

City of Keene
New Hampshire

JOINT PLANNING BOARD /
PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 13, 2026

6:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Planning Board

Members Present:

Harold Farrington, Chair
David Bergeron
Mayor Jay V. Kahn, (Remote)
Michael Hoefer
Kenneth Kost
Andrew Madison
Councilor Molly Ellis
Stephon Mehu, Alternate
Joseph Cocivera, Alternate

Planning Board

Members Not Present:

Roberta Mastrogiovanni, Vice Chair
Tammy Adams, Alternate

Planning, Licenses &

Development Committee

Members Present:

Randy L. Filiault, Chair
Philip M. Jones, Vice
Chair
Edward J. Haas
Robert C. Williams

Planning, Licenses &

Development Committee

Members Not Present

Laura E. Ruttle-Miller

Staff Present:

Paul Andrus, Community
Development Director
Mari Brunner, Senior Planner
Evan Clements, Planner /
Zoning Administrator

A. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Roll Call

Chair Farrington called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and a roll call was taken. Stephon Mehu was requested to join the Planning Board as a voting member.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 9, 2026

A motion was made by Councilor Jones that the Joint Committee accept the March 9, 2026 meeting minutes. The motion seconded by David Bergeron (it was not stated who seconded) and was unanimously approved.

3. Public Workshop:

- a. Ordinance O-2026-09 Relating to Short-term Rental Uses. Petitioner, City of Keene Community Development Department, proposes to establish a use definition and use standards for “Short-term Rental” in Article 8 of the Land Development Code and permit this use by right with limitations in the following**

zoning districts: Rural, Residential Preservation, Low Density, Low Density 1, Medium Density, High Density, High Density 1, Downtown Transition, Commerce, Neighborhood Business, Business Growth and Reuse, Office, and Agriculture.

Senior Planner Mari Brunner addressed the Board and stated this Ordinance is coming from staff as a way to maintain the status quo. She noted the City of Keene never had a definition for short term rentals. However, the previous definition of family allowed four or fewer unrelated individuals to occupy a dwelling unit for any length of time. Under that definition, most short term rentals qualified as a family and therefore as an allowed use in a Residential District.

Ms. Brunner went on to say State law changed and the City is no longer allowed to utilize the old definition of family. The new definition focuses on transiency, and so any use that is transient of 30 days or less would no longer qualify as a family. For this reason, staff is proposing to create a new definition for a short-term rentals, so that all rentals exist today can continue to operate.

Ms. Brunner stated to date, staff is not aware of any major issues related to short-term rentals. A study was done in 2023 where they looked at the share of short-term rentals compared to the overall housing supply and they found that at that time it was a very small percentage. To staff's knowledge that data hasn't really changed. The City does not have a paid subscription to obtain some of this data, However, an informal search on Airbnb and VRBO etc. showed that the number of short term rentals hasn't really changed since 2023.

Ms. Brunner stated planning staff had discussed this issue with Code Enforcement staff, Police and Fire Department staff and through those conversations, it became apparent that there are not many complaints or issues being generated by the short-term rental properties the City currently has especially when they are compared to regular long-term rentals (they are actually less).

Ms. Brunner went on to say staff also created a short-term rental survey through the flash vote platform and those results are summarized in the staff report in the Committee's packet. She noted there is a wide range of views that have been expressed throughout that survey. The main concern people expressed was the fear that short-term rentals, if they were to proliferate could take away long-term housing.

Ms. Brunner noted where staff is coming from with this Ordinance is to create a definition for short-term rentals that maintains the status quo, and makes it so that they are allowed. Staff is also proposing two Use standards. One Use Standard is specifically related to the residential appearance of the dwelling unit. She explained if someone is operating a short-term rental in a residential district, it would have to maintain the look and appearance of a residential structure. The second Use Standard is for short-term rentals that staff is not referring to "hosted." In that instance somewhere within the dwelling unit, contact information needs to be posted for the owner or if the owner is not within an hour's drive, then contact information for a property manager who is within an hour's drive who can respond to complaints and issues from guests.

Ms. Brunner next reviewed the Definition:

The definition for short-term states *a dwelling unit or a dwelling, or any portion thereof, that the owner or the lessee of the dwelling offers for occupancy for a fee for fewer than 30 consecutive days. Short term rentals can be hosted where the dwelling is the primary residence of the owner or lessee or non-hosted, or the dwelling is not the primary residence of the owners or lessee.*

Ms. Brunner noted the distinction between hosted and non-hosted is different from what other communities use to define hosted and non-hosted.

In terms of choosing where this use would be allowed, staff is proposing to allow this use in all residential districts as well districts where bed and breakfast is currently allowed. Ms. Brunner explained the reason staff chose this is because the definition for bed and breakfast is very similar. The main difference with a bed and breakfast is that meals have to be served to guests.

