicant and the Committee's suggestion for rezoning this area in the Community. Mr. Noonan said the proposed rezoning would allow for more opportunities and options to redevelop this intersection and expand the Commerce District in a logical manner. As background, he noted

that the original zoning for these lots was commercial when it was the Pearl Street School; it was one of the first areas commercially zoned in Keene. Mr. Wright thanked the Council for its time.

Councilor Roberts said one thing he heard from a number of people was about “the trust factor.” He said that people lived in those houses for a long time, they were evicted, and then the houses sat there for some years in disrepair. Councilor Roberts said the people who live in that area feel like those people were basically forced out. So, some people in the neighborhood who he talked to really questioned whether the applicant was trustworthy and want to know what they are actually going to do with that property. Councilor Roberts said the applicant would really have to convince that neighborhood. Mr. Noonan said that it was not a question, so he did not know how to answer. He said anything developed on those lots would be presented on. For the rezoning, he said the applicant did not have to present a plan of what their intent was to develop on those specific lots. With rezoning, now there would be more options to develop on that land. Mr. Noonan said anything proposed for development would be clear when submitting a Site Development Plan.

Councilor Madison asked why rezone to Commerce as opposed to something like Medium Density, which allows multi-family or duplexes by right and a number of commercial uses by Conditional Use Permit. Mr. Noonan said ultimately, to avoid “spot zoning” by expanding the Commerce District that is directly next to where the Low Density and Commerce Districts meet currently. Adding another zone at this location would be spot zoning, which is typically frowned upon.

Councilor Tobin’s question was similar. She recalled Ms. Brunner stating that Corridor-Oriented Commerce was intended to have multimodal access. Councilor Tobin said it looked like the Commerce District was supposed to be accessed predominantly by vehicles, so multimodal transportation did not seem like a priority. Councilor Tobin asked why the applicant chose the rezone to the Commerce District. Mr. Noonan referred to the new roundabout in this area of Winchester Street. He noted that the City had spent a lot on infrastructure (e.g., sidewalk improvements, curbing) down Island Street. So, he said the area had become more multimodal, with crosswalks at the roundabout and sidewalks that tie into the commercial area. Mr. Noonan said that a commercial development would be more likely to provide sidewalks and other items in front of their establishment versus a Low Density residence. A commercial development would have a Site Plan for improving sidewalks and a Low Density residence application would not. He said rezoning to Commerce would provide more availability for pedestrian and bicycle traffic in this area, in addition to the two-lane traffic for vehicles. Mayor Kahn noted that this question was addressed by City staff on page 22 of the agenda packet.

Mayor Kahn opened the Hearing to public comments.

Sally Rose of 315 Pearl Street attended two meetings on this Ordinance. She said this meeting had had an excessive amount of talk about housing and affordability. She asked why the City was trying to take any valuable land that could be used for housing and make it commercial when it really is not possible at that location, which she called a neighborhood. Ms. Rose said this is a neighborhood with history that had been written about; it is a fabric of Keene. She thought the City would want to preserve its neighborhoods and its citizens over commerce. She

said there is so much commerce, so many clothing stores, and things that do not do well; why do we need more? Ms. Rose called this a really cute, small neighborhood and said the residents love it there. She said it would not be fair to make it commercial, stating that it is not commercial land; there were three houses there, with people in them, including children that her kids went to school with. Ms. Rose said that these days, she thought housing was a really big issue, and she did not think Commerce was a good idea because it would erode the rest of that neighborhood. She noted that the other end of Pearl Street was already very dangerous to cross, so this proposal would whittle it away. She added that Island Street had also been “blown up.” Ms. Rose said, “the neighborhood is losing its neighborhood.” She thought enough was enough. Ms. Rose thought the Council should leave the housing there.

Steve Popowich, owner of 127B Pearl Street, posed some logistical and technical concerns. In looking at the map, he did not know how any amount of business was going to come on and off Winchester Street within the first 25 feet of the roundabout. He said it would undo all the investment that was put into making that roundabout flow, noting it was so hard before the City put the effort into it, and now it was so much nicer for him. Mr. Popowich said the proposal would bring more people down Pearl Street, backing up traffic, and added that there was already a speeding problem down Pearl Street; a temporary speed bump was recently installed. He cited experiences with speeding cars while walking his dog and noted that families live there, stating that more traffic would not be nice. He referred to Councilor Roberts’ point about the families who were evicted, and Mr. Popowich said he used to pass by there every day on the way to work and see the kids on their way to school. All of a sudden, he said the properties were purchased, closed, and the families were gone. He said they were not abandoned for years and then purchased; they were purchased and closed. He heard the argument that there could be residential in the Commerce District, but he said it should stay Low Density then. He heard the argument that the Commerce District was already right at the corner, so they might as well expand it, but Mr. Popowich called that a slippery slope: “death by 1,000 cuts.” He said that in five years, the applicant would want to take the next couple and then the next couple, etc. Mr. Popowich said it would have to stop somewhere and thought the hard line should be Pearl Street. He was not comfortable with giving a “blank check” to put any Commerce at this location; he heard rumors about some other fast food, when Panera just left Island Street. Mr. Popowich asked, “Why?”

