

Town of Keene

Joseph P. Wilson Jr, Supervisor
Robert M. Biesemeyer, Deputy Supervisor
Bi Monthly TOWN BOARD MEETING
March 30th, 2021
Via Zoom 5:30 pm

Board members present: Joseph P Wilson Jr., Supervisor,
Teresa Cheetham-Palen, David R. Deyo, Jennifer G Whitney.
Highway Superintendent Scott Smith
Water Superintendent Ryan Hall
Town Clerk Cori-Anne Favro
Town Residents also present.

Called the meeting to order at 5:35pm

Privilege of the Floor: NONE

Old Business update presented by Mr. Wilson:

Corona Virus and reopening issues: 24.7% vaccination of Essex county has been completed. There is now an on call list to get vaccinated. That is for both vaccines. The % is the total population of Essex county (Including children).

Mr. Wilson asked if we wanted to resume in person meetings and we need to begin to make plans for events on Marcy field. We do have 2 requests right now and more coming in for the use of the field. We are making plans to resume the hiker shuttle.

Mr. Deyo: It's changing daily, I think we should wait for more guidance from the CDC. I think we should not make a decision in stone today and I think we should review the 2 requests in the next meeting and vote on that and look at the size. With regards to the bus, I think you should see if you can find a driver willing to actually drive the bus.

Board discussed having the next meeting in person. If it's nice weather we can have them outside at the pavilion and if it's cold and snowy then we can have them at the Keene Valley Fire house.

Mr. Wilson stated that we have a request for June use of the pavilion . The Junior class would like to use the pavilion for the modified prom outdoors, 50 people, no dinner and they will have chaperones there. The board discussed this and thinks this will be okay. Mr. Deyo suggested Mr. Wilson, Mr. Mayberry and Mr. Woughter

put together a final safety plan. So if the safety plan is good, then we are in agreement to move forward to give it approval. A unanimous vote was taken that the next steps will be taken for the Junior class to move forward with planning the Prom at the Community Pavilion.

Second request that was reviewed:

RESOLUTION 86-21

Offered by Mr. Deyo to approve the VFW memorial day service at Vets Park with the submission of a Covid Safety plan. Seconded by Ms. Cheetham-Palen.

VFW wants to have memorial service at Vets park, would the town board approve that?

Ms. Whitney: Is setting a precedent for allowing all town venues to open?

Mr. Deyo: I think we should just take a case by case basis.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: should we make sure each group submits a safety plan, in case they do not follow the guidelines we can revoke? I think each group needs to submit a safety plan when requesting use of town property.

Modified motion Approval of Event as long as events have a safety plan submitted to the board.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen should we put a guide in there about the County infection rate % changes for the worse then we the board need to rescind. So we should go with the wording tentative approval.

Mr. Wilson agreed that we need to handle each request case by case and require a safety plan. We will just refer to State guidance, so that will not allow people to challenge the decision.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: YES

Mr. Biesemeyer: YES

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES

Mr. Deyo: YES

Ms. Whitney: YES

Next item of business:

Community Master Planning, Introduction of Draft Plan by Carolyn Peterson, Phase II Steering Committee Chair.

Phase I Steering Committee Members:

Supervisor Joe Pete Wilson
Deputy Supervisor Robert Biesemeyer
Committee Co-Chair Kristy Farrell
Committee Co-Chair James Bernard
Teresa Cheetham-Palen, Town Board
Larry House, Planning Board
Aaron Miller, Keene Central School Board
Jennifer Kazmierczak, Keene Central School Board
John Hudson, Community member
Carolyn Peterson, Community member
Thomas McCabe, Community member
Barbara Dumas, Secretary

Phase II Steering Committee Members:

Supervisor Joe Pete Wilson
Teresa Cheetham-Palen, Town Board
Acting Committee Chair Carolyn Peterson
Larry House, Planning Board
Aaron Miller, Keene Central School Board
John Hudson, Community member
Melissa Eisinger, Achievable Housing Working Group Leader
Fritz Sabbow, Short Term Rentals Working Group Leader
Peter Slocum, Hiker Parking and Recreational
Infrastructure Working Group Leader Jeannie
Cross, Health Center and Senior Services Working
Group Leader