Ms. Brunner added staff's approach is to treat short-term rentals so they can continue operating the way they have been, continue to address any nuisances or complaints that come in through the standard process. However, in the future should the City end up getting more short-term rental; start seeing a concentration of them in a certain area and this is causing problems. Staff could come back before the Joint Committee and address the issue. This concluded staff comments.

Councilor Williams asked what mechanisms exists to ensure that short-term rentals are paying their share of meals and rooms tax. Ms. Brunner stated this would be up to the State to collect but felt the City could perhaps have a license fee.

Councilor Haas noted in reading the statute it seems like there are exceptions to when that rooms and meals tax won't be paid and asked whether staff knew what those exceptions were. Ms. Brunner stated a certain number of rental rate would have to be met to require the rooms and meals tax and recalled that it was 185 days but wasn't entirely sure.

Mr. Madison asked for the difference between an AirBNB and a hotel. Ms. Brunner stated with a short-term rentals it has be a residential structure and it is being rented out for 30 or fewer consecutive days for a fee. There are no requirement to serve meals. A hotel however, is a commercial use reviewed through the building code. A hotel also has very specific fire code and building code. It comes down to what the structure was originally built for and how it is being rented out.

Councilor Ellis noted some municipalities are requiring short-term rentals to let abutters know of their intent and asked why Keene was not taking this approach. She also stated short-term rental might not be a problem now, but it might be good to know how many exist in the City. Ms. Brunner stated communities that have regulations is because they have had issues; tourist areas, college towns, large demand for short-term rentals. She stated the most common item she has seen in New Hampshire is the requirement of a license, which she indicated would require another staff position and have a budgetary impact. She went on to say because Keene does not have too many short-term rentals, staff did not feel it was worth taking that approach at this time. A Registry would be another option, but this could also require added staff time, which Ms. Brunner indicated staff is already having a hard time keeping up with the Code Enforcement complaints.

Councilor Haas stated short-term rentals don't build neighborhoods. Short-term rentals also take housing off the market. He added he is glad the City is trying to get a handle on this issue. The Councilor clarified the downtown is not an area recommended for short-term rentals. He felt he would like to see these rentals not in medium or low-density residential districts but rather in higher density or unused areas of the City. He asked whether there was a reason to discount downtown for short-term rentals. Ms. Brunner stated downtown is envisioned for high intensity uses such as hotels and multi-family. She added the reason for looking at residential areas is because there is a high percentage of Keene's population who lives alone and this could become a mechanism for someone to make money and stay in their home. She stated staff is open to where these rentals should be located. Ms. Brunner added the Committee could also look at hosted versus non-hosted.

Councilor Haas stated he did not see much difference between a hotel and a short-term rental other than the building and the kind of items they deliver. The Councilor asked whether there was a way to differentially assess short-term rental properties because their value probably is not reflected in the property assessment alone. He felt in the property tax assessment, these properties are assessed just like their neighboring residential. The short-term rentals are income making properties but are assessed same as a residential property next door. He added short-term rentals are a disruption to the neighborhood.

Mr. Kost stated he sees hosted versus non-hosted as two entirely different things. Hosted gives people the opportunity to stay in their home. He felt short-term rentals are disruptive to a neighborhood but felt it would be better if the owner lives in the home.

Mayor Kahn stated he hoped staff would explore the option of "non-hosted." The Mayor stated having contact information of the owner posted inside the house would be satisfactory for him. He stated some sort of registry for non-hosted would also prudent. He asked how flexible the State statute is for the period for rental (anything less than 30 days) could that be defined differently. Ms. Brunner in response stated this is something that the City can define for itself. Staff came up with 30 days to complement the definition of family. She went on to say 30 days seems to be standard in terms of the definition across the board, in looking at other communities and also some model ordinances from the National League of Cities.

She further stated once the City starts moving towards hosted versus non hosted, as well as very short-term rentals and short-term rentals, it adds more complexity and the City would have difficult time tracking and enforcing it. She stressed the City has the leeway to define this any way it chooses.

Mr. Hoefer noted there is a law from 2016, which indicates that anyone who operates a short-term rental needs to register with the state, if they are advertising online they have to show their license number and pay rooms and meals tax. He clarified if that law is in force, the concerns raised today could be moot. Mr. Hoefer stated this is HB1590, Chapter 2323 law of 2016 signed by Governor Hassan. He stated he also agreed with staff for a simpler solution.

Councilor Jones stated this law was still in force but more for tax purposes and the time threshold was 160 days.