Charles Henderson of 122 Water Street asked what damage Commerce would have to a Low Density area that is clearly around it, where there is already a lot of damage coming from Walmart and McDonald’s. He thought there would be a high risk of people using drugs and also bringing more crime to the area. Mr. Henderson asked if the City Council had thought about the risk factors of putting commercial in there.

Lori Rippey of 352 Pearl Street (basically directly across from the proposed change) had been to a number of these meetings and reiterated her concerns for the Council. One of her biggest concerns was the flood risk. While the petitioners mentioned engineering solutions, she said those are not an end all-be all, and they do not always work correctly. She cited engineered solutions for flooding that had catastrophically failed in our country. Having gone to middle and high school in Keene, Ms. Rippey remembered when all of lower Water Street flooded and people kayaked. In the recent years, Ms. Rippey went through two floods in her current home

and lost a lot of sentimental family things. She said that creating impervious services increases flood risk because there is nowhere for the water to go. So, Ms. Rippey said that while the applicant might have engineered solutions, they might not necessarily be perfect solutions. She cited living on the riverbank and the water rising to the top and undercutting her bank during heavy rain. Ms. Rippey stated that she unfortunately lives on the inside of the turn on Pearl Street, so this proposal would take land from her property, and her trees were dying from the significantly increased erosion during flooding. Ms. Rippey also spoke about noise pollution, stating that patrons tend to loiter raucously outside of businesses that are open early/late. She cited instances already in the McDonald's parking lot, which her home faces, during many parts of the year; she had heard and witnessed drug related crime. She added her concerns about large trucks deliveries and construction noise. Next, Ms. Rippey spoke about light pollution from illuminated signs, headlights from cars, and parking lots for businesses that are open late or very early. She also mentioned environmental pollution that would move closer to the River: garbage and litter (already in abutters' yards from patron litter and blowing from the business dumpsters), and chemical runoff. Ms. Rippey concluded that this proposal would be a huge public safety risk. She thought the roundabout was already too small, people did not merge correctly, the crosswalks are in a blind spot, and she had seen pedestrians almost hit by vehicles.

Shana Stack Davis had lived at 323 Pearl Street for 19 years and said part of the parcel in question runs right at the back of her house. She recalled hearing that when commercial plans happen, applicants think about the abutting neighbors. She did not think that happened when McDonald's was built, citing serious privacy issues; a lot of her privacy trees were cut down during the past season, and now she was experiencing noise, crime, and people hanging out at all hours of the night. She said it is not good for the neighborhood. Ms. Stack Davis said she would hate to see another business, potentially even fast food, go into the proposed location and have even more crime, traffic, noise, and light pollution. She said those things were real on Pearl Street, where there were also already traffic and speeding safety issues; cars drive past her house daily at 60 to 70 mph, and cars with loud bassy music wait for food at McDonald's. Ms. Stack Davis thought that rezoning to Commerce would actually change the dynamics of the historic neighborhood. She said it would start with this and keep going, so that soon it would be in her backyard and next door even more than McDonald's.

Amy Fulton of 75 Wood Street pointed out her parcel on the map. She said this might be a great idea for the developer, but it was not a great idea for anybody else. Ms. Fulton echoed other comments, saying that people abuse Pearl Street. She added that the roundabout needs a Police Officer there to direct traffic because she had witnessed several car accidents. Also, when the bus stops on Island Street (when it is open), cars from Winchester and Island Street do not stop, and the roundabout becomes clogged. Ms. Fulton said someone would get seriously hurt. She added that the petitioner was also not considering the Day Care Center, the Italian Club, and huge industrial park on Wood Street; she had called the City of Keene about this because the property is leased to a pavement company that is open Saturdays and Sundays (the neighbors do not get a break). Ms. Fulton spoke with their owner because the drivers of large dump trucks and tar removing machines drive so fast. Ms. Fulton said there is this large industrial area and now Commerce District was proposed. She said that when she walks her dog into her backyard, she is in Mr. Wright's area and then there would be a business. Ms. Fulton said that would not fair. She questioned the petitioner saying they had been doing this since August 2025 but asked if they

owned those properties when the houses were there and for 20 years let them rot. She thought squatters had lived there since 2006, stating that nobody with money would live there if they had a choice, and that was how that property was allowed to be. Now, Ms. Fulton said there were rumors about drug sales up and down Pearl Street and Wood Street. She felt like a business would just make that worse. She also wondered what would prevent the applicant from building a bar because in a Commerce District they could develop anything that makes money. Ms. Fulton stated that she felt like this application was a “money thing, and it has nothing to do with helping our neighborhood.” She said she would love the Council to not allow this rezoning.

