

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, June 10, 2026**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Randy L. Filiault, Chair  
Philip M. Jones, Vice Chair  
Robert C. Williams  
Edward J. Haas  
Laura E. Ruttie-Miller

**Staff Present:**

Elizabeth A. Ferland, City Manager  
Amanda Palmeira, City Attorney  
Brandon Latham, Deputy City Attorney  
Paul Andrus, Community Development  
Director  
Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk  
Heather Fitz-Simon, Clerk's Administrative  
Assistant

**Members Not Present:**

*All Present*

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

1. **Keene Elm City Rotary Club - Request to Use City Property – Clarence DeMar Marathon - September 27, 2026**
  - a. **Staff Report/Safety Protocol Team – Keene Elm City Rotary Club - City Clerk**

Chair Filiault welcomed the petitioner, Mick Blume (of 54 Skyline Drive), to represent the event. Mr. Blume had no comments to add to his letter.

Chair Filiault welcomed staff comments. Community Development Director Paul Andrus reported that the Protocol for this event is pretty extensive; they met on May 12, 2026 to review and update the event plan for the 2026 event. There are no significant changes from last year. Mr. Andrus ended that there will be a second Protocol meeting in late August, about one month before the event. Chair Filiault said this is one of Keene's finest and very popular events that had definitely worked the kinks out over the years.

Councilor Haas asked if the petitioner anticipated any changes in the route and deployment, or anything else different this year. Mr. Blume said there were no changes. Councilor Haas hoped for a cloudy day.

Councilor Jones thanked Mr. Blume for attending in Alan Stroshine's place. Councilor Jones called this a wonderful event, noting that the logistics and footprint are unbelievable. He said they do a wonderful job and thanked the organizers. Mr. Blume said the Elm City Rotary has so many volunteers from throughout the entire City who are a part of this fantastic event for the City.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller used this as a pitch, as a member of the ultra-running community, to advocate for a DeMar ultra marathon as well. She noted that Clarence DeMar was known for running from Keene to Boston and if that were ever an option, there is a huge ultra community in Keene that would be on board with that concept. Mr. Blume said that was good to know.

There were no public comments.

Councilor Williams said he really loves watching the marathon from his front door and cheering on the runners.

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

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the City Council grant a revocable license to the Keene Elm City Rotary Club to conduct the Clarence DeMar Marathon on Sunday, September 27, 2026, subject to the licensing requirements identified in the staff report, including associated road closures. All permissions granted herein are subject to compliance with the City-approved safety protocol document, which becomes a part of this license.

2. **Keene Music Festival - Request to Use City Property – Keene Music Festival - September 5, 2026**
  - a. **Staff Report/Safety Protocol Team – Keene Music Festival - City Clerk**

Chair Filiault welcomed the petitioner Pablo Fleischmann, owner of Green Energy Options (of 37 Roxbury Street). He thanked the City Council and City of Keene for supporting this event since its inception in 2001. He promised to do his best to bring good weather. Mr. Fleischmann said the organizers are really appreciative of the support from the City.

Chair Filiault welcomed staff comments. Community Development Director Paul Andrus said a Protocol Committee meeting was held on May 19, 2026 and there would be a follow-up meeting on August 4, 2026. During the event, the music will cease by 10:00 PM. Chair Filiault said this is another successful and popular event that started small and now they are basically turning bands away, and Mr. Fleischmann agreed.

Councilor Haas thanked the organizers for doing this great event again. He thought of Mr. Fleischmann as the face of the event and asked him to acknowledge some of his other partners. Mr. Fleischmann said it is a group of at least five, two or three of whom are Keene residents— Sam and Matt Martell, and Chelsea. They are mostly musicians and have also been running the event for years. Councilor Haas appreciated recognizing their importance too.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller thanked Mr. Fleischmann for putting this event on. Since Councilor Ruttle-Miller came here for college in 2009, this festival is one of her earliest memories of being in Keene and her introduction to the City. Mr. Fleischmann said the organizers are actively working not to let the Festival grow because it is currently a manageable size and is a lot of work. Chair Filiault said it is definitely appreciated by the entire City and still one of his favorite parts of the year; he appreciates all the hard work that goes into it.

Councilor Jones thanked Mr. Fleischmann for all he does to get the talent at this Festival. Councilor Jones noted that for someone without musical talent like himself, he appreciates all the talent that comes to the City even more. Councilor Jones looked forward to the event.