The Keene Strategic Plan was commissioned in the Spring of 2019 in order to provide a roadmap for the Town Board in future planning efforts. The objective of the plan was to update the 2002 Strategic Plan, identify the challenges due to a variety of recent trends and to capitalize on our existing strengths. Letters of interest to join the Keene Strategic Planning Steering Committee (KSPSC) were solicited by the Town Board and a steering committee comprised of a wide range of residents was designated to develop the scope of work.

Phase I began over the summer of 2019 when the KSPSC developed and disseminated a community survey in order to assess areas of concern from stakeholders. A rubric was developed by the steering committee to select the top five

issues. Then a public meeting was held in October of 2019 to establish five working groups and facilitate a visioning process for each category. The newly established working groups began meeting in person monthly from November 2019 – March 2020 to develop a series of recommendations for each topic area. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, work slowed as members, town officials, business owners and the community as a whole pivoted to handle this public emergency. Outdoor activities were recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention during the pandemic and people seeking the outdoors flocked to the area, creating more management pressure for the town and a rise in housing prices.

Phase II began in September of 2020. New members joined the Steering Committee as some of the original members were no longer able to participate due to the challenges presented by COVID 19. The KSPSC met in the fall via Zoom to resume the planning process. Working Group Leaders presented their findings and recommendations. A summary of the progress from Phase I and the start of Phase II was posted on Nextdoor Keene for community members. The working group reports were the foundation of a written report developed by the KSPSC to present to the Town Board for adoption in the Spring of 2021.

The working groups' major findings are as follows:

Achievable Housing: The issue of affordable housing is not new to Keene and has been identified in the last two strategic plans, but the group found that the rise of the second home rental market has exacerbated the problem. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed many people to purchase homes quickly in an effort to avoid the dense urban centers, inflating costs. The fact that some of the affordable housing stock is located within the floodplain adds to the pressure on the market. Lack of achievable housing affects the ability of local Fire Departments to recruit new members, businesses have trouble maintaining staff as available housing is limited, and new teachers and school staff are struggling to find housing for their families. It is also a struggle for Seniors wishing to age in place.

Short Term Rentals: The short-term rental market has exploded in recent years in the Town of Keene, throughout the Adirondack region and the nation as a whole. The

positives include economic opportunity for local families, small businesses and an increase in revenue from the Essex County Occupancy Tax. In some cases, providing a short-term rental creates enough supplemental income for local residents to afford to live in Keene. The challenges from this market include noise complaints, parking issues, safety concerns, and loss of neighborhood character.

Seniors and Health Care: The median age in Keene is 50, and a quarter of the local population is over 65. Keene continues to be a place chosen by Seniors to live for its beautiful and friendly community. The primary care health centers in Keene and Elizabethtown and access to specialists throughout the region are major benefits. However, hiring and retaining medical professionals is a challenge here and across rural America. Affordable and accessible housing poses current and future concerns for this age group. There are opportunities to improve quality of life for our seniors, such as working toward becoming an AARP Age-friendly Community. Aspiring to be an Age-friendly community will contribute to developing a livable and sustainable community for both Seniors and young families alike.

Preschool and Full Day Child Care: This working group found that many young families are attracted to Keene by the reputation of the Keene School District; however, the lack of achievable housing and access to full day childcare are deterrents. After conducting a study of childcare needs in the greater Keene area, the working group has developed into a task force that is actively fundraising and developing a plan to build a Child Care center in Keene for children 6 weeks old through pre-school age. They, too, have stressed the need for housing.

