

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONGREGATE LIVING AND SOCIAL SERVICES LICENSING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers,
City Hall

Members Present:

Jennifer Seher, Chair
Tom Savastano, Vice Chair
Robert Hamm
Ian Matheson

Staff Present:

Mike Hagan, Building Division Manager
Corinne Marcou, Board Clerk

Members Not Present:

Alison Welsh

1) **Call to Order: Roll Call**

Vice Chair Savastano called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2) **Election: Voting Chair & Vice Chair**

Mr. Savastano was willing to continue serving as Vice Chair but did not think he should serve as Chair because his term would be ending on December 31, 2026. Corrine Marcou, Board Clerk, noted that the Board could postpone voting until all members were present. Discussion ensued. Members agreed that Ms. Welsh, who was absent, stated distinctly multiple times that she was unwilling to be elected. Mr. Haam felt that someone with Ms. Seher's history would serve well as Chair. Ms. Seher thought she would do well in that role helping to keep the process of meetings. She confirmed with City staff that the commitment would be for the full 2026 calendar year. The Board agreed that this would be a good year to have a Chair with an understanding of its history.

A motion by Mr. Savastano to elect Ms. Seher as the 2026 Board Chair was duly seconded by Mr. Hamm and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion by Chair Seher to nominate Mr. Savastano as the 2026 Board Vice Chair was duly seconded by Mr. Matheson and the motion carried unanimously.

3) **Minutes of Previous Meeting: November 18, 2025**

A motion by Mr. Hamm to adopt the November 18, 2025 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Vice Chair Savastano and the motion carried unanimously.

4) **Unfinished Business:**

Staff Liaison Mike Hagan, Building Division Manager, reported no unfinished business. Mr. Hamm asked if the agenda would list any unfinished business if there were. Mr. Hagan said yes.

5) **Applications:**

- A) **CLSS-2026-02: Applicant, Jewel Wilson, House Supervisor for Emerald House, is requesting a renewal Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Residential Care Facility, located 32 Emerald St., that is in the Downtown Growth District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Chair Seher opened the Public Hearing and requested staff comments. Staff Liaison Mike Hagan referred to page 20 in the Board's February 24, 2026 Agenda packet for comments on the applicant's inspections, which were completed by City staff on January 12, 2026. There were no comments from the Police and Fire Departments. There was one comment from the Property and Housing Inspection about a window in the attic with a section of frame deteriorating. Mr. Hagan said City staff were working with the applicant to address it.

Chair Seher welcomed Jewel Wilson, the new House Supervisor for Emerald House, who was requesting renewal. She noted that the City asked Emerald House to work on its Neighborhood Relations Plan. She recently took over this responsibility from Patricia Forman. Ms. Wilson had since sent letters to all of the neighboring businesses, explaining who Emerald House is and a general idea of what they do, with her contact information and the staff line. Chair Seher appreciated that Ms. Wilson had already answered the two questions she had about the application. Ms. Wilson had nothing else to share about the application.

Mr. Matheson asked what kind of care Emerald House provides for the residents and at what point the facility would need assistance from City services is there skilled nursing on staff? Ms. Wilson said there is not a nurse on staff at all times. Emerald House is connected to Monadnock Family Services (MFS), so there is access to all the nursing and clinical staff there. Ms. Wilson continued that each resident has their own team of support outside of Emerald House who can come to help. Ms. Wilson explained that Emerald House assists adults experiencing mental illness with learning daily living skills and keeping connected with their services. The whole goal of the program is to transition into independent living. So, she said hopefully Emerald House is able to help them with their targeted needs while in residence to make for successful transitions. Ms. Wilson said Emerald House does not use City services very often because they have built-in crisis support through MFS, but Emerald House does have a panic button and a City Fire Box. However, she said they very rarely have calls because of the ability to normally intervene before it gets to that point. Mr. Matheson asked whether the Emerald House nurse is on call. Ms. Wilson said the nurse is on site at Emerald House one day per week, and at MFS the other four days. Typically, Ms. Wilson is on call, but Emerald House does have access to the MFS nurse if needed, which she said is more often for clinical psychiatric needs than medical needs.