There were no public comments.

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

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the City Council grant a revocable license to Keene Music Festival to use downtown City rights-of-way to conduct the Keene Music Festival on Saturday, September 5, 2026, subject to the licensing requirements identified in the staff report, including associated road closures and authorization of free parking. All permissions granted herein are subject to compliance with the City-approved safety protocol document, which becomes a part of this license.

**3. Councilor Ruttle-Miller - Request to Reinstate the College City Commission**

Chair Filiault noted that Mayor Kahn wanted to be present to discuss this, so if there were no objections from Councilor Ruttle-Miller or others, the Chair was inclined to put this on more time. Councilor Ruttle-Miller did not object.

The following motion by Chair Filiault was duly seconded by Councilor Haas.

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the request to reinstate the College City Commission be placed on more time.

**4. Mayor Kahn - Potential Expansion of Permitted Uses in Commerce, Industrial, and Industrial Park Zones**

Because Mayor Kahn could not attend, Chair Filiault recommended placing this on more time and heard no objections from the Committee.

The following motion by Chair Filiault was duly seconded by Vice Chair Jones.

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends that the Potential Expansion of Permitted Uses in Commerce, Industrial, and Industrial Park Zones be placed on more time.

Councilor Haas asked that City staff be prepared to discuss this in light of the legislation happening in Concord that might make this irrelevant. Also, to discuss how these two occupancies might interact across the City in the different zones.

**5. Warrant for Unlicensed Dogs - City Clerk**

Chair Filiault welcomed Deputy City Clerk Kathleen Richards and Clerk's Administrative Assistant, Heather Fitz-Simon. Ms. Richards stated they are present to seek authorization to issue the annual warrant for unlicensed dogs as required by RSA 466:4. The City Clerk must annually present to the governing body a list of dog owners who have failed to license or renew their dogs. The warrant would result in a \$25 forfeiture fine for owners whose dogs remain unlicensed as of April 30, 2026. This year, the Clerk's Office was seeking authorization for two lists. The first consists of owners who have not renewed existing dog licenses; that list includes 256 owners, representing 318 dogs, which the Deputy City Clerk was pleased to report reflects an approximately 30% decrease since 2025 and called that encouraging. The second list includes new dog owners reported by local veterinarians that have not yet been licensed. There are about 75 owners with a total of 85 unlicensed dogs. The renewal numbers have improved, but this category increased by about 20% at this point since last year.

Next, Ms. Fitz-Simon discussed the outreach campaign coordinated this year. Her efforts, along with the support of the other staff in the Clerk's office, helped to drive this significant improvement in compliance. Ms. Fitz-Simon explained that to encourage compliance before reaching this stage, the Clerk's office undertakes a substantial public outreach effort each year. That effort includes newspaper notices, website postings, biweekly e-mail reminders, reminder postcards, automated phone calls, and multiple national change of address reviews to ensure records remain current. She was happy to report that as of June 2, 2026, the Clerk's office issued 2,754 dog licenses for the current licensing year compared to 2,690 at the same time in 2025. Ms. Fitz-Simon explained that following City Council approval of the warrant, forfeiture notices would be mailed in early July 2026 to owners whose dogs remain unlicensed with forfeiture fines due later that month.

Before concluding, the Deputy City Clerk and Ms. Fitz-Simon shifted to some of the information the program helps collect because they maintain records on all licensed dogs and are able to compile interesting statistics on Keene's dog population. This data was for 2,739 of the licensed dogs. Among those there are 1,377 different dog names. The most popular dog names again this year were Bella, Daisy, Luna, and Lucy. There were also 285 different registered dog breeds, with Labrador Retrievers continuing to lead the list in popularity, followed by mixed breeds and golden retrievers. For colors, black dogs remain the most common, followed by multi color and black and white dogs. In total, licensed dogs in Keene represent 88 different color categories. The licensing data also reflects responsible pet ownership. More than 87% of licensed dogs in Keene are spayed or neutered, while approximately 13% are not. The population of licensed dogs is also balanced by gender, with about 53% female and 47% male. Beyond statistics, licensing serves several important public purposes. It helps ensure dogs receive regular rabies vaccinations, supports the state's animal population control program, and provides important records that can be used if a dog is lost or involved in an incident. Chair Filiault appreciated the informative and fun presentation.