Hiker Parking and Recreational Infrastructure: The increase in recreational tourism is wonderful for local lodging, restaurants and other businesses in Keene. The tourism economy is very important for the Keene Community, but it comes with significant management challenges for a small municipality with limited resources and infrastructure. Access to parking, public restrooms and information are being addressed, but the working group has outlined suggestions for improvement. Ideas to improve recreational opportunities for local residents have also been developed.

Based on the workgroup recommendations, the enclosed

draft strategic plan envisions that over the next decade, the Town of Keene will intentionally:

- support the expansion of year-round, achievable housing stock for individuals working and retiring in Keene;
- expand child care options for local and area families, with an eye to enhancing the ability of young families to live and work in Keene;
- support continued access to primary health care within the Town;
- become an AARP age-friendly community and use that opportunity to build upon and create infrastructure and resources that serve seniors and young families alike;
- seek to balance support for recreational tourism in Keene with protecting residents from the adverse impacts of over-use and mis-use of non-Town lands;
- expand recreational opportunities for residents.

Thank you to all the Keene Community members who participated in the survey and in the working groups; your careful thought and input has been valuable and is reflected in the document that follows. (Full document available as PDF or printed copy from the town hall)

They are submitting this to the Town board in hopes that they can begin the next steps.

Mr. Wilson thanked everyone for this hard work, it was a ton of work and it was a lot to ask from volunteers. The next step will be to set up a dedicated time for the board and the work group leaders and committee to review each section and what the next steps will be and where to go from here.

Mr. Deyo: I need to interrupt, I think we are just a step ahead of ourselves here. I appreciate this Carolyn and all the work everyone did here, but we have a board here called the planning board. I think we should somewhat turn this over to the planning board. I think that is what they are here for, before we step on their toes and circumnavigate in any way, shape or form. Especially since you (Mr. Wilson) and Teresa were vastly involved in this, I don't think you should switch sides of the table to see if you like your own advice. I think we should get the Planning Board involved to review before we make decisions as a Town Board.

Ms. Peterson: We did discuss this at our last meeting and we are completely on board with having the planning board involved and if they would like to attend a group meeting. Larry House is on the steering committee and we did have this discussion with him and he agreed.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: Larry was the one who felt this would be up to the board, because we asked him what he thought about that as the planning board represented.

Mr. Deyo: I think a lot of things in this report is pertinent to the site plan review law, some of it would be simple town board decisions.

Mr. Wilson: how about we extend a clear invitation to the planning board? We did get Larry's representation of the planning board.

Mr. Deyo, Does the planning board have a copy of this report?

Mr. Willson: Not yet, no. I think the committee wanted the Town Board to see this before it was released to anyone else. So we can get copies of the report to the Planning board.

Discussion continued about the dates when the next meeting will be scheduled. At the first meeting no decisions will be made. We will just be going over how we move forward with the next steps.

RESOLUTION 87-21

Ms. Cheetham-Palen offered to adopt Pandemic Plan seconded by Mr. Deyo. Copy of this plan can be found with the minutes and will be filed in the Town Clerk office.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: on page 10 on staggered shifts, the Town of Keene Highway Department Covid 19 operation plan. Is that referring to the plan we will rely on for the staggered shifts?

Mr. Wilson: yes this was a plan that was adopted early on in the pandemic, used from Scotts plan that the board approved early on in the pandemic. This is included word for word in the document.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: Second question page 12 letter A, how are we supposed to manage supply chain disruptions?

Mr. Wilson: we are supposed to have a 30 day supply of PPE on hand and partner with the fire departments of both storage and sharing of PPE and working with the Essex County Emergency Services.

This is being signed and submitted.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Mr. Wilson: YES

Mr. Biesemeyer: YES

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES

Mr. Deyo: YES

Ms. Whitney: YES

Snow Removal Policy: Defer to next meeting. Mr. Biesemeyer is going to email Mr. Wilson some ideas and thoughts and we will go over this next meeting.