Mr. Hamm asked if there is staff on site 24/7. Ms. Wilson said yes, there is a team and she is able to get away sometimes. Typically, there are at least two or three staff overnight. On weekends, there is one longer-term team member on call because there is typically not a significant need, but there is always availability to pull more people in if needed.

Chair Seher asked if MFS could be called 24/7 for mental health crisis support. Ms. Wilson said yes, Emerald House is connected with New Hampshire Rapid Response Access Point, and she noted that MFS also does a few programs with their acute care services team, which Emerald House can access during business hours.

Chair Seher stated for the record that what Ms. Wilson explained was more robust than the Neighborhood Relations Plan documented in the packet, and Chair Seher really appreciated that. She thought the fact that Ms. Wilson was letting the businesses know they could contact her with any concerns was really helpful and important. Mr. Hamm suggested at least an annually offering an update to the abutting neighbors, in case they lose the information, and so they maintain a sense of who to call. He said that kind of outreach can be really helpful.

There being no public comments, Chair Seher closed the Public Hearing.

The Licensing Board reviewed the three Criteria it is required to consider when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a Congregate Living and Social Services License Application:

Criteria 1: *The use is found to be in compliance with the submitted operations and management plan, including but not limited to compliance with all applicable building, fire, and life safety codes.*

Criteria 2: *The use is of a character that does not produce noise, odors, glare, and/or vibration that adversely affects the surrounding area.*

Criteria 3: *The use does not produce public safety or health concerns in connection with traffic, pedestrians, public infrastructure, and police or fire department actions.*

The following motion by Vice Chair Savastano was duly seconded by Mr. Hamm. On a vote of 4-0, the Congregate Living & Social Services Licensing Board accepted Application CLSS-2025-02 on all three criteria.

Discussion ensued about the Board's process. Mr. Hamm noticed the recommended motion in the Board's Agenda packet, which was different than the motion Vice Chair Savastano just made for CLSS-2025-02. Chair Seher noticed a change from the Board's prior process because they did not vote to approve each required Criterion individually. Mr. Hamm noted that the process seemed redundant to him and suggested the Board should move a recommended motion, have a conversation about it, and then vote. Chair Seher saw his point. Mr. Hamm asked City staff whether that would be the appropriate process. Mr. Hagan said that would be appropriate and it is correct that the Board can make the motion however it wants to, both methods are fine: (1) motion on the application, read/discuss the three criteria, and then vote; or (2) read/discuss the three criteria, motion on the application, and then vote. Mr. Hamm felt that the first option would be most efficient and aligned with his experience of Robert's Rules of Order. Chair Seher

appreciated getting into a pattern of process, having lost the experience of former Chair, Med Kopczynski.

- B) CLSS-2026-05: Applicant, Hilary Seifer, Executive Director for American House Keene, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Residential Care Facility, located at 197 Water St., and is in the Business Growth & Reuse District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Chair Seher opened the Public Hearing and requested staff comments. Staff Liaison Mike Hagan recommended accepting this application for annual renewal as complete. City staff completed inspections on January 15, 2026. There were no comments from the Police and Fire Department Inspections. The Property and Housing Inspection noted several ceiling duct registers needed to be cleaned and checked. Mr. Hagan said City staff were working with the applicant at this time to ensure that it would be completed.

Chair Seher welcomed Executive Director for American House Keene, Hilary Seifer. Ms. Seifer said the Neighborhood Relations Plan was updated in the Application this year but everything else was the same.