After the work on Island Street and the sheer amount of traffic that neighbors had experienced on Pearl Street in the previous six months, Michelle Knapp of 129 Pearl Street called it “insanity.” She used to be able to just pull out of her driveway easily, with no traffic. Now, in the mornings she would wait for three to seven speeding cars to pass; in the afternoon, she said she had not experienced the new sheer volume of traffic on Pearl Street during her nine years living there. Ms. Knapp described being able to hear the loudness of vehicles, starting at Winchester Street and revving all the way down to West Street. She felt that it was a huge problem, and she thought that the property in question on the corner of Winchester and Pearl Streets was a really important buffer for this neighborhood. Ms. Knapp said there are not a lot of neighborhoods around any longer, and she thought the City should be keeping neighborhoods as neighborhoods. She did not think Commerce should be allowed on that property.

Stephen Gunseth of 228 Pearl Street read a statement from Drew McGuire of Pearl Street: *“I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed rezoning of the property on Pearl Street in Keene. I am concerned that this change would have long term negative effects on both my neighbors and myself. Residents living adjacent to the rezone area could face increased property taxes, already a significant burden in New Hampshire, and particularly Keene, as well as substantial rise in unwanted traffic. These impacts would meaningfully alter the character and livability of our neighborhood. I respectfully urge the City to reject this rezoning proposal, not only for the well-being of current residents, but also for those who may choose to make our community their home in the years to come. Thank you, Drew McGuire.”* Mr. Gunseth stated that as a property owner on Pearl Street, he also opposed the application. He said the area should stay residential. He appreciated what Mr. Wright was trying to do, but Mr. Gunseth objected.

Dillon [no last name provided] of 352 Pearl Street also opposed this rezoning. First, he felt that the proposal was a little too vague, not knowing what the applicant would build there. He said building something giant that shades a lot of the houses could cause mold and damage the roofs, cause plant death, and harm wildlife. Dillon also looked at some studies on commercial versus residential crime rates, citing peer-reviewed sources from Science Direct and the Journal of Urban Economics that showed a 15% increase in crime rate when commerce encroaches into residential neighborhoods (he could send his research to the Council). Dillon was also worried about rezoning to Commerce and the applicant having a “blank check” to build anything; it would be “rolling the dice,” and unclear if it would increase or decrease property values. He talked about the crime rate. Having lived at 352 Pearl Street for about six years, Dillon said he liked to see kids walking up and down the Street. As crime had increased, he found bags of heroin on the ground and had to call the cops a few times. He was unsure what would happen with more properties, where it was unclear what would be going in them, noting that the kids

literally get on the bus right where the applicants proposed Commerce. Dillon said it made him worried because when he drove around Keene, it was mostly commercial property and he saw a lot of people on drugs; he had seen people using drugs in the Walgreens parking lot on West Street and openly on Main Street. Dillon said one of the first things he saw when he moved to Keene was people using drugs. He called Keene a beautiful place and thought the City should keep this area zoned Low Density.

Dawna Woodhull, 29-year resident of Crescent Street on the corner of Meadow Road and Pearl Street, spoke about the traffic. She was rear-ended in July 2025 by someone going 60 mph at the corner by Meadow Road. She said the traffic issues had just been increasing, like with Island Street being closed. When Ms. Woodhull bought her home 29 years ago, her son was six years old and kids could play in the street. She said that everyone before spoke about traffic. Ms. Woodhull said this is a neighborhood; the residents bought there and were paying property taxes to live in a neighborhood (with Keene having the third highest taxes in the state). Ms. Woodhull stated that she was opposed to the Ordinance based on wanting to keep the neighborhood that was known as “Little Italy” when she moved in. She had always appreciated that it was a neighborhood and said it did not feel that way anymore.

Regina Wright, Adam Wright’s mother and property manager of the apartments that Mr. Wright owns, the last of which are at 347 Pearl Street. At almost 80 years old, Ms. Wright said she still managed many properties and had good tenants. She stated that the “trust factor” Councilor Roberts mentioned was “blowing her away” because part of the reason they bought the Winchester Street property was due to the drugs and terrible deterioration. Her tenants 347 Pearl Street frequently commented about what was happening at the properties at the corner of Winchester and Pearl Streets and the disrepair there for years before the Wrights bought them about two years before this. Ms. Wright said she had to have a crew go in there to handle the needles, rats, and mice. She stated that the places were horrible and that everybody who lives on Pearl Street knew about the horrible conditions. Ms. Wright said she came to this meeting to be very positive about this. She stated that Winchester Street is the gateway into the City of Keene and had been beautified nicely (i.e., the roundabouts, the buildings, the streets, the lining in the middle of the street). However, she said this terrible corner at Winchester and Pearl Streets was still a mess and said something needed to be done with it. She thought business should continue, the whole strip all the way down—car dealerships, restaurants, gas stations—noting that people come to spend money in Keene at these businesses (e.g., TJ Maxx, Home Goods, and Walmart). Ms. Wright said she would love it if her taxes went down because people come to purchase things around Winchester Street. She noted the speed bumps on Winchester Street at Keene State College, and she certainly thought the City of Keene should invest in more speed bumps down Pearl Street. She agreed with the speed problems on Pearl Street. She said it was similar at times on Winchester Street and Main Street, noting there was a changing population in Keene, with cars from many different states. Ms. Wright said, “I’m sorry, the old days are gone, but can we do something to help move this along?” “Winchester Street is a vital gateway into the heart of Keene. It has undergone tremendous updates in the last few years to welcome people. First, there was a corridor. Second, the bridge over the Ashuelot River. Third, the construction of two new roundabouts. All of these were designed to improve traffic flow, safety, and welcoming access to local businesses.” Ms. Wright concluded, stating that next, the City needed to consider economic growth (i.e., lessening taxes), beautification of Winchester Street, and connectivity and quality of