Mr. Kost asked who outlines the definition for bread and breakfast where meals need to be served etc. Ms. Brunner stated the definition comes from the City. He asked whether the City can then craft a definition which indicates a short-term rental has to be owner occupied, and don't have to permit non-hosted. Ms. Brunner agreed this would be Council prerogative but suggested the Council focus more on whether it is a primary residence.

Councilor Williams asked whether there could be a cap placed on the number of units where this use can be placed.

Councilor Jones noted this would be a commercial use in a residential area and felt it would cause confusion and suggested that this use be considered residential. Ms. Brunner stated she would advise against that. He asked whether it could be referred to as a conditional use to provide more clarity. He asked whether this would be a time to discuss the application process. Ms. Brunner answered in the affirmative and added at the present time it is "permitted with limitations"; this means it is permitted by right but there are use standards that need to be met. What the City has in place now is an agreement applicants sign which outline the use standards, they have to agree to. This document is filed under the property file giving staff the opportunity to review the agreement should there ever be a complaint filed.

Ms. Brunner went on to say if this issue was completed under the Conditional Use Permit process, it would require the applicant to come before the Planning Board for a public hearing, place a notice in the Sentinel and send out abutter letters. Ms. Brunner stated given the fact that short-term rentals are operating now without issue, her recommendation would be to allow it with limitations and add Use Standards and review this in a year to see how it is working. She stated she is afraid to create a complicated process for something individuals have been able to do by right.

Councilor Jones with reference to the application process, because this is happening in residential zones, could it be outlined in the application process or posted somewhere that there are other items that could come up that are not within the purview of zoning, such as, no parking on the front lawn, dog leash laws, overnight parking laws their guests are going to have to adhere to. Ms. Brunner stated she has stayed in short term rentals, which would have a handout which outlines emergency and non-emergency numbers for the police, house rules guests have to follow etc.

Councilor Ellis noted staff has indicated that short-term rentals are only a small percentage but how would the City know if this becomes a problem. Ms. Brunner stated there are data sites that could provide good information as to how many are out there, but there is a cost to attached to this. She used Decker as an example, which is around \$10,000 per year. Staff could perhaps look into this.

Councilor Haas stated the challenge is enforcement after the fact when a house has been rented for a week and the property has been trashed which impacts the neighborhood. He stated he is in

favor of making this process difficult for an applicant, perhaps through the CUP process or a variance of some sort. He did not feel the City should be approving non-hosted occupancies and stressed enforcement is the biggest issue. Ms. Brunner asked whether a detached ADU where the main house is owner occupied would be acceptable. Councilor Haas agreed it would.

Planner Evan Clements stated the City has a list of long-term rental units, which are operated under a short-term lease for a number of different reasons. He added the lease could be week to week but the tenancy could go on for a long period. Mr. Clements stated one of the challenges staff is facing is how to allow the landlord to have that flexibility while also providing for long term leases, which at times could not be owner occupied. This could cause long-term lease properties to be taken off the rolls.

Chair Farrington asked should the Committee not approve what is being proposed what would happen to the current short-term rentals; would they be non-conforming or legally non-conforming. Ms. Brunner stated they would be non-conforming as the City's prior code did not define short-term rentals and did not allow that use. They were under an old definition of family, which does not exist anymore.

The Chair asked for public comment next and asked that comments be kept to three minutes or less.

Mr. Brian Harmon of 27 Center Street Keene addressed the Committee first. Mr. Harmon stated he uses AirBnbs throughout the country and noted that both the hosts and guests are vetted through platforms that are listed. He stated he would like to list his property on Airbnb with no limitations as he pays a large amount in taxes. He felt AirBnbs bring people into a community and people prefer these places compared to hotels.

Ms. Hannah Maynard of 80 Roxbury Street Keene stated she was a host and has been a host for three years. She stated she has had transient guests who come for the weekend as well as reoccurring guests, visiting doctors and nurses, and local families who are displaced. She stated her guests have posed no negative issues to the neighborhood. Ms. Maynard stated if Keene has too many AirBnbs, hosts won't make money and as a result won't host anymore. She agreed guests are vetted through the platform, her license is available online and the rooms and meals taxes are automatically deducted through the platform. Ms. Maynard stated the money she makes from AirBnbs helps her subsidize the long-term rentals so she doesn't have to raise their rents.

Ms. Dee Robinson of 11 Hancock Street agreed AirBnbs have a good vetting system and noted she has lived next door to a house which attracted negative behavior and wanted to make sure these properties properly screen guests.

Ms. Jacqueline Stromberg of Bergeron Avenue Keene addressed the Committee next. Ms. Stromberg stated one of the homes in her neighborhood was turned into an Airbnb and there have been no issues but the same can't be said about another property. There have been people coming in and out, the yard needs mowing and there is an accumulation of trash on the lawn. This is a four-bedroom house rented to four individuals. Ms. Stromberg added the same owners

have purchased another home and plan to rent it to 15 individuals. She did not think any of these individuals who rent these properties have been vetted. She questioned if the City is aware of who is living in these properties and whether this is an issue for the City. Ms. Stromberg expressed her frustration of having to live in this neighborhood and added that she has been told by the City that there is nothing that can be done about these issues.