Mr. Savastano asked about the current state of ownership at American House, noting that it had been uncertain. Ms. Seifer replied that essentially, American House was purchased at the end of 2018 from Kaplan Development (which was Bentley Commons) and they invested with a group called Black Salmon; that investor was their first senior living property. Then, she said Covid hit, and American House was not really a money maker, and they realized they did not really want to be in senior living. So, she said American House sought a new investor and unfortunately, the previous investor was very difficult to work with and close with, so it took some time. American House went into receivership, which Ms. Seifer said was actually a huge favor because the old investor stopped communicating, so that remediation that the receivership provided was “fabulous.” Ms. Seifer said American House went with a new investor, JDI, who has five other senior living communities. She noted that they are “always sort of behind the shadows, but at least they are experienced.” American House closed with JDI on November 17, 2025. Ms. Seifer said nothing about American house ever changed, only who was financing the loan. She called it a good experience but a long one, and the new investor would be making some nice upgrades to the building that had been on hold.

Mr. Matheson noted that he really likes the applicant’s Neighborhood Relations Plan, which talks a lot about how much American House Keene is involved in the community. Mr. Matheson said he thinks that is really important to highlight. He was curious whether the organization sends any type of like communication to its abutters or has a form they can submit with grievances or recommendations; is there an open line of communication between American House and anybody nearby who could potentially be affected? Ms. Seifer said the organization had not sent out formal written communications. Coming up on nine years with American House, she said most people knew her there by now. She said they do communicate updates directly to their American House family members via email. American House also hosts the East

Keene Neighborhood Group, so they are familiar with the building, and it allows them to know who to contact if needed.

Mr. Matheson asked American House's threshold for providing City services like EMS, Fire, or Police; what services can be rendered in-house without the need for those services? For example, non-urgent transportation, like lab appointments. Ms. Seifer said it was a great question, calling it a community-wide issue. She explained that American House provides transportation to all local medical appointments, Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and can usually make an exception. If it is an emergency, they call 911, which Ms. Seifer noted is the American House preference for two reasons. First, housing assisted and independent residents. American House does not have medical charts for independent residents because they are not under a doctor's order, so there is no way to document refusal of care. Therefore, they choose to call 911 and have a licensed paramedic to document refusal of care. Ms. Seifer had conversations with new entities in the area that could provide transportation but said so far in her relationship with the Keene Fire Department (FD), their preference had been for American House to continue calling them. She also cited another obvious reason as potential injury from a fall. She explained that American House would call Keene Police if there were difficulty in the neighborhood. Ms. Seifer said the Police had been wonderful, but that need had been minimal as of late.

As a nearby neighbor, Mr. Hamm observed that American House had been very open to things, and he knew Ms. Seifer was at the heart of that openness. For example, creating meeting and gathering places that were very important to the neighborhood. Ms. Seifer said thank you.

Chair Seher asked whether American House had connected with the City of Keene about partnering on management of the rail trail. Chair Seher knows it is not American House's responsibility but thought that it could be an interesting partnership. Ms. Seifer said not necessarily partnering, but American House does communicate with the City. She said City staff had kept trimming the long shrubbery to the benefit of all in the neighborhood for sight lines after problems a few years prior; those issues had settled down quite a bit. Ms. Seifer reported American House as having a very friendly relationship with the City of Keene (e.g., the Public Works Department uses the facility as a water testing site). Chair Seher asked whether Ms. Seifer would be open to a more collaborative partnership with community members regarding the rail trail. Ms. Seifer said absolutely, the American House residents use the trail frequently.

Mr. Hamm asked about the overnight staff. Ms. Seifer reported three onsite overnight: one either medical tech or nurse, and two licensed aides. Ms. Seifer is on call and lives two streets away.

Chair Seher disclosed that she knows Ms. Seifer.

There being no public comments, Chair Seher closed the Public Hearing.

