

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 