life. Ms. Wright said she still had tenants, and she wanted to see traffic slower with speed humps and see more beautification; she thought those were possibilities.

Stephen Allen of 305 Winchester Street thought that the corner of Winchester and Pearl Streets had been a blight on the City for decades. Having lived there for 35 years, Mr. Allen said that everybody has always known the houses on that corner to be “the heroin houses,” and said the houses were totally neglected for decades. Mr. Allen said it seemed as though it would be nice to see that area cleaned up a little.

Michele Wright grew up on Pearl Street and now owns a home in the neighborhood. Ms. Wright was present to say clearly and firmly why she believed the proposed rezoning of Pearl Street was not only ill advised but fundamentally incompatible with the City’s own standards, goals, and long-term obligations outlined in the 2025 CMP. She said that Councilors who prioritized logic, consistency, and responsible planning would see that this proposal did not withstand scrutiny. First, Ms. Wright discussed measurable, predictable, and economic harm. She said every planning study across the country confirmed that introducing commercial zoning into a stable residential area depresses nearby property values. When commercial lighting, signage, extended business hours, parking lots, and traffic enter residential blocks, the market responds with lower demand for those homes. She said lower demand means lower appraisals, lower tax revenue, and diminished long-term economic stability for families and the City; she said there was no data showing the reverse occurring. Second, Ms. Wright stated that environmental and safety impacts of this proposal were guaranteed, not theoretical. She said commercial zoning brings with it unavoidable light and noise pollution, and significantly increased traffic loads. She called Pearl Street a narrow, human-scale street. She said it was never engineered for commercial circulation patterns, loading zones, or overflow parking. Ms. Wright believed that zoning Pearl Street as Commerce would guarantee safety risks for pedestrians, cyclists, and children. She said it would also guarantee increased wear on infrastructure that the City would ultimately pay to repair. Ms. Wright said this was not speculation, but predictable, documented municipal impact. Third, Ms. Wright noted that the City’s own cultural stewardship obligations were being ignored. The Keene Heritage Commission had recently recognized this area as the only remaining historic Italian neighborhood in the City of Keene, which she said is not a sentimental label, but an official acknowledgment of cultural and historical significance. If rezoned, Ms. Wright said the recognized heritage would not change, it would be eliminated. Once commercial zoning fractures a historic residential enclave, she stated that the culture, continuity, and identity vanish; they cannot be legislated back into existence. Ms. Wright thought the Council must ask itself whether demolishing Keene’s last remaining ethnic neighborhood would be consistent with its stated values. Fourth, Ms. Wright stated that rezoning failed the fundamental test of necessity: there was no demonstrated need for additional commercial zones on the street, no market demand analysis, no community benefit analysis, and no evidence that commercial expansion here addresses any documented economic or development gap. In contrast, she said the harms were well documented, predictable, and permanent. Finally, Ms. Wright explained that there was a better, more responsible alternative. She said Keene’s housing needs are real, but the solution is not to destroy an existing neighborhood. Ms. Wright said the solution is to expand residential capacity where infrastructure already supports it: infill development in appropriate zones, adaptive reuse of underutilized downtown commercial buildings, incentivized mixed income developments, and clustered residential expansion in areas already designated for density. She

thought these strategies would add housing, without “cannibalizing” historic neighborhoods and without violating the City’s own long-term planning principles. Ms. Wright concluded, stating that Councilors who relied on linear, fact-based decision making would recognize that this proposal was misaligned with the economic logic, historical preservation standards, urban planning principles, and public interest of the City. She said that approving the rezoning would set a precedent that no stable neighborhood, no matter how historic or culturally significant is safe from commercial encroachment. She added that rejecting the application would affirm that Keene governs with consistency, respect, and foresight. Ms. Wright urged the Council to protect the residents and history of Keene and integrity of its planning process by voting “No.”

