

City of Keene
New Hampshire

CONGREGATE LIVING AND SOCIAL SERVICES LICENSING BOARD
MEETING NOTES

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

6:00 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Andrew Oram, Chair
Medard Kopczynski, Vice Chair
Thomas Savastano
Jennifer Seher

Staff Present:

John Rogers, Building & Health Official
Corinne Marcou, Board Clerk

Members Not Present:

Alison Welsh

I. Call to Order – Roll Call

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

II. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – October 25, 2022

A motion by Vice Chair Kopczynski to approve the minutes of October 25, 2022 was duly seconded by Mr. Savastano and the motion carried unanimously.

III. Applications:

- A) Continued LB 22-01: Applicant, Samuel L. Lake, Executive Director, of the Keene Serenity Center, located at 34 Mechanic St., Keene, which is in the Downtown Limited District and owned by DEW Properties, LLC; is requesting a Congregate Living & Social Services License for a Group Resource Center as defined in Chapter 46, Article X of the Keene City Ordinances.**

Mr. Rogers recalled that Mr. Lake was here earlier this year, when the application was conditionally approved, pending additional application details, which were now provided to the Board. Mr. Rogers confirmed that Ms. Seher had read the May meeting minutes and was well-informed of this application and the previous discussion. Thus, she could participate and vote on this matter.

Chair Oram welcomed the applicant, Samuel Lake, Executive Director of Keene Serenity Center. Mr. Lake said he presented most of the application in May, stating that he was the first

application before the Board, who asked for more information on the operational security plan, life safety plan, staff training plan, health and safety plan, emergency response plan, neighborhood issues plan, and building and site maintenance plan. Mr. Lake said he submitted those procedures and further details along with virtually the same application. He recalled that the Serenity Center is a peer resource recovery center that meets with individuals one-on-one and in-group settings for trainings and more. They try to help people find solutions to theirs or others' substance use disorders. Carl Jacobs of 81 Wyman Road is a member of the Serenity Center Board and was present with Mr. Lake, but Mr. Jacobs did not comment. Mr. Lake welcomed questions.

Vice Chair Kopczynski asked how big the office space is. Mr. Lake said 3,100 square feet, with one emergency exit to the rear of the building. Vice Chair Kopczynski asked if the training and procedures plan was a written one. Mr. Lake said he submitted the whole training and procedure manual initially, which Ms. Marcou displayed on the screen. Initially, the applicant thought this license would be more of a discussion and collaboration with the Board and less about submitting documents. Vice Chair Kopczynski said sometimes it is just the latter.

Mr. Savastano asked Mr. Rogers whether all inspections had been conducted and Mr. Rogers replied in the affirmative, noting that all inspections were completed before the initial application was heard in May and anything minor was corrected at the time. The Police and Fire Departments signed-off on the application in May.

Chair Oram heard public comment.

Bill Bradford Hutchinson of Marlboro Street spoke to this topic and some others. On this topic, he stated that he had visited the Serenity Center a few times over the years as a recovering alcoholic and prescription drug user. He said that with various social issues in our community, the Serenity Center's services are needed now more than ever. He said it sounded like the inspections and overall impression of the building were excellent. He was glad the Serenity Center had good collaborative relationships with the Police and Fire Departments to maximize the efficiency of services provided. He thought the Serenity Center would continue doing positive work on a difficult problem for the community. He hoped they would continue working with the various City departments to help people find services they need. Mr. Hutchinson concluded that we all want the same thing, which is to help people. He thanked the Board for their support.

Ms. Marcou confirmed that the staff training and procedure plan was available in the agenda packet.

Hearing no further comments, Chair Oram closed the public hearing.

Vice Chair Kopczynski said he knew Mr. Lake had worked with Staff to clarify things on the application. The Vice Chair applauded City Staff for their collaborative relationship with all

applicants. He said this process was meant to establish criteria on how to deal with some challenges. He said one of the reasons this Board was created through the Land Development Code was to provide opportunities to ensure these services have a chance to be successful and are properly placed and representative throughout the City's Wards.

The Board continued reviewing the criteria for approving the application, which are listed in the book of Ordinances:

The licensing board shall consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to approve, renew, or deny a congregate living and social services license application.

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

Vice Chair Kopczynski said there was only positive public comment and Mr. Rogers testified that this application was compliant with Zoning, Building, Police, and Fire Codes. Vice Chair Kopczynski made the following motion, which Mr. Savastano seconded.

On a vote of 4-0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board found continued application LB 22-01 compliant with criteria one.

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

Vice Chair Kopczynski said there was no evidence of any issues with noise, odors, glare, or vibration. He added that the Fire Department is right next door and says the Serenity Center is a good neighbor. Vice Chair Kopczynski made the following motion, which Mr. Savastano seconded.

On a vote of 4-0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board found continued application LB 22-01 compliant with criteria two.

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

Vice Chair Kopczynski said there was no testimony that there were any nuisances coming from the Serenity Center and no evidence that the Police must visit the Center often. Vice Chair Kopczynski made the following motion, which Mr. Savastano seconded.

On a vote of 4-0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board found continued application LB 22-01 compliant with criteria three.

On the whole application, Mr. Savastano made the following motion, which was duly seconded by Ms. Seher. On a vote of 4–0, the Congregate Living and Social Services Licensing Board approved continued application LB 22-01.

IV. New Business

Mr. Rogers reported that they were still trying to work through the scheduled calendar, but they were not on schedule for the first year. The next set of applications would be for lodging houses. He said that different uses have different degrees to which the applications would be completed. For example, lodging houses are more strictly residential and might have thinner applications. He provided the specific example of a house by the college rented to five students, surpassing a single-family home, and qualifying as a lodging house. Board members should contact Mr. Rogers with any questions on applications. In response to the Chair, Mr. Rogers said the criteria and standards are uniform for all of these uses, except for homeless shelters, which have extra criteria to address. Chair Oram asked, if a lodging house has no employees, how they can ask for a staff and training manual. Mr. Rogers said that some parts of applications could be marked as not applicable to certain uses. The Chair said the Board’s purview was to realize all uses are different and have different levels of license involvement depending on the scale of the use and staffing. The Board will have to be creative in some cases. The Vice Chair said one reason for these criteria was to level the playing field between these uses so the City Council does not have to try to make educated guesses on these matters on the spot. Some of these applicants had also appeared before the Planning Board for Conditional Use Permits.

Mr. Savastano noted that an agenda was not available for this meeting on the City website, and he questioned the public notice process. Ms. Marcou said there should have been an agenda and public notice posted to the City website. If those were not posted, Ms. Marcou apologized for the error. The notice was posted around City Hall.

V. Non-Public Session (if required)

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Oram adjourned the meeting at 6:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker
December 1, 2022

Reviewed and edited by,
Corinne Marcou, Board Clerk
December 7, 2022