



MUNICIPAL SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
Council Chambers B, Keene City Hall
October 11, 2023
6:00 PM

A. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Safety Concerns on the Eastside of Keene
Hilary Seifer/American House - Safety Concerns on the Eastside of Keene
Robert Hamm - Safety Concerns on the Eastside of Keene and the Need for Increased Police Presence
Vicky Morton - Safety Concerns on the Eastside of Keene and the Need for Increased Police Presence
Krishni and Ed Pahl - Safety Concerns East Keene
Councilor Filiault - Homelessness in Keene

B. MORE TIME ITEMS

NON PUBLIC SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

American House Keene

197 Water St Keene NH 03431 603 352 1282 keene@americanhouse.com

September 12, 2023

3 Washington St
Keene NH 03431

Dear Keene City Council and Mayor Hansel:

I am submitting this letter to have my concerns regarding the safety of East Keene on record. I am a homeowner on Beech St as well as the Executive Director at American House Keene on Water St. In the last 3 weeks I have had to call Keene Police numerous times for suspicious activity on and directly near the Water St property. There was an incident that occurred on Sunday morning September 3rd where the neighborhood was sealed off with crime tape, and a stabbing victim was in the street directly in front of American House. On September 6th someone came to American House looking for help, he was distraught and was at the front door pacing and holding up large objects for protection. When he did not get anyone at the front door, he proceeded to bang on a resident's patio door. The police were called, and he was escorted off the property.

As a homeowner on Beech St, I recently had my vehicles rummaged through and a checkbook was stolen, the alleged perpetrator attempted to cash a check. In this incident we were lucky that the bank recognized the fraudulent signature. I am aware of several neighbors in the Beech St area have also had their vehicles rummaged through and items taken.

I am concerned about the changes we are seeing in the East Keene area, and would like the City Council to be aware, and provide input on how we can keep our neighborhood safe. I would be interested to see public interest in a

neighborhood group, as well as what data already exists on how the City monitors the safety of city neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Hilary Seifer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hilary Seifer



Robert Hamm <robert.hamm33@gmail.com>

East-side Concerns

3 messages

Dear City Leader,

I'm sending this email to all of you collectively, acting upon the suggestion of Ward 2 Councilor Mitch Greenwald and Councilor at Large Randy Filiault. They, along with Ms. Chadbourne, advised that it would be most helpful for any and all communication with them about neighborhood concerns to be directed to the whole of the Council.

You may, perhaps, already have received communication from a number of us who met yesterday to lift up mounting concerns for the safety of our neighborhood. We lifted up a number of concerns, which follow:

These are the events that many of our number have witnessed and would like to report.

On Carpenter Street, the following incidents were observed:

- Used hypodermic needles have been picked up near Carpenter Field (the new Patricia Russell Park)
- Dead body on Carpenter Field
- Drug dealing happening at Carpenter Field area

The Bike Path has become a matter of intensifying concern due to the following observations:

- Stabbing on Church Street and one of the victims ending up on Water Street
- People having sex on the bike path at 11 am
- People with needles sticking out of their arms up and down the bike path
- A drugged up bloody person banging on American house trying to get in
- Vagrant groups hanging around on the corner of 93rd Street and on the bike paths

Our neighborhood (Valley, Kingsbury Streets) has also been reporting a number of automobiles being broken into and ransacked. Cars and motorcycles frequently speed down our streets, even when children are playing on the sidewalks.

We met out of concern for behaviors that are troubling; but we have a vision for a neighborhood that is safe, and clean, that is walkable, a place of which we can be proud, where our children can walk safely to and from the parks and area schools. We have a vision of a worry-free neighborhood that fosters a culture of caring.

I believe that it's necessary for the City to focus its attention on Church Street and the deterioration of buildings, and frankly, the street and sidewalks themselves. The sidewalks - particularly on Church, Roxbury and South Lincoln Streets. are trip hazards for elderly walkers and runners.

We are given to understand that the Police Department is currently short-staffed by nine officers. I, along with most people, believe that our Police Department is doing a very good job. However, I believe that our neighborhood needs more policing, and am curious about other models for seeing to the safety of our homes and streets.

Something must be done, and we look to you to begin to work with us in order to address the issues we face.

Rob

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council:

I am writing with concerns for what is happening in the eastside Keene neighborhood. There is a general lawlessness that threatens public safety. I would like this discussed at one of the Council's formal committees.

We have an increase in automobile break-ins, automobile thefts, assaults, stabbings and overdoses. Other residents have complained about finding human feces on the bike path, used needles on the sidewalks and streets, and aggressive individuals on the bike path. Residents on Victoria Street have a go cart, golf cart and dirt bike, none of which display registration plates, that they ride around the neighborhood and for trips to Cumberland Farms. Earlier this week, two cars aligned at the stop sign on Valley Street and drag raced across Water Street and down Victoria Street. A cable installation company parks their bucket trucks towing cable spool dollies in the north bound lane, effectively hindering the flow of traffic. Floral displays have been stolen from our front porch along with garden statues, and a rock display. I found one of our granite posts partially out of the garden as if someone was coming back later to steal that as well.

Some would like to say that this is due to the relocation of the homeless shelter and the increased number of homeless individuals. It is easy to blame them, but I don't think that is entirely the case. Likely a huge part of it, but not entirely. While this is happening in our eastside Keene neighborhood, it is not just an eastside issue, it is of city-wide concern. As news spreads of the deaths, break-ins, assaults and general lawlessness, businesses and potential new residents will make decisions about whether Keene is the best place for them to be. This could easily have an economic impact on all of Keene.