Next item Transfer Station

Mr. Deyo's report on his conversation with Essex County DPW about the county-wide solid waste system. There will never be a landfill in the Adirondack park. We are not in the garbage business we are in the transfer business. Some of the Towns in the area are doing well and turning a profit. They are never going to go to the Essex county waste system. Some smaller towns like Crown point are going to Ticonderoga. We do a good job recycling so we have less volume.

The county will not take over unless a full collapse. 5 years if we are lucky for the county to take over. For the next 10 years we are going to be in the transfer station business. We need to start making plans to make it work. The County is not taking it over so we need to find a way to manage it. We need to make decisions based on whether we are going to be working at this transfer station for at least another 10 years.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: thanks to Mr. Deyo for doing this work because we have all been waiting and we needed this clarification.

Mr. Deyo: This is going to be a way forward and order the cardboard container. We can get a cardboard container for under \$5k and the county will pick it up when it's full for free.

RESOLUTION 88-21

Mr. Deyo offered the motion to purchase a cardboard recycling container Mr. Biesemeyer seconded this motion and moved it to its adoption.

Mr. Wilson: YES

Mr. Biesemeyer: YES

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES

Mr. Deyo: YES

Ms. Whitney: YES

Mr. Wilson: Last year we postponed the Bulky day and Ms. Whitney did not want the idea of Bulky day just to disappear without revisiting it. Do we want to continue Bulky Day?

Ms. Whitney: yes, that she didn't want it to disappear, but are we even able to afford it this year?

Mr. Deyo: I think we continue to not do it, I have not had many people ask about this. I think we won't have the volume and people are used to going to Lewis or other places now.

Mr. Biesemeyer: I think in lieu of the report we just got, I think we have to look at our local landfill and we need to look at the 2022 budget. We need to really get a handle on what the transfer station can handle. It doesn't look like we are going to get a lot of help. Last year it was the fence and the gate, now we have a container problem. You can see that when it gets busy we are going to need help up there.

Mr. Deyo: my thought is to postpone bulky days this year.

Mr. Biesemeyer: I think we are going to have to continue to provide the services but we may have to subsidize. We will need to really look at this come budget time.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: I think we should plan to maybe revisit this in the fall?

Mr. Deyo: I think we should talk to some people and see if there are some strong feelings towards it. People can go to Lewis.

Ms. Whitney: I think we should revisit it in the fall, I'll still stand at the gate and help collect the \$25 and Ms. Cheetham-Palen seconded that.

Mr. Wilson: Last meeting a board member asked for the transfer station operating statement. Did it help answer your questions?

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: I think it was me, and I think that it was helpful and I think I would like to compare the use from Casella and I think that we need to look during budget planning to break it down and analysis of the change from Casella.

Next item of business was the correction of the meeting minutes from 1/26/21

Ms. Favro: Minutes correction from 1/26/21 per Mr. Palen in reference to the Jack Rabbit Trail parking location and their private land. "We hope the DEC will buy the lower lot and turn it into public trail parking." correction to "Our exact offer to the state was to "donate an easement on our property, in perpetuity (forever), free of cost". - Ed Palen (Correction made 3/25/21) CF

New Business:

Ms. Whitney: Licensing agreements for use of Town of Keene name and logo.

The new logo with the mountains and the tree. We have had a few businesses come forward wanting to use the logo for their business items for mugs and t-shirts. The items came up as how do we sell the logo to businesses, do we keep it and make our own items, how much is a logo worth and do we create a contract. Ms. Whitson was also involved in this conversation. There were a few options presented, example a year contract, or selling the full rights to the logo etc. How much is a logo worth etc.

Mr. Wilson: Josh Whitney was involved because he created the logo, so he owns the intellectual property rights. He donated the rights to the town, but if we sell it then how do we compensate Josh Whitney (Logo Creator).

Ms. Whitney: He donated to the Town, and if the Town decided to sell that logo and other businesses then it turns into a franchising agreement. Then it would be benefiting others than just the Town.

