

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONGREGATE LIVING AND SOCIAL SERVICES LICENSING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Jennifer Seher, Chair
Tom Savastano, Vice Chair
Ian Matheson

Staff Present:

Mike Hagan, Building Division Manager
Corinne Chaisson, Board Clerk

Members Not Present:

Robert Hamm
Alison Welsh

1. Call to Order: Roll Call

Chair Seher called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: March 24, 2026

A motion by Mr. Matheson to adopt the March 24, 2026 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Unfinished Business:

a. Complaints

Mr. Hagan was happy to report that City staff had not received complaints on any licensed facilities in the City of Keene during the time since the last meeting.

b. New Applications

Mr. Hagan reported that the Community Development Department received one new application on June 12, 2026 and it was currently under review at this time. It is a new behavioral health small group home that will be located at 232 Winchester Street. Staff would be scheduling inspections and would review and issue a license based upon the current regulations.

Chair Seher asked if there were two locations for this applicant. Mr. Hagan said there are two locations, but this one is just for the group home and the other is for the clinical services area.

c. Updates to Ordinance Changes/Timeline

Mr. Hagan provided an update on the CLSS Ordinance changes and timeline. The proposed “family” definition was recently adopted by the City Council on Thursday, June 18, 2026. City staff needed to wait for that definition to be adopted before they could finish rewriting the CLSS regulations. At this time, City staff were finishing writing the updates to the CLSS regulations before a proposed special CLSS meeting on July 7, 2026 to review and discuss the proposed Ordinance language presented by the City Attorney. The purpose of the Special Meeting is to review and give the Committee an understanding of how not only the state laws changed and some of the regulations within the City of Keene have changed, but what the proposal is for CLSS, and to have a discussion. He noted that the Board would need to vote to have a special meeting on July 7.

Mr. Savastano asked staff to share the text of the new Family definition. Staff proceeded looking it up.

Mr. Matheson said he would be out of the country but happy to attend a July 7 Special Meeting remotely. Discussion ensued about confirming whether this could count toward quorum. Chair Seher and Mr. Savastano both confirmed their availability for the Special Meeting.

A motion by Chair Seher proposing that the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board have a Special Meeting on July 7, 2026 at 6:00 PM based on staff recommendations was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Seher said the goal is to have a quorum if the Board is to take any action on July 7. Mr. Hagan reviewed the possible actions the Board can take depending on how it wants to move forward. He put the two options together in consultation with the City Attorney and in consideration of the different timelines for the Ordinance adoption process (i.e., going through certain public meetings). He explained the two different options:

1. Expedited Timeline: in which the Committee can participate in the public process. Mr. Hagan said this option would move the Ordinance through the process as quickly as possible. At the July 7 meeting, the City Attorney will review the draft Ordinance language. The first Ordinance reading before City Council would be July 16. Then there will be a September 14 Joint Planning Board-Planning, Licenses and Development (PB-PLD) Committee public hearing review process, followed by an October 7 PLD Committee meeting. If all goes smoothly, the second and final Ordinance reading and final vote by the City Council would be October 15, 2026. Under this timeline, the Board would have limited opportunity to review and provide feedback prior to the Ordinance being submitted to the formal adoption process. However, there would still be opportunities for the public input and comment through the City’s formal Ordinance adoption process, including the Joint PB-PLD Committee and the PLD Committee review stages. Mr. Hagan said this would be the fastest in order to work with the timeline that the board voted on in March 2026, with the licenses only extending until the October meeting.
2. Extended Timeline: This option provides a licensing Board with the opportunity to review the proposed ordinance language and provide comments before the Ordinance

is introduced to City Council. It would be a timeline of the July 7 Special Meeting, a regular meeting on July 28 or the August meeting (because no Council committees are meeting in August), or both, before the Ordinance's first reading before Council on September 17. The next would be the Joint PB-PLB Committee meeting on October 13, the PLD Committee meeting on November 11 or December 9, and December 17 would be the second reading of the Ordinance and vote of the City Council. This option would allow the Board to meet again in July/August/both to review the proposed Ordinance language and provide feedback before the formal Council adoption process begins.

Mr. Hagan said this was really the Board's decision. Discussion continued briefly on the merits of each option. The Board did not need to make a decision at this meeting. They would be presented with the draft language at the July 7 meeting and review these two options again. He encouraged the Board to think about how involved they want to be in the process; the Ordinance may sound great to them on first read and they could send it through for the October timeline. He said it would require Board action to extend the licenses to December. It made sense to Chair Seher to wait until the Board hears from City Attorney Palmeira on July 7. Chair Seher's initial instinct was that the Board had come this far, why would they not want to be able to weigh in on the Ordinance before it goes to City Council, which would mean extending.

Mr. Savastano wondered what points the Ordinance would be hitting on: the family definition and how it relates to the kinds of organizations that the board is regulating and licensing? Mr. Hagan said that was correct. At this time, the City regulates nine different types of facilities and that list will be reduced based upon not only the family definition but also based upon some state and federal law changes on protected groups. That is in the City Attorney's hands to be presented on July 7.