The Licensing Board reviewed the three Criteria it is required to consider when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a Congregate Living and Social Services License Application:

Criteria 1: *The use is found to be in compliance with the submitted operations and management plan, including but not limited to compliance with all applicable building, fire, and life safety codes.*

Criteria 2: *The use is of a character that does not produce noise, odors, glare, and/or vibration that adversely affects the surrounding area.*

Criteria 3: *The use does not produce public safety or health concerns in connection with traffic, pedestrians, public infrastructure, and police or fire department actions.*

A motion by Mr. Hamm to approve CLSS-2026-05 for American House Keene to operate a Residential Care Facility located at 197 Water Street was duly seconded by Vice Chair Savastano.

Chair Seher stated that she so appreciates American House as a part of the Keene community. Mr. Hamm agreed that they are good citizens and neighbors.

On a vote of 4-0, the Congregate Living & Social Services Licensing Board approved application CLSS-2026-02 for American House Keene to operate a Residential Care Facility located at 197 Water Street.

- C) **CLSS-2026-07: Applicant, Gregg Burdett, Executive Director for Covenant Living of Keene, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Residential Care Facility, located at 100 Wyman Rd., and is in the Rural District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**
- D) **CLSS-2026-08: Applicant, Amanda McSweeney, Executive Director for Keene Center Genesis Healthcare, is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Residential Care Facility, located at 677 Court St., and is in the High Density District and as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Staff Liaison Mike Hagan noted that the applicant was not present for CLSS-2026-07. The Board could act on the application as presented; an applicant does not have to be present for that action, although he said it is nice to have the discussion. If the Board felt that it could make a determination on the license based upon the information that was provided on the completed application, it would be its purview to act now or request that they come the next month. Additionally, Mr. Hagan also noted that application CLSS-2026-08 was incomplete, so the Board also had the option to continue it until the next month's meeting. He explained the process for motioning to continue applications until the next month's meeting, when they would appear as "Unfinished Business" Agenda items. Mr. Hagan noted that the Board could speak freely because it had not opened either Public Hearing.

Discussion ensued about whether the Board wanted to continue the applications. Mr. Matheson said he had questions to ask the applicant for CLSS-2026-07, which was one reason he was in favor of continuing. He added that he would not feel comfortable taking any type of action on the application if there was nobody present to speak about it, even if they are not required to be.

The following motion by Vice Chair Savastano was duly seconded by Mr. Hamm. On a vote of 4-0, the Congregate Living & Social Services Licensing Board continued applications CLSS-2026-07 and CLSS-2026-08 until the March 24, 2026 regular Board meeting at 6:00 PM in the City Hall Council Chambers.

6) **New Business:**

Mr. Hagan, Staff Liaison, recalled that this portion of the agenda is an opportunity for Board Members to request any additional information they may need from City Staff or other new business may want to see brought before the Board.

Mr. Hamm reflected on this being his second Board meeting. During the first, it seemed the Board took convoluted steps to approve each of the three required Criteria, which did not seem necessary to him. He thought that if Board receives a City staff report in the agenda packet that concluded with the "Criteria Review," that there are no reasons for the Board not to accept what the staff say there about the Criteria. So, then the Board should move on to approving based on what it has heard from staff and the applicant.

Mr. Hagan said this was a great time to talk about process and how the Board operates under City Code of Ordinances Sec. 46-565. - Licensing Board Review Procedures. He explained the benefit of being able to vote to deny Criteria individually is that the applicant would know what section they do not comply with. In consideration of approving the Criteria as a group, Mr. Hagan said that section of Ordinance goes on to talk about how the Board approves, denies, or continues applications. It includes associated procedures for the applicant. The Board had followed different processes in the past, such as voting on the Criteria individually. Mr. Hagan said it might allow the applicant an opportunity to know where they fall short when the application, or part, is denied.

Mr. Hamm explained his concern that the Board would not have standing to deny. Mr. Hagan thought that during this meeting, the Board reviewed the applications based on the Criteria that it has authority to review and then made a motion to either approve or deny each application. In these instances, the motions were to approve. Chair Seher thought the Board was currently following the procedure that is needed to move the motions forward and approve them, and if at some point the Board wants to amend its process or vote on subsections, it could move to that. Mr. Hamm said that if the Board is going to approve each of the three Criteria, then the Chair should be given appropriate language to direct the Board to provide a motion for each particular Criterion. Mr. Hagan said staff could help with that. Chair Seher and Vice Chair Savastano agreed that the Board used to have some kind of language/process for voting on the three Criteria individually.