Jack Donnell had lived in Keene for about 42 of his 46 years and while he did not have a personal attachment to Pearl Street, he said both of the buildings at the corner of Winchester and Pearl Streets were in terrible condition; he had been in both buildings. He said that when Mr. Wright purchased those homes, he wanted to try and fix them up first, but Mr. Donnell said it was not possible. He called them complete teardown homes and said he was sick of looking at them after 40 years. Mr. Donnell said that when it came down to sheer economics, those two homes could not make money rebuilt because no one wanted to live there. He understood the comments about neighborhoods; he lives in a neighborhood and said he would not want someone to put anything commercial next to his house. Still, at some point, he said this was not in the middle of a neighborhood. He said it was more like two houses at the end of a commercial zone, and it made sense to him to clean that up; he called it horrible. Mr. Donnell also understood that once zoned Commerce, there would be no control over what the applicant could develop there (i.e., blank check). He knew Keene had a shortage of housing but said there could not be houses everywhere either. He said that sometimes things need to be contemporized.

[Didn’t state name] The owner of 308 Pearl Street had lived there for 55 years and said it has tremendous history just as a house, which originally came from Ashuelot Street originally when the neighborhood was opened up to invite construction and homes. She cited her long Italian history, so she wanted to see all of those good things preserved. Her biggest concern—even more after listening to the openness of everyone at this meeting, which she appreciated—was that years ago, before many were involved with this corner property, there was already a fight to prevent further zoning changes on Pearl Street. She explained that it was agreed upon then that the border would remain as the fronting houses on Pearl Street. She stated that she saw no usable purpose for anyone to allow changing that zoning to allow a commercial piece and she was sorry if that was a bad investment. She suggested that the City maybe ought to look at houses when they are in grave deterioration and start speaking up about how do to deal with people who do not take care of structures. She agreed that Mr. Wright was entitled to buy the corner property but stated that she was “not going to listen to the sadness. The gentleman that owned the house before was an entrepreneurial renter who did not keep his house up. I’m sorry that you have a piece of property that is not attractive. Plant grass on it and put a new house back from the corner.” She was totally against changing the zoning in this neighborhood because they were already suffering “horrendously” from the surrounding changes. She cited the fact that Island Street is narrower now than it was, having heard it called “a failed intersection” on the other end of Pearl Street. She said that when you start using phrases like that, the City might need to take a closer look at what it is doing to neighborhoods.

Chris Margraf of 60 Blackberry Lane said he was impartial on this issue, but he grew up in Keene. He remembered Symonds School and that Pearl Street was always the first street called for the bus, and he was always very jealous because his bus was always the last one called. Having grown up in Keene, Mr. Margraf was very proud hearing everybody talk and of how much pride they had in Keene and Pearl Street. As a good friend of Mr. Wright's, Mr. Margraf thought this had to be tough on Mr. Wright. At the same time, Mr. Margraf said he could "just feel it" for all the residents on Pearl Street. He said he would hate to think that that a kid who had grown up in Keene all his life and his mother who had been here and taken great pride in this place would become so divisive and that there would be so much anger. Mr. Margraf stated that if the properties were rezoned, he would expect that Mr. Wright would do the right thing by them; Mr. Margraf was present to represent and support Mr. Wright because Mr. Margraf believes in and loves Keene. Mr. Margraf said this was tough for Mr. Wright. However, Mr. Margraf hoped the Hearing could end on a happier note, with anecdotes about the Pearl Street bus. He thanked the Council for facilitating the Hearing, stating that it was a joy to witness, even though it was hard to see.

Mayor Kahn brought forward and acknowledged agenda items C1 through C3, communications regarding Ordinance O-2025-28-A. The City Clerk read into the record two communications in support of Ordinance O-2025-28-A from Leon Watkins and Michael Wright, and one communication in opposition of Ordinance O-2025-28-A from Shane Brown. Mayor Kahn noted that two additional communications from Rick Grauer and Katherine Kidder, both in support of Ordinance O-2025-28-A, were also received and distributed into Councilors' mailboxes.

Nancy Proctor of Algonquin Drive said her sons grew up with the Wrights—Adam, his brother, and sister. Ms. Proctor had sold many properties to the Wrights over the years, multi-family investment type properties. She said that every time they had bought a property, they 100% improved the property. Ms. Proctor said that when Adam Wright moved to Massachusetts, Regina Wright and her husband managed "those properties, and I'm sure the people on Pearl Street know the property that they own." Ms. Proctor said their properties had been managed well, with great tenants. She said she knows Ms. Wright and that people call Ms. Wright "The Bulldozer," so the tenants were always very respectful, and the Wrights were very cognizant of who they rented to. Ms. Proctor said the Wrights communicated a lot with Keene State College to ensure they secured the best tenants, improving upon the tenants who there before or would have been. Ms. Proctor said she could vouch for the Wright family and Adam Wright, stating that whatever they do to that property at the corner of Winchester and Pearl Streets, it would be done in a great, professional manner. She said Mr. Wright is not a trashy landlord. Working on Island Street, Ms. Proctor said she knew it had been a hassle; she could not get to her office without walking almost one-half mile every day. She would also be glad when the work would end and knew the traffic had been a hassle for Pearl Street because she had to access Pearl Street to reach her office. Ms. Proctor vouched for the Wright family, stating that whatever is going to be at that location, they would do it right.