I ask for an increased police presence and enforcement of our laws and ordinances. I ask that police personnel get out of their vehicles and do walk-about. I ask that they approach vehicles parked at our various parks with "Good afternoon. How are you today?" Those with something to hide will move along and those without may have a delightful conversation. I encourage them to walk the bike paths, not just on the eastside, to have a presence. If the police force would like community liaisons, then let's get started. We need to get this under control for the sake of the law abiding, tax paying residents and the city in general.

I understand that we have 9 open, unfilled police positions. I have spoken with a couple of City Councilors about utilizing those payroll funds to create a supplementary/auxiliary force to support our existing force. This auxiliary could answer lesser priority calls leaving officers available for more serious, higher priority calls. I am thankful that we have only 9 unfilled positions and not the complete force. I hope we can find ways to support our fire and police personnel. I have had many positive interactions and appreciate how difficult their daily shifts must be.

This is a leadership issue. Residents should feel safe in the City and I admit I do not. We lock our doors, and our vehicles. We are considering security systems and high fences. There are informal conversations about forming neighborhood watch groups. You are part of the answer. You sit in a position to redirect resources. You sit in a position to create solutions and there are many residents willing to work with you to make it safe again to live in Keene.

I request this be sent directly to a City Council committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicky Morton
275 Water Street
Keene, New Hampshire

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Vicky Morton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and a horizontal line at the end.

Dear City Councilors:

A group of concerned neighbors met yesterday and at that meeting it was suggested that we reach out to all of you regarding a growing safety concern in our neighborhood.

There was a recent stabbing on Church Street and one of the bloody victims ended up on Water Street. There was a death last week near Pat Russell Park due to an overdose and another overdose death 2 months ago two doors from where my husband and I own a home on Valley Street.

We have heard of drug dealings going on near Pat Russell Park.

The bike path off Water Street has very concerning behavior; people relieving themselves, people passed out with needles sticking out of their arms in the middle of the day.

We have also been informed about cars been broken into at different locations, most importantly employees at American House have had their cars broken into. They have also had individuals high on some type of drug banging on windows asking to be let in.

On a personal note, my car was stolen right out of our driveway last December. My 86-year-old mother-in-law lives with us and on days I have to go into the office – she is alone at home. I don't want someone banging on our doors. This is of great concern to us.

During neighborhood cleanup I have picked up needles near Pat Russell Park.

Church Street is deplorable, most of the negative behavior is feeding from that street and this is a street that the City has ignored for years and now taxpayers on Valley Street, Kingsbury Street, Fowler Street etc. are paying the price.

These are safety concerns that need your attention immediately.

- There is overgrown vegetation that needs to be thinned down on the bike paths.
- Our bike paths need more lighting
- Pat Russell Park and Carpenter Street need street lights
- Carpenter Street and Church Street could use cameras
- Code Enforcement need to work with landlords on Franklin and Church Streets to bring properties up to standard and have them work on behavior of their tenants that are affecting the rest of the neighborhood
- We also need added police patrol

I have spoken to friends who live on Pine Avenue, Old Walpole Road, Laura Lane, Elm Street and none of them are experiencing any of the issues we are.

So I am questioning why this negative behavior is happening just in our neighborhood? What is different? What can we do? We are taxpayers, raising families just like the rest of Keene. We require the same kind of protection from the City as the rest of Keene.

We need these issues addressed now and request that these concerns be assigned to the MSFI Committee for immediate action.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Ed and Krishni Pahl

84 Valley Street, Keene, NH 03431

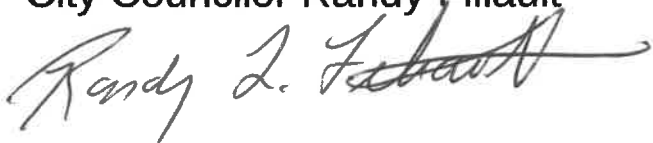
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed and Krishni Pahl', is written over the printed name and address.

September 16 2023

To: Mayor Hansel and Keene City Council
From: Keene City Councilor Randy Filiault
Subject: Homelessness in Keene

On Friday September 15th I had the opportunity to walk with a homeless outreach coordinator thru multiple homeless encampments within Keene. What I saw was breathtaking, but not in a positive way. What looked basically like a subdivision of squalor condition tent encampments, each with unbelievable huge areas of trash, discarded alcohol bottles, filthy sleeping bags and tents, and discarded and used hypodermic needles everywhere. I was told to wear heavy boots in the event I stepped on one of the many discarded needles that littered the landscape. I photographed these encampments as words don't come close to describing the scenerio. This is not acceptable on any level. Not even close. I realize we've formed committees to discuss the homeless situation in Keene, but clearly, after what I observed, we're failing. Badly. I hereby respectfully request we schedule a workshop in the not to distant future, to include, but not limited to, the Keene City Council, the County Commissioners and administrator, local State Representatives, local homeless advocates, property owners these encampments sit on, and the general public. Time is of the essence as we're about to head into the winter season. I realize there is no easy answer, or answers, but we must try much harder. We're better than this.

Respectfully submitted,
City Councilor Randy Filiault

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Randy L. Filiault". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.