Vice Chair Savastano agreed with Mr. Hamm's point about voting on all three Criteria at the same time. Vice Chair Savastano thought that anyone listening to the deliberations would know why they failed a particular element, so it would be pretty clear. Voting on all three together seemed reasonable to him.

Mr. Hamm said if the first Criterion read, “The use is *not* found to be in compliance with the submitted operations and management...” then the Board would have something to say. Mr. Hagan explained that if the Board were to either suspend or deny the license, they would want to identify based on which of those three Criteria, and that is why the Chair reads them before the motion. He said the motion on the application is based on the three Criteria and could include a provision for denying one or more of these three Criteria, and then the Board could vote on them individually with the recommended motion. Mr. Hagan said the Board and Chair can discuss process once it has a motion before it.

Procedurally, Mr. Hagan said the Congregate Living & Social Services Licensing Board’s job is to approve, suspend, or deny CLSS Licenses. Mr. Hamm said that this was telling him that during Criteria review, everything is in compliance. Mr. Hagan said yes. So, Mr. Hamm asked why there would be a need to provide a motion for every Criterion that City staff already found to be in compliance. Mr. Hagan and Mr. Hamm agreed that they were discussing the Board’s former process of voting on each Criterion individually. Chair Seher agreed and noted that if she ever feels it is necessary to vote on an individual Criterion (e.g., things come up outside the staff report), that it would be possible.

Chair Seher asked how many applications the Board expected to see at the March 2026 meeting. Board Clerk Corinne Marcou reported six applications, including the two continued under Unfinished Business, which will be first on the agenda. Chair Seher asked how applicants continued to the March meeting would be notified. Mr. Hagan explained that Ms. Marcou would provide a Notice of Decision by the Board on the applicant’s current license and contact them with information about the next meeting. Chair Seher asked about the incomplete CLSS-2026-08. Mr. Hagan said there had been some transition at Keene Center Genesis Healthcare and their Executive Director was out. City staff were doing their best to connect with someone who might be able to produce the necessary paperwork in their stead.

Mr. Matheson confirmed that this was the first CLSS Board meeting of 2026. However, he noted the License numbers on the agenda were CLSS-2026-02, CLSS-2026-05, CLSS-2026-07. He asked if the others were in progress and waiting to be submitted. Ms. Marcou explained that to keep items organized using a spreadsheet, each agency has a license number. Every project is categorized by the Board acronym (CLSS) and the year. Typically for the Planning Board or other license boards, applications would be numerical from the beginning of the year. Since this Board is a different configuration, each agency has its own License number, so the Board may not see them in numerical order. So, Mr. Matheson said with the first application the agency submits, it is assigned a License number, which they keep permanently. Ms. Marcou agreed.

Mr. Matheson asked when the Covenant Living of Keene license would expire and if tonight’s action would delay anything. Ms. Marcou said no, there are specific license deadlines during the course of each year. The first is in April for residential care facilities. Because there are many in the City and in order not to do all of them in one night, the applications are dispersed throughout February, March, and April. She said Covenant Living would still have time in March. Ms. Marcou added that in a situation like Genesis Healthcare, when someone might be on medical leave or have extenuating circumstances, the Board could choose to extend their license, and City staff work with applicants and agencies.

Chair Seher thanked Mr. Matheson and Mr. Hamm for joining the Board and being a part of the process, and Vice Chair Savastano for continuing. Chair Seher also thanked City staff.

7) Adjournment

A motion by Mr. Hamm to adjourn the meeting was duly seconded by Mr. Matheson and carried unanimously.

There being no further business, Chair Seher adjourned the meeting at 7:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Corinne Marcou, Board Clerk