Mike Pappas of Main Street, property owner in Keene, said the Wright family takes pride in the City. He noted that they own plenty of property in the City of Keene and had always been good landlords and always take care of their places. Mr. Pappas was hired to clean up those two houses when the Wrights first bought them because "they knew that it looked like an eyesore."

Mr. Pappas said he had received so many compliments from cleaning them up. He suggested the Council needed to think about a few things. First, economics: someone would need to buy those houses that are so close to commercial. He said the Wrights, “didn’t buy these houses for peanuts because everybody knows that they’re so close to commercial that they have multiple different values.” Mr. Pappas said he would look at it more as a buffer if Mr. Wright developed businesses there. Mr. Pappas said “there has to be some trust factor. He is from here, you know.” Mr. Pappas cited a similar experience with his properties on Main Street. He said it would be better than selling to an out-of-state investor. Instead, he said Mr. Wright could develop a local business as a buffer, with fences and greenery, and make that the line. Mr. Pappas said the end that faces Winchester Street “reeks of commercial” not of a little tiny neighborhood. He agreed with and applauded Little Italy, calling it wonderful, but said it needed to have a buffer from the businesses. He cited the examples of people with McDonald’s or the Italian Club in their backyards and said there was a buffer; he thought this proposal provided a perfect opportunity to have a buffer from Winchester Street, with a business that is the new line not to be further encroached in the future, but to help benefit the neighborhood, not detract from it. Mr. Pappas noted that Mr. Wright owns other properties on Pearl Street, and he suggested that there could be a stipulation that he could not go any further with businesses. Mr. Pappas said Mr. Wright was not putting every property he has on the Street on the line. Mr. Pappas said the old rundown frat houses needed a breath of fresh air and so did these corner properties. He said Mr. Wright was trying to make the spot better, not making it an eyesore. Mr. Pappas said most businesses (e.g., Rite Aid) that go into these locations spend money on security, lighting, parking, and management at all times of the day and could help a neighborhood. They are not like houses, where there is no indication who is living there. At the end of the day, Mr. Pappas thought some were looking at this encroaching on a neighborhood, but he thought it would make a great buffer and suggested putting these locations together to make a new line facing Winchester Street and a backside facing a nice, cute neighborhood. Mr. Pappas stated, “We’re trying to put up a monstrosity there.”

Patricia Wright of 344 Pearl Street said that when she moved in there 60 years prior, the whole area on Winchester Street was filled, including McDonald’s and Walmart. She used to sit on her porch and see the fireflies in the summertime, and her kids would catch toads and snakes. Her kids played in the road. Now, she called it “the most horrific place.” She said that when McDonald’s was developed, they said that it would be the end of it and the buffer would be the property Mr. Wright was now trying to rezone. Ms. Wright said it would not be a buffer if it would be on the corner across the street from hers and her next-door neighbor’s houses. Ms. Wright was not happy about the fact that the petitioner was talking about putting something commercial in when there was no indication of what it would be; she was concerned about the lighting, noise, traffic, not being able to walk up and down the street, and safety issues (e.g., not having her grandchildren over). Ms. Wright was opposed to the application and said she would oppose it until she could not anymore. Nearing her 82nd birthday and having lived on Pearl Street for more than 60 years, Ms. Wright said she did not want something in her neighborhood that would destroy her personal life, and that was what she felt this petition would do.

Hearing no further public comments, Mayor Kahn closed the Public Hearing at 8:51 PM, except that written comments will be accepted up until 1:00 PM on Tuesday, December 9, 2025. This

12/04/2025

would be on the December 10, 2025 Planning, Licenses and Development Committee agenda for a final recommendation. No public comments will be taken on this item when it is before PLD.

A true record, attest:



City Clerk

Mayor Kahn called a recess from 8:52 PM to 8:58 PM.