Mr. Deyo: I spoke with Josh about this and he stated he gave the logo to the town as a gift and he would like it to remain solely with the town. If we start giving it to Old mountain coffee or whoever, then we are in a franchise agreement and we are talking attorneys. He stated he didn't want to get into that and muddy the waters. He stated the town could have it and I prefer the town just keeps it. I think we should honor it this way. Jennifer and Josh worked really hard and branded the town and updated its image. I am not in favor of giving this logo away to businesses, because they will make money.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: Is he opposed for the town to make t-shirts and sell them?

Mr. Deyo: Yes, he gave them to the town to use. He said why can't you just tell the other businesses no. I think we should honor that.

Ms. Whitney: Ms. Cheetham-Palen did ask what if we gave it away for free. I did ask ROOST about this because they did this a few years back and gave it on a disc to all local businesses to advertise to come to that area, but I am not sure we really need to advertise more to have more people come to Keene.

Mr. Deyo:

Mr. Wilson: I am looking at it from another way. The most valuable thing the town owns right now is our cool name and our cool logo. If we could help our local businesses make a little money from that and the town could make a little money. Then we aren't in the t-shirt business. Then we get a share and the local businesses get a share. That's the way I was looking at it. Not a way to bring more people here.

Ms. Whitney: Like Davey had said, Josh doesn't want to deal with this. It was a gift and it's for town use only .

Mr. Deyo: I agree and I think that we can maybe revisit this in the future. We as a town have a lot bigger issues to work out. When the transfer station is running correctly, and

the sidewalks are getting plowed and a machine. Then we can think about franchising. But right now we need to focus on the real issues in the Town of Keene and we are busy enough right now.

Mr. Biesemeyer: I think we need to keep focus on the bigger issues.

Mr. Wilson: I don't think we really need a vote on this but all in favor of Keep the rights with the Town of Keene solely.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: YES

Mr. Biesemeyer: YES

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES

Mr. Deyo: YES

Ms. Whitney: YES

Mr. Wilson: The next item is the Library Building in Keene.

Mr. Biesemeyer: About 1 week ago the code enforcement sent a letter to you all explaining the condition of the building and to the point of almost condemning the library. Mr. Biesemeyer with the consent of the board got a structural engineer Wylie Levine to go into the building. It cost \$350-\$450 to do the inspection. After a lengthy inspection. The structure has been failing and there is a sense that the repair will be substantial. It's failing in 4 places, we don't know the condition of the rafters etc, and it needs a new roof, and silver placement, and piers under the post. It has gotten to the point that I want to brace the board for how the report is going to be. It looks like the building in its present condition may be able to be used just in the summer for a couple more years. If there is a snow storm we need to shovel the roof off. Until the repairs are done. It's looking like the cost will be about \$100,000.00 at least. I don't think the board will agree to put that kind of money into the building especially on a taxpayer's dime. And the other problem is the septic system issues. So even once the repairs are done there is not a working septic system. Also because of the safety issues

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: I talked to Derrick about this today too, is there any concern about safety now. This summer, is it safe to have kids in there?

Mr. Biesemeyer: Yes they believe it's safe because there is no snow load on the roof.

Ms. Whitney: It's here nor there, but how did we get to this point?

Mr. Biesemeyer: Well we got to this point when Irene hit, that roof has been dealt with over the course of time and the repairs that were in budget for that particular year. But after Irene hit FEMA funding made repairs to the roof. We have had discussions that we may abandon that building. That is not going to be a popular decision, but that Library has been seeing a lot of visitors. There is the option that maybe we could move the library to the community center in the winter. If we do get heavy snow storms we do need to close it.

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: what happened with the engineering study that we had on the community center? Cause we had discussed moving the library there. I just wanted to know where that study ended up?

Ms. Whitney: Is that a historical building?

Mr. Biesesemeyer: we talked about that, the building is not on the historical registry, but the building has been altered. And wouldn't qualify for a historical grant.

Mr. Wilson: Let me What we need to do is get the engineering report, get that to Derrick so that we can operate this summer with clearance.