Councilor Tobin addressed the Committee and stated there has been many discussions about opening up opportunities for developers to bring in housing to Keene. During every one of those conversations, the question has been raised about how to regulate short-term rentals. She stated there is a difference between primary residence and non-primary residence. If the goal is to help people stay in their homes and supplement their income, this is one issue. However, if a building only caters to short-term rentals, this become a separate issue. The Councilor stated she understands the need to keep things simple with no regulations but then you come to a situation where it has been allowed for this long the used needs to be permitted. She added if it is not primary residence then it perhaps should fall under the Conditional Use Permit process forcing people to go through the process.

Councilor Workman was the next speaker. She stated since the report in 2023, there has been an increase in short-term rentals. She stated as of tonight there are 20 rentals available in Keene. She stated she would also like to encourage a different assessing revenue formula for some of these short-term rentals based off their income revenue. The Councilor stated she also encourages a registry and felt the City needs to be a proactive not reactive and felt this cannot be done without information.

Ms. Arvanda Henderson of 16 Bergeron Avenue Keene stated she has lived in her property since 1975. She noted this does not affect someone until it happens in your neighborhood. She referred to a property in her neighborhood rented to four individuals whose backgrounds seem to be of question. She noted the same property owner has purchased another property and is looking to rent it to as many people as they choose. Ms. Henderson noted this one property owner has changed the entire dynamic of this otherwise peaceful neighborhood. She stated when she reached out for assistance from the City she was told there is nothing that can be done.

Mr. Jake Phipp of 11 Bergeron Avenue Keene was the next speaker. Mr. Phipp stated he would like to echo what his neighbors have stated. He stated he agrees with Councilor Haas that this type of use does not build neighborhoods and added they tear neighborhoods apart. He stated three of his neighbors are considering moving because of what is happening in this neighborhood. He stated this is a safety issue, quality of life issue and a property value issue. He explained these properties provide one-month leases, each bedroom has its own lease and there are many transient and they have now started constructing walls to create additional space. Mr. Phipp added unlike AirBnBs, these individuals are not being vetted. He added this type of issue is not protecting abutters. He encouraged the City to be proactive.

Councilor Filiault stated he has received emails from neighbors in this area. He stated the Ordinance discussed tonight does not address the concerns being raised. The Councilor stated he is addressing a few other neighborhoods who are going through similar issues and did meet with

the Fire Marshall to make him aware of this. He added he is also discussing these issues with Code Enforcement.

Mr. Nathan Grove of 3 Bergeron Avenue Keene stated he has concerns not knowing who is living in these homes. He indicated he has five children and does not like to expose them to some of the negative behaviors introduced by some of these residents. He added he has concerns about safety for his children.

Ms. Maynard addressed the Committee again and stated she wanted to address host versus non-host. Having a responsible host does change how these properties are handled. She stated to encourage good hosts the City should have limitations as well as licensing. Councilor Haas asked Ms. Maynard if she knows of conversations happening on Airbnb or VRBO platforms as to how to educate communities on how to deal with this problem. She stated she does not get into the online chats but felt most issues are in resort towns and bigger cities.

The Councilor felt the City should be doing its own research as this something that is affecting many communities and some communities are banning them completely.

Councilor Kost asked whether this was Ms. Maynard's primary residence. She answered in the negative and went on to say that she owns a multi-family unit and one of those units is an Airbnb. She stated she has a private residence in Swanzey.

Chair Farrington stated there have been many concerns raised that need further discussion. The issues are how the rooms and meals tax is being handled, hosted versus non-hosted, should there be different rules for ten days versus 30 days. For process should it be by right with limitations, should it be handled through a CUP or a variance, how is tax assessment being handled for these properties, vetting of renters.

Councilor Filiault stated he agrees with Chair Farrington and added the City needs to be sure we are getting this right. He stated he will be working with the neighbors on Bergeron Avenue and encouraged other Councilors to reach out to them as well. He stated it is concerning when neighborhoods start taking a downturn. He felt one more month on this item will not hurt.

Mr. Madison stated he too agreed with an extension. He stated this is an issue he raised during his time on Council. He indicated he lives north of the Square and during Covid his neighborhood was affected greatly by AirBnBs. He referred to a multi-unit building that are all AirBnBs, the other is a cottage court now turned into a semi-resort consisting of five buildings which is now abandoned. He stated when he was a Councilor, he used to receive complaints about a property on Union Street owned by an entity in Massachusetts. He indicated this was a party house which created undue hardship for their neighbors. He stated he tried to work with AirBnB who had no interest in assisting as this was more of a financial incentive to them.