NOMINATIONS - AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING COMMITTEE; ASHUELOT RIVER PARK ADVISORY BOARD; ASSESSORS BOARD; BICYCLE PEDESTRIAN PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE; BUILDING BOARD OF APPEALS; CONSERVATION COMMISSION; HERITAGE COMMISSION; HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION; HOUSING STANDARDS BOARD OF APPEALS; KEENE HOUSING; *AND* PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE

Mayor Kahn nominated the following individuals to City boards and committees:

To the Airport Development and Marketing Committee: Peter Temple, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Julie Schoelzel, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board: Arthur Winsor, re-nominated to move from an Alternate to Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Thomas Haynes, re-nominated to serve as an Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Assessors Board: John T. Newcombe, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee: Rowland Russell, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Charles Redfern, re-nominated to move from an Alternate to Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Michael Davern, re-nominated to move from an Regular to Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Diana Duffy, re-nominated to serve as an Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Andy Holte, re-nominated to serve as an Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Building Board of Appeals: Corinne Park, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Malcolm Katz, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Steven Walsh, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2027. To the Conservation Commission: Robert Milliken, re-nominated to move from an Alternate to Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Steven Bill, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Kenneth Bergman, re-nominated to move from an Alternate to Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Alexander "Sparky" VonPlinsky, re-nominated to serve as an Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Heritage Commission: Cauley Powell, re-nominated to move from an Alternate to Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Historic District Commission: Anthony Ferrantello, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Sophia Cunha-Vasconcelos, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31,

2028; Peter Poanessa, re-nominated to serve as an Alternate Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. To the Housing Standards Board of Appeals: Corinne Park, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Malcolm Katz, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Steven Walsh, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2027. To Keene Housing: Cody Morrison, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2030. To the Partner City Committee: John Mitchell, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Andrew Madison, re-nominated to move from Councilor to Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; William Schoefmann, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028; Doris McCollister, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2026; Gerald Lins, re-nominated to serve as a Regular Member, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. Mayor Kahn tabled the nominations until the next regular meeting.

CONFIRMATION - HERITAGE COMMISSION

Mayor Kahn nominated Marilyn Huston to serve as a Regular Member of the Heritage Commission, with a term to expire December 31, 2028. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to confirm the nomination was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT - REQUEST FOR AN ACCESS EASEMENT ACROSS CITY-OWNED LAND IN THE TOWN OF SWANZEY - PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending that the City Manager be authorized to do all things necessary to negotiate and execute and record a deed for a permanent access easement benefiting Public Service Company of New Hampshire, (d.b.a Eversource Energy), across City-owned land in the Town of Swanzeay. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORT - MIKE PAPPAS - PETITION - MAGNOLIA WAY RESIDENTS - REQUEST FOR DISCONTINUANCE AND REMOVAL OF SIDEWALK ON NORTHERLY SIDE OF MAGNOLIA WAY

A Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the withdrawal from the Petitioner. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to carry out the intent of the Committee report was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

MSFI REPORTS - RELATING TO THE LOAD LIMIT POSTINGS OF THE BEAVER STREET AND SPRING STREET BRIDGES - CITY ENGINEER; RELATING TO THE 2025 CONSTRUCTION SEASON SUMMARY AND 2026 CONSTRUCTION SEASON PREVIEW OF UPCOMING PROJECTS - CITY ENGINEER; DRAFT "PROTECTION OF STREETS" ORDINANCE - PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR; *AND* DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT UPDATE - PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

The first Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the report [Relating to the Load Limit Postings of the Beaver Street and Spring Street Bridges] as informational. A second Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the 2025 Construction Summary and 2026 Construction Preview as informational. A third Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the draft "Protection of Streets" Ordinance as informational. A fourth Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee report was read, unanimously recommending accepting the Downtown Infrastructure Project Update as informational. Mayor Kahn filed the four reports as informational.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

The City Manager, Elizabeth Ferland, began with some positive feedback she received after the recent snowstorm. The crossing guard at Wheelock School shared that there was a large pile of snow on the Marlboro Street crosswalk where children cross and access the sidewalk, and two City employees went above their call of duty and stopped to clear the path for the children and their parents. The City Manager said Antonio and Dominic were so very gracious to stop on their way downtown and make the crosswalk safe. The School wanted to acknowledge this kindness and help they provided. To make it even more amazing, the crossing guard learned that Antonio and Dominic had been working for the prior 24 hours straight during the snowstorm. City Manager Ferland said kudos to the Public Works and Highway team, noting this first storm of the season was a significant one, and the team performed exceptionally well.

City Manager Ferland also recognized the Community Development Department. All three of the City's planning staff had recently passed the American Institute of Certified Planners Certification, which the City Manager called an extensive exam. She said it is not often a City has three planners who have passed it. The exam covers nine major topic areas. The City Manager recognized the Community Development Department for going above and beyond to get that Certification and congratulated Senior Planner Mari Brunner, Planner Evan Clements, and Planner Megan Fortson.

The City Manager also noted some recent social media because the City had been receiving questions about setting the tax rate. She said the City was waiting for the Department of Revenue Administration to set that tax rate for the City, noting that everything on behalf of the City is in the Department of Revenue's hands and she expected to hear from them soon (i.e., any day). Then, she said it would take City staff a few days to print the bills.

Also, this week some Councilors, including Councilors Favolise and Haas, attended the *Aftermath* play. The City Manager and both Deputy City Managers also saw it at the previous year's New Hampshire Manager's Association. City Manager Ferland called it a very powerful play about the life of a firefighter both at work and at home after responding to a very serious critical accident. She said the same could play out for lots of different first responder positions and the play goes into what happens after that. It includes a question-and-answer period to talk about these issues. The City Manager said there was good attendance, but she hopes to attract more first responders the next time. She thanked Deputy City Manager Bohannon for arranging the play in Keene.