Ms. Whitney: asked about the covid relief package, will we be getting those funds? The paper stated we would be getting \$120,000.00. Could we use some of that money?

Mr. Wilson: there has been a lot of press about that funding, but we have not heard anything about this money. I have been moving our projects to be ready to submit. I have not seen anything that the town of Keene is getting a check.

Mr. Biesemeyer: I don't think if we got that money that the library would not be on the top of the list for using those funds. There is a long list of other projects that would take priority.

Mr. Wilson: I will share more information as I get anything about the relief package.

Next item on the agenda:

Mr. Smith: 284 agreement, put this into everyone's mailbox. I will need your signatures on the original.

RESOLUTION 89-21

Motion made by Ms. Cheetham-Palen seconded by Ms. Whitney. To approved the Keene Valley's Library Annual Fund Request of \$6365.00.

This was approved in the budget for 2021. it was already approved by the board in the 2021 budget.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: YES
Mr. Biesemeyer: YES
Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES
Mr. Deyo: YES
Ms. Whitney: YES

RESOLUTION 90-21

Ms. Whitney offered a motion to make purposed budget amendments below, this was seconded by Ms. Cheetham-Palen.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: YES
Mr. Biesemeyer: YES
Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES
Mr. Deyo: YES
Ms. Whitney: YES

1. Budget Amendment add to appropriation Line #A11104.01.004.00 for the hiring of the Town Court Clerk by \$14,000.00 using fund balance and increase in revenue in fines and fees over from 2020. The newly hired Court Clerk will not go through payroll, they will be getting a 1099, that code is contractual not personnel service.
2. Add to Appropriation Line #A019104.01.004.00 Unallocated Insurance, over budgeted amount by \$2172.56.
3. To add an appropriation Line #A054104.01.004.00 Sidewalks Contractual over budgeted amount by \$1950.00.

Mr. Deyo: I spoke with Ryan and the funds were just taken out of the wrong line item.

RESOLUTION 91-21

Ms. Cheetham-Palen offered motion to Accept December's Supervisors Report seconded by Ms. Whitney.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: YES
Mr. Biesemeyer: YES
Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES
Mr. Deyo: YES
Ms. Whitney: YES

Ms. Whitney: So now that December's report is done, will we be getting January's report soon?

Mr. Wilson: Yes so this time of year we are always behind a little because of the AUD and getting checks clearing etc. We will always be a couple of months behind. We are just a little further behind.

Any other questions from board members?

Ms. Whitney: I saw another Town got a community 2020 enhancement fund from Roost, did we get that?

Mr. Wilson: Yes, that's just the pay out on the 2020 occupancy tax.

Ms. Whitney: Okay I saw that Wilmington got the \$20,000 and then they just got an additional payment

Mr. Wilson: So far we have been putting it all towards managing hikers, and community recreation out at Marcy Field and managing visitors. It has to go towards tourism.

Ms. Whitney: I thought it had to go towards the community.

Mr. Wilson: So our recreation benefits visitors and community.

Mr. Biesemeyer: I'm going to interrupt, after having a lengthy discussion. This is an important issue and I don't think we should gloss over this. I think we need to do due diligence on these funds.

Mr. Wilson: Lets talk and get you up to speed and then get this on the agenda for next meeting.

RESOLUTION 92-21

Ms. Cheetham-Palen offered a motion to Audit of Bills, they were not all signed, so if there is a problem with any they will be pulled and not paid. The remaining board members will stop to sign.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: YES

Mr. Biesemeyer: YES

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES

Mr. Deyo: YES

Ms. Whitney: YES

RESOLUTION 93-21

Mr. Deyo offered Motion to adjourn 7:05pm after all business was conducted seconded by Ms. Whitney.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Wilson: YES

Mr. Biesemeyer: YES

Ms. Cheetham-Palen: YES

Mr. Deyo: YES

Ms. Whitney: YES

Adjourned 7:05PM

Cori-Anne Favro, Town Clerk

4/4/2021