Chair Filiault also pointed out that this is a state RSA. It is not the City "playing hardball with your pooch." This is required by the state, and the City just has to follow through. He asked if there was a grace period for those on the list or if that had already passed. Ms. Fitz-Simon said the licenses are due by April 30 annually, and the month of May is a grace period month.

Starting June 1, a late fee of \$1 begins. Starting July 1, the late fee becomes \$2. The forfeiture fine that starts around the end of July will be \$25 on top of the original license fee and late fees.

Councilor Jones knows veterinarians are required to notify the Clerk's office when they do inoculations. He wondered whether Massachusetts or Vermont vets notify as well. Ms. Fitz-Simon said some send notices but she was unsure whether there were Massachusetts vets, necessarily. Councilor Jones mentioned that the closest 24-hour vet is Deerfield, MA, which was why he wondered. Ms. Fitz-Simon offered to check. Councilor Jones knew only the New Hampshire vets are required to report and wondered if others do as a courtesy and Ms. Fitz-Simon said some do, yes.

Councilor Haas asked how much the City collects in fines and forfeiture fees. Ms. Fitz-Simon said between now and when forfeiture fines go into effect, probably approximately \$600. However, a lot of the dogs on that list might have moved away or passed away, in which case it can be difficult for the Clerk's office to receive notice. Councilor Haas said he would be interested in comparing what the City collects in fees and fines to how much is spent on outreach. He thought it may be interesting to skip a year of outreach and just use banners and simple advertisements vs. all the outreach to see if it makes any difference. Ms. Fitz-Simon thought it was an interesting idea and Councilor Haas said they would talk further.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller said she was sure the reminders are helpful for people because they kind of align with when dogs need their rabies shots. She said sometimes life gets busy and people forget. She thought there were probably a substantial portion of people on the list who could not go register until they completed their rabies shots; sometimes things need to align. Discussion ensued about the list of dog name popularity and the Clerks offered to look names up for Councilors. Chair Filiault said he appreciates the fact that the Clerks make the effort for the reminders because he was down to the last minute this year and got a reminder before his name was on this list. So, he said thank you for the last-minute warnings. Without the last-minute warnings, Councilor Haas said the City would have increased revenues. Councilor Ruttle-Miller said she is unsure the City's job is to make anyone's life complicated, so she thanked the Clerk's office for helping make people's lives easier. Chair Filiault pointed out again that this is a New Hampshire RSA and not something the City wants to do but has to do.

There were no public comments.

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

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends the City Council issue a warrant for unlicensed dogs pursuant to NHRSA 466:14, and the Keene Police Department and the City Clerk's Office be directed to issue a civil forfeiture to those dog owners who have failed to license their dog by April 30, 2026.

**6. Relating to the Definition of "Family" Ordinance O-2026-02 Mari Brunner, Senior Planner**

Chair Filiault welcomed Senior Planner Mari Brunner to speak to this Ordinance. Ordinance O-2026-02 was originally introduced on February 5, 2026, a public workshop was held on March 9, and the public hearing occurred on May 21, 2026. Ms. Brunner welcomed questions since the Committee had heard about this Ordinance a few times already. As a brief reminder, this came about because of a change to state law from the 2025 legislative session, House Bill 457 “Relative to Zoning Restrictions on Dwelling Unit.” Basically, the state made it illegal to regulate in the municipal zoning code based on the familial or non-familial relationships between people. That is causing the City to have to update its definition of “family.” Staff recommended to switch to more of a functional family definition, which focuses more on how a group operates together rather than how they are related to each other. There are a couple other scholar provisions in this Ordinance related to a dwelling unit, which specify that it is intended for non-transient users. It also closed a loophole to make sure that anytime somebody proposes a change to a definition, such as the definition of family, which is technically outside the zoning code, it would still go through the zoning amendment process and have the same level of public engagement and scrutiny as a normal zoning change would have.