The City Manager noted that she had multiple interviews for the Executive Secretary to the Mayor and City Manager position. Nicole Howe was promoted to Human Resources and splitting her time temporarily. The City Manager was also in the midst of a background check for an Airport Director finalist and hoped to have an announcement at the next City Council meeting.

REPORT - CITY COUNCIL GOALS (2026–2027)

A memorandum was read from City Manager Elizabeth Ferland, recommending that the City Council adopt the proposed City Council Goals for 2026–2027.

Mayor Kahn noted for the public that these goals were the result of two City Council Workshops over the prior month. He said it was very helpful to review the progress made on these goals over the previous two years, but also to look forward to those things the Council needs to address in the coming two years.

City Manager Ferland pointed out one change from the version in the meeting packet. The College City Commission was listed under #4 and it should have been listed as a part of #3. She thanked Councilor Favolise for pointing that out. She provided a revised copy to the Council. City Manager Ferland agreed with the Mayor about the Workshop process to revise these Goals. She said these were still the same eight goals, but they had changed slightly to reflect the current City situation. She said the changes made at the second workshop were incorporated and shown in blue on the printed copy for the Council; those items were to give more direction related to each specific goal. Once approved, the City Manager said staff would begin working on moving these goals forward as part of their budget and capital planning efforts.

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to adopt the City Council Goals for 2026–2027 as presented was duly seconded by Councilor Filiault.

Councilor Haas asked for the next Goals update to occur in a location that allows more public input in whatever appropriate format before the Council goes into its own workshops. Mayor Kahn thought the advantage of this process was having just completed the Master Plan, which had a significant amount of public input, and he was unsure whether that source would be available two years from now. The Mayor said the City Manager and Community Development Department staff would find a mechanism during the Budget process. He added that during that

process, the Council should pay attention to the Budget documents and what departments put in them relative to departmental goals and statistical analyses.

Councilor Tobin said she appreciated all of the work that went into setting up the process, so the Council could have these conversations. It was really helpful for her to hear from people and to talk things through. She really appreciated going through this process.

Councilor Remy asked if he could vote on the updated Goals that were provided to the Council in-person, while participating remotely. The City Manager believed that the updates shown in blue were reflected in the online meeting packet and checked to confirm that Councilor Remy could in fact participate in the vote. She said the only change was moving College City Commission from item #4 to item #3.

The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

REPORT - AMENDMENTS TO THE PLANNING BOARD REGULATIONS AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES

A Planning Board report was read, unanimously recommending amendments to the Planning Board Subdivision regulations, site development standards, earth excavation regulations and application procedures, as shown in the memorandum to the Planning Board dated November 14, 2025 with an effective date of January 1, 2026, with the exception of amendment one, striking the words “in accordance with Article 23 of this LDC” and capitalizing the 1st letter of the next word; In addition, striking Amendment 2 entirely with the intent that the definition is sent forward to City Council for a different amendment. The Planning Board report further recommended unanimously referring the amended regulations to City Council for incorporation into Chapter 100 Land Development Code of the City Code of Ordinances. Mayor Kahn filed the report from the Planning Board as informational.

ORDINANCE FOR FIRST READING - RELATING TO AMENDMENTS TO THE PLANNING BOARD REGULATIONS AND APPLICATION PROCEDURES - ORDINANCE O-2025-38

A memorandum was read from Senior Planner Mari Brunner, recommending referring Ordinance O-2025-38 to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee for review and recommendation. Mayor Kahn referred Ordinance O-2025-38: Relating to Amendments to the Planning Board Regulations and Application Procedures to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

RESOLUTION - RELATING TO ADOPTING THE PROVISIONS OF RSA 79-E “COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION TAX RELIEF INCENTIVE” - RESOLUTION R-2025-35

A memorandum was read from Senior Planner Mari Brunner, recommending referring Resolution R-2025-35 to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee for review and recommendation. Mayor Kahn referred Resolution R-2025-35: Relating to Adopting the

12/04/2025

Provisions of RSA 79-E “Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive” to the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee.

NON PUBLIC SESSION

A motion by Councilor Greenwald to go into non-public session to discuss legal matters pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(L), and personnel matters pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a), was duly seconded by Councilor Tobin. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor. A five-minute recess was called by the Mayor. The Session began at 9:29 PM.

The Session concluded at 10:30 PM. A motion by Councilor Greenwald to seal the minutes of the non-public session held this evening as divulgence of the information would render the proposed actions ineffective was duly seconded by Councilor Bosley. The motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote with 15 Councilors present and voting in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Kahn adjourned the meeting at 10:30 PM.

A true record, attest:



City Clerk