Mr. Madison stated AirBnB does vetting of hosts and guests, but they also have a financial incentive not to do that. He added he does not place too much faith in AirBnB in doing their due diligence and felt it was incumbent on the City to protect its citizens from this activity. He added he also felt there were a few bad actors that were causing these issues because most owners live

locally but there are a few who live out of state or across the country who use these properties for financial gain and these are the properties the City needs to watch out for.

Councilor Jones stated he too agrees with an extension. He felt there needs to be more discussion regarding CUP and discussion about Councilor Haas' discussion regarding splitting this use as there is a wide variety of uses that fall under this category. He stressed the need for licensing and added the City needs to control this use.

Mr. Kost stated when approving applications, it is the requirement to review if an application supports the master plan. He stated he is surprised there is discussion about the ability for people to take homes they don't live in and turn them into short-term rentals. He felt this go against the livable housing pillar the City has been discussing. He felt especially the non-hosted rentals go against the master plan. He noted the City invested a lot of money in adopting the master plan which he did not feel the City was currently utilizing.

Councilor Ellis stated she too agrees with extending this item. She stated she is not opposed to short-term rentals and talked about a situation with a friend who was financially assisted because she was able to use her property as an AirBnB. However, agreed this item needs to be reviewed under the guidelines set forth in the master plan. She referred to Ms. Maynard who rents out one of her units as an AirBnB and felt perhaps this could be a solution.

Councilor Jones stated the master plan also refers to "preserving the character of the neighborhood" and felt should also be included in the discussion.

Community Development Director Paul Andrus stated discussion staff has had, has to do with compliance and enforcement and some of the grey areas. He stated with the continuance he would like to bring forward those challenges, from a realistic standpoint.

The Mayor stated if people don't visit Keene, they are not going to want to live in Keene. He felt this relates to the City's housing and workforce issues. He felt the non-hosted issue could probably be addressed through code enforcement.

A motion was made by Councilor Jones that the Joint Committee continue Ordinance O-2026-09. The motion was seconded by Councilor Haas.

Ms. Brunner stated there does not seem to be a quorum for the August PLD Meeting and based on the number of topics the Joint Committee would like staff to look into, staff is recommending that this item be continued to the September Joint Committee meeting.

Councilor Jones asked staff whether this is causing any issues for staff as the Joint Committee changed its definition of family to work it into this Ordinance as well as the Lodging House Ordinance which is still be addressed.

Ms. Brunner stated the new definition of family went into effect last month and because of this Ordinance, staff is holding out on any enforcement against short-term rentals. She stated staff will bring to the next meeting a few options for the Committee to consider.

Councilor Haas noted continuing this item to the September meeting won't hinder addressing the health and safety enforcement issues that exist on Bergeron Avenue which will continue through Community Development.

The motion carried on a roll call vote for the Planning Board.

The motion carried on a roll call vote for the PLD Committee.

4. Presentation:

a. Implementation of Housing Strategies in the 2025 Master Plan. The Community Development Department will review housing-related strategies that the department intends to work on over the next 1–3 years

Mr. Andrus addressed the Committee. Mr. Andrus stated the topic for discussion is housing related strategies outlined in the master plan such as diversity, affordability, the impact on neighborhoods. The walkable aspects of how we do smart planning and development. Workforce, aging population, sustainability in the future and what the City would choose to pursue.

In terms of the housing pillar, Mr. Andrus stated one of the prime things local governments can do with respect to supporting housing, growth and redevelopment is through regulations. How can the City provide for missing middle housing.

Evan Clements addressed the Committee next. Mr. Clements stated staff has brought many zoning change recommendations before the Committee through this process. He explained some of these are based on legislative changes affected at the state level, as well as innovative changes the City has been initializing on its own. He added some of the changes the State is proposing recently are already things the City has in place such as updating and modernizing ADU Regulations, allowing detached or attached units anywhere in the City with a single-family residence.

He stated the most impactful change the Committee might be aware of is the Cottage Court Ordinance. It is an infill ordinance that allows for a right sized densification without unnecessary intensity. It provides controls to mitigate intensive uses to maintain neighborhood character. It provides allowances, for example, front setbacks so that some of the existing building stock that may have been around for over 100 years is much closer to the road than current front yard setbacks would require. He indicated the Cottage Court actually acknowledges the existing built form and allows new development to match that form so that it maintains the streetscape and it also provides flexibility for some of these lots.