Councilor Williams wondered about any downstream effects on the Code that might result from having changed this definition; what in the future might we also have to change? Ms. Brunner said there are a few downstream effects that staff noted in the staff report. Notably, for short-term rentals, which is an Ordinance that was already introduced and would be discussed next month at a public workshop scheduled for July 13. The other major downstream effect would be impacts to community living and social service uses, which is a whole category of uses that staff are currently working on updating and bringing an ordinance forward for the Committee to review on the topic. Ms. Brunner said other impacts are less or ones the City is not aware of yet, or they are not to the same level where they need to be addressed as urgently. For example, the other category of impacts in the staff report was the change to occupancy limits; right now the Zoning Code is the only thing that limits how many unrelated people can be in a unit together, so by getting rid of that, there is no number to rely on. However, other codes like life safety codes are relied upon to ensure situations are healthy and safe.

Councilor Haas said all of these things were to get away from trying to define what a family is and to define how many people can be in a dwelling unit; he said we moved away from those toward the life safety codes to define neighborhoods regarding impervious surfaces, parking, trash, and more. He said that links the Land Development Code closely to these issues when an occupancy begins. Moving forward with this Ordinance, Airbnbs, and temporary lodging, he said the City always needs to keep that together and talk about how to enforce things after the fact; how would the City know because they do not do internal inspections on one/two-family housing? He asked how to get all the good intentions in the Land Development Code and Building Codes aligned with what happens later. He said it is a big task. Then maybe Fire Marshall Rick Wood can help with these things. Ms. Brunner agreed that Fire Marshall Wood, who is the Building Official and Health Official, would be at the public workshop for the short-term rental discussion to specifically talk to those topics. With respect to the Ordinance under discussion tonight, Ms. Brunner did not think this changed much other than that it is easier to say

if it is more than four unrelated people it is a violation and now it would probably be more of an investigation to see if it is a household or not. She does not think the City gets a lot of complaints about occupancy issues; there used to be more when there was a higher student population and more of an impact on community housing vs. now with most of the student population on campus. Councilor Haas thinks a lot goes to property maintenance standards and that is where the City needs to give attention and be able to respond effectively to how things change over time.

Councilor Jones recalled the City writing the congregate living regulations in the early 2000s when there were student issues, mostly with frat houses, and the City wanted them to get licenses if more than four unrelated people lived together. During the City's homelessness issues, the City added the social services aspect to those regulations. Now, he said both were becoming obsolete, he would think, because of the definition of family. Ms. Brunner thought that she would have to look into fraternity and sororities a little more. With respect to the congregate living and social service uses she could not speak to each use individually, but there would be some definitions that would probably need to change in response to this that staff were in the process of working on and would bring more forward on that topic. So, Councilor Jones said the Council could anticipate changes to those regulations.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller mentioned that as the legislative season winds down in Concord and many new bills have been passed, with a range of dates when those bills go into effect based on the way the legislation is written. She assumed whatever the date is that the state says this is effective would be when it is effective regardless. So, whenever the City's Code says, it does not really matter—if the state is allowing it and the City's Code does not match it, people are allowed by right to do it. She asked how long the City has to update its zone. Ms. Brunner said the state changed the law and it went into effect pretty much immediately on September 13, 2025. So, at this time, the City's current definition of "family" is not something it could enforce. Councilor Ruttle-Miller wanted people to be aware that the state will pass a law with an effective date and then the City has to update our Code to match the state law. This means people do not necessarily have to follow the City's rule the way it is written if it has not yet been updated to match the law passed by the state. She said the state law is effective regardless while the City works through kinks on its end. Ms. Brunner said yes, the City tries to track to the best of its ability and keep its Code up to date and in compliance with the state law as much as possible. She said it had been challenging for the past year or two with a lot of state changes that affected zoning codes, which take a lot of time to work through. Luckily in Keene, these changes can go through the City Council whereas smaller towns only have one chance per year at town meetings to come into compliance. So, Ms. Brunner said it is challenging but Councilor Ruttle-Miller is correct that state law always supersedes the City's laws. Although, they are generally in alignment to avoid confusion. Councilor Ruttle-Miller wanted to be clear as a new Councilor. Ms. Brunner said there were approximately 70 bills dealing with zoning in the past year. Chair Filiault said it could all change again in November and not to become too comfortable with any of the bills.

The following motion by Councilor Ruttle-Miller was duly seconded by Vice Chair Jones.

On a vote of 5 to 0, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2026-02.

**7. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Filiault adjourned the meeting at 6:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Terri Hood, City Clerk and Kathleen Richards, Deputy City Clerk