Mr. Hagan read the new definition of "family" adopted by the City Council: "Family shall mean a natural person living alone or a group of natural persons living together as a single housekeeping unit that is primarily non-transient. For the purposes of this definition, "transient" shall mean occupancy of a room or dwelling unit for less than 30 consecutive days or rental of a room or dwelling unit for a term of less than one month."

Mr. Savastano asked if that definition was arrived at by the City Council out of consultation with state guidelines for families now. To answer Mr. Savastano's question, Mr. Hagan said he could read the City's old definition of "family," noting that it can no longer be based on blood or marriage, so it is a more neutral approach in line with state law.

Mr. Hagan read the *old* City definition of "family" for comparison: "Family shall mean one of the following: 1) two or more natural persons related by blood, marriage, civil union, adoption, or foster care, living together as a single housekeeping unit with or without customary household helpers in a dwelling unit; or 2) a group of four or fewer natural persons, who are not related by blood, marriage, civil union, adoption, or foster care, living together as a single housekeeping unit in a dwelling unit. This term shall not preclude one natural person from being the sole occupant of any dwelling unit."

Mr. Matheson asked if it would be possible to have one meeting before July 7 to go through this process, make any recommendations, and then meet on July 7 with those updates. Mr. Hagan said the next available time for the draft Ordinance is July 7, which is why staff recommended it as the closest time available to still meet the timeline. That is the first opportunity to present it to the Board.

Chair Seher thought it was not just the family definition in the Ordinance, but there are also some other things playing into it that were alluded to that the Board was not aware of yet. She was interested to hear exactly what is being presented, noting it is the state law piece that is being used for facilities that are already licensed by the state and this is the only City trying to also license; she assumed some of that would be reconciled through this process. Mr. Hagan said in conjunction with this Ordinance the City is also working on the definition of short-term rentals, so there is not only the family definition, which is essential for a part of the Land Development Code, which was the first step. Then additional terms could be added for the short-term rentals based on the 30-days. He explained the challenges of reconciling the Ordinance. There are two codes being affected in two locations that need to be codified: the licensing portion under City Council and the Land Development Code.

Mr. Matheson said he liked the expedited option because he thinks the Board has batted this around for too long already. He said the Board is going to potentially be right up at the deadline of what they said they were comfortable with or have to extend again. He thinks it makes more sense to get it done and over with, noting the Board members still have the opportunity to attend these public meetings and share their pieces as CLSS members, it just will not be in this formalized setting.

Unless others felt strongly about deciding right now, Chair Seher wanted to wait to choose an option until after hearing the City Attorney's presentation on July 7.

Vice Chair Savastano agreed with Mr. Matheson's point that it is a public process. Mr. Savastano's gut feeling was to agree with Mr. Matheson about the shortest term unless there is something really glaring in the Ordinance because Mr. Savastano questioned how much opportunity the Board would have to change it; how much input would the Board be able to effectively have in advance of this public process?

Mr. Matheson heard about a Joint PB-PLD Committee meeting and asked if there could not be a joint meeting with the CLSS. Mr. Hagan did not believe so but would check with the City Attorney but he did not believe that would believe it would be a part of the process. Mr. Matheson understood that it could be an issue because then any City committee could request input in that way.

Chair Seher said no action was needed at this time. She looked forward to hearing the City Attorney's presentation, noting then it would be easier to know if the Board needs to push back or not. Vice Chair Savastano agreed.

4. Applications:

Discussed above.

5. New Business:

a. Annual City Council Report

Mr. Hagan explained that the Committee's staff gives a report for the Committee and an update to City Council on where the Committee is at and a brief update on the licenses; members are more than welcome to attend. He was unsure of the exact date that it would be presented to City Council but would get that information to the Board. Ms. Chaisson noted there is a report that staff could assist the Chair in writing and then she could present it to the Board and staff could present it to the Council. She imagined the Board would want to wait until the end of the Ordinance update process to provide this update and staff thought the Council would understand the delay since they are also in this process.

Looking at the sparse audience, Mr. Matheson wondered about having something on the City's social media talking about the Ordinance change, how it affects all these different City boards, and that the CLSS is a place to have input regarding licensees. Mr. Hagan could not answer that directly but said that as the process moves forward, those are the conversations that occur with the Board and during public hearings; those are things the Board members should bring up if they feel strongly. Mr. Hagan was unsure that there were advertisements but knew there was information on the website. Mr. Matheson had seen the City's other informational/advertisement videos and thought about something like that. Mr. Savastano recalled proposing something similar in the form of a Letter to the Editor of The Sentinel about two years prior, so he drafted it and it was approved. That was one form of public notice. Chair Seher agreed that it had been a topic of conversation for some time: a big part of the point is to let people know that there is a place for their voices to be heard, positive or negative. She thought the Board was on the same page.

6. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Seher adjourned the meeting at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Corinne Chaisson, Clerk