The other item Mr. Clements addressed was parking standards. He indicated about year or so ago, the City completed a parking study and at the completion of the study the City determined a reduction in parking spaces from two spaces to one space per dwelling unit. He stated this is just a minimum if the market demands more parking and a lot can support it, a property owner can certainly provide additional parking. The City has also gone so far in certain downtown districts

to reduce that number to less than one parking space for efficiency units, studios, and workforce housing and housing restricted for 55 and older residents. He stated staff would continue to providing innovative suggestions to keep Keene moving forward on achieving its housing goals.

Ms. Brunner addressed the Committee next and noted the land development code was a multiyear project to bring all land use regulations into one document.

As far as redevelopment, Ms. Brunner noted the City of Keene was an early adopter of the 79 E tax incentive program which was recently updated to include residential property revitalization zone. The manner in which the City has chosen to implement this, is to make sure that either units are not being lost or that new units are being created.

Ms. Brunner addressed site plan thresholds. The Planning Board looked at increasing some of the projects that could go to a minor site plan review versus coming before the Planning Board. This was another effort at trying to make the process work better for applicants, especially for smaller scale projects that have fewer impacts on neighboring properties.

Ms. Brunner next addressed Housing Updates:

Housing Needs Assessment done in 2023, which provided the City with a solid foundation of data for future changes. Minimum lot size in the rural district was reduced from five acre to two acres, which has resulted seven new lots being created. In June 2023, the City expanded where ADU's are allowed and made it easier to construct them which resulted in three new units. The item that has been the most successful is the Cottage Court Ordinance, which was adopted in May 2024. So far, the Planning Board has approved 107 units, although 38 of those units were either revoked or have expired. The City is looking at a net total of 69 new units through this process. The City also created a height incentive for multifamily housing in the commerce district. Not only is multifamily housing allowed in the commerce district, but it can now go up to six stories. The City also removed the density factor for residential units in medium density, high density, and downtown transition districts. Based on the data system, staff was not able to figure out how many new units this might have allowed for. Hence, that impact is unknown. The City increased the threshold for projects to qualify for major site plan review. With the 79E Residential Property Revitalization Zone option, which is a relatively new item. So far there has been only one application for the creation of two units. Mr. Andrus noted costs continue to be the major barrier for construction.

Building Division Manager, Mike Hagan, addressed the Committee next. Mr. Hagan stated his department has been trying to implement a few new programs last year. One of which is OpenGov, a new technology being adopted by many departments. He explained this new technology helps staff streamline the process but also allows applicants to see where their application is in the process. This program also allows clients to schedule appointments with inspectors. Mr. Hagan stated the department is also looking at digital plan review tables through a grant process, which would allow for markup of plans on the table and get plans immediately back to the applicant.

Mr. Hagan next addressed solar permitting. He stated this is a piece of legislation to allow for instant solar permitting. Mr. Hagan stated Keene is the first community to have solar permitting.

The next item he referred to was Automated Oil and Gas Permits which is when minimum guardrails are met, inspection get scheduled instantly. This concluded Mr. Hagan's presentation.

Former Director of Economic Development, Med Kopczynski was the next speaker. Mr. Kopczynski stated there is a lot of discussion about housing happening in the City. He referred to the Accelerated Home Building Act which passed, the one the President refused to sign. Mr. Kopczynski stated the prime issue is the cost of construction. He indicated one of the things being discussed is Portfolio Homes, which is referred to in the master plan. This program is to have pre-approved plans available for people to utilize. So far only two states have taken advantage of this program; Oregon and Vermont. He explained Vermont is far along with this program. So far, they have ten house plans available for comment. Mr. Kopczynski noted when a plan is pre-approved it shortens the permit period. He noted this reduces costs for an applicant.

Mr. Kopczynski stated there has been a decline in starter homes lately (1,400 square feet or less). These are now referred to as ADU's or Cottage Court. Today the market is only at 7% for starter homes. He stated this is mainly because of demographics. 80% of households are not nuclear families but 72% cater to traditional nuclear families.

Mr. Kopczynski stated going forward there needs to be regional conversations to align standards. Using technology also needs to be something that needs to be considered such as using AI programs to review plans etc. This concluded Mr. Kopczynski's presentation.

Ms. Brunner next addressed what the Committee can expect in the next few years. The land development code mentioned earlier was a larger undertaking for staff to update, modernize and place in one document. However, during that process the one item that was not addressed was the zoning map. The last update to the zoning map was done in 1977. Staff is proposing an update with phase one starting in 2027 to address housing and neighborhoods. This would be done in collaboration with neighborhoods. Phase two would be employment districts in 2028, zones that have been created overtime to be consolidate. This would be done in collaboration with the business district. Phase three would be map clean up; looking at areas that can be consolidated, spot zone areas, seed overlay. End of phase three would be a brand new zoning map.

Ms. Brunner noted some of the items in the master plan would be completed with partner organizations. One of those organizations is the Monadnock Housing Collaborative who is working on housing issues. Amplify existing energy and sustainability efforts – staff is in the process of hiring a Sustainability Planner to track progress on these goals and work on these goals. Mr. Andrus noted there have been 50 applicants applying for this position.

Mr. Kost referred to Goal One, Boost Infill Development and Redevelopment. The priority is to use GIS to create a map that shows existing development regulations. He asked whether this was in progress and whether it includes private land and would it show development regulations on private land as well. Ms. Brunner stated staff is not in the process of doing this right now. She stated her understanding of this action item was that the City would have a parcel map and when someone clicks on a parcel, there will be a layer of information to it. Ms. Brunner added this would be another project that would require consultant assistance.

Councilor Williams stated he would like to see a running total of how many short-term rentals the City has. He stated he would like to see if the City is meeting the housing requirement based on the housing study that was done a few years ago. He added he is surprised there are only three ADU's and heard stated that some of the ADU applications are turning into a duplex and asked for clarification. Ms. Brunner stated there are some situations where somebody wants to build a second unit, and if one of the units were owner occupied, it would be considered an ADU. Because the City has the owner occupancy requirement, they can't build it as an ADU so instead they either construct it as a duplex or if a duplex isn't allowed in the base zoning district, they go through the Cottage Court process. She used 135 George Street as an example where there was a detached garage in poor condition. They tore down the detached garage and created a second single family home on the property. Because both units were being rented out and they were in the low density, it couldn't be considered an ADU so they went through Cottage Court.

Councilor Williams asked whether it was correct to assume that Cottage Court is in many ways is a substitute for ADU's in cases where there is that ownership requirement and they are using Cottage Court as a work around. Ms. Brunner stated she wouldn't refer to it as a work around because Cottage Court has an extra review process built into it. Whereas with an ADU it can be done by right. Cottage Court has to go through the Planning Board for a CUP. She felt Cottage Court is creating more infill options. She referred to a house in the north central neighborhood where there were two units of which one unit had five bedrooms. They were having a hard time finding someone to rent out a five-bedroom apartment and hence, were able to go through the Cottage Court process to create a third unit. She stated people are using Cottage Court for small projects as well as for larger projects.

Councilor Jones thanked staff for this presentation and for the streamline process staff has put into place.

5. Referrals from City Council:

a. Letter from Councilors Williams, Ruttle-Miller, and Tobin Dated May 5, 2026 Regarding Implementation of the 2025 Comprehensive Master Plan Housing Initiatives.

Councilor Williams addressed the Committee and stated the reason he wrote this letter is to convey the message not to let go of the master plan as a driving document in terms goals. He stated he appreciated the presentation as it answered many of the questions he had. He stated as was mentioned by Mr. Kopczynski it would be nice to have a catalog of pre-approved designs. He encouraged Cottage Court and ADU's. In the long term would like to know if the City is meeting its housing goals and if rents are stabilizing and going down.

Councilor Workman addressed the Committee next. She stated a lot of effort went into producing this master plan and there are items in the master plan that have not yet been implemented. She commended staff for using the master plan as a directive and encouraged this Committee to do the same. The Councilor stated she sees the housing stock being increased but not the type of housing stock she would like to see. She stated she would like to see housing

created for those who have grown up in Keene and for students who graduate from Keene State; to entice them to keep living in Keene not just for out of state retirees.

Mr. Kopczynski stated he wanted to address the pre-approved plan issue he had talked about earlier. He referred to a website “802homesforall” the Vermont website where the approved plans are available for review. He indicated once the plans are fully formed he intends to have them reviewed by planning staff to make sure they meet Keene’s building code but noted Vermont does not have a building code for one- and two-family housing. He added when looking at these plans, Keene needs to consider changes to its code and how the plan would adjust to those changes.

Councilor Tobin stated she appreciates this letter being brought forward. She stated she was expecting rent to stabilize and noted she is in that position where she might have to move again due to her rent increase by another \$400–\$500. The Councilor stated when measuring the impact to look at why the City made this decision in the first place. The goal was to build more housing so rents would stabilize. She felt perhaps looking at re-evaluating the plan and a discussion as to whether it needs to be changed was in order.

A motion was made by Councilor Haas that the Joint Committee accept this item as informational. The motion was seconded by Andrew Madison and carried on a roll call vote from both Committees.

b. Letter from Mayor Kahn Dated May 15, 2026 Regarding Potential Expansion of Permitted Uses in the Commerce, Industrial, and Industrial Park Zones.

Mayor Kahn addressed the Committee. The Mayor stated he would like to address the second pillar in the master plan, which is thriving economy. He commended the Keene Sentinel’s article in the recent edition regarding vacancies and change in demographics in this region. He stated this is what he wanted to call attention to in his letter. He felt the land use code needs to be updated to see what kinds of businesses the City should attract and look at businesses that might want to relocate to Keene.

He added housing is an important aspect as well. When attracting workforce to the area there needs to be housing to match that.

Chair Farrington agreed that attracting businesses is important for viability of Keene as well as housing.

Mayor Kahn felt condominium-like spaces might be something startup companies would be interested in.

Councilor Jones stated he agrees with the Mayor on the notion of condominiums and referred to such a use on Krif Road which started as a small business and then continued to grow. He felt the Mayor’s request should be moved into the more time category.

Mr. Hoefer stated he reiterates Councilor Jones' request for crypto currency and data centers aligned with consolidating the number of zoning districts Keene has and maybe expanding the amount of permitted uses within those zoning districts. This may align with any work that happens in that regard.

A motion was made by Councilor Jones that the Joint Committee that the May 15, 2026 letter from Mayor Kahn be placed on more time. The motion was seconded by Councilor Haas.

Mr. Clements asked for added guidance as to the reason for more time. Chair Farrington stated the Mayor had alluded to vacancy rates, unused land, ideas for analysis, uses in various districts. Councilor Haas stated he would be looking uses that won't be appropriate in certain districts. The Mayor stated he was recently approached by an employer from a different region in New Hampshire wanting to look at property in Keene. He stated he provided a list but felt his list was small compared to what might be available in Keene. Identifying vacant areas might be an important step. Ms. Brunner stated she agrees with Mr. Clements and added as stated earlier in reference to the work plan, they have outlined phasing in terms of the priorities based on the master plan. Phase one was to look at housing in neighborhoods. Phase two was to look at employment districts, which would address much of what the Mayor has raised today.

With respect to timing, staff is looking at starting this work in 2028. However, if the Committee wants to speed up some of this, the City might want to start thinking about getting a project into the CIP.

Councilor Jones stated adding this to more time means the item won't be forgotten.

The motion carried on a roll call vote by the Planning Board and the PLD Committee.

c. Letter from Councilor Jones Dated June 16, 2026 Regarding a Request to Consider Additional Land Use Definitions in the Land Development Code.

Councilor Jones stated this item pertains to four definitions. The definitions he is looking was for "Datacenters," "cryptocurrency mining facilities."

He stated he witnessed at the statehouse an effort to push these onto communities throughout the state but fortunately that legislation failed and part of the reason the legislation failed was because of the lack of definitions. He stated at the present time data center, cryptocurrency and mining facility could go into any of our industrial areas.

The other two definitions are for privately owned prisons and privately owned immigration detentions centers. The Councilor felt one falls under criminal court the other under immigration court. Currently, this falls under institutional use within Keene. He noted a few years ago, Keene created institutional streets where these uses would be allowed. He stated he would like to see this go on more time, the item come back to the Committee and the Committee create definitions.

Ms. Brunner stated the City has a Permissive Zoning Code and if a definition is created for a use and it is not listed anywhere, the City would be essentially saying this use is not permitted. She added she has not done a review of the existing list of principal uses to determine if any of these uses would fall under existing use definitions the City has. However, noted privately owned prisons and immigration detention facilities, even if they are privately owned, are being undertaken on behalf of a governmental entity and would still fall under the governmental use exemptions. Chair Farrington clarified this would mean the City won't be able to prevent these uses from locating in Keene through our land development code. Ms. Brunner stated we wouldn't be able to prevent the use from locating somewhere, but there may be other criteria that could be used as long as the specific use is not being targeted; general criteria that would be applied to similar uses.

Mr. Clements stated there is a definition for data center in the land development code, which is allowed in certain zoning district. He added his opinion is that crypto mining would also be considered a data center use.

Mr. Bergeron explained what the City can't do is to say a data center cannot be located in town but can dictate where it can be located.

Councilor Haas stated he would be hard pressed to tell the difference between a cryptocurrency mining facility and a data center, other than what the owners chose to name it. They could name it appropriately and the City would never know exactly what was going on in there except machines producing out data. As far as the prisons are concerned as Ms. Bruner pointed out, this would be out of the City's control other than for health and safety code.

Mr. Hoefer noted data centers are permitted in eight out of the 24 zoning districts.

A motion was made by Councilor Jones to place this item on more time. The motion was seconded by Councilor Filiault and carried on a roll call vote from the Planning Board and the PLD Committee.

6. New Business

7. Next Meeting – Monday, August 10, 2026

B. MORE TIME ITEMS

1. Neighborhood / Activity Core areas ("Neighborhood Nodes")
2. Private Roads

C. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Farrington adjourned the meeting at 9:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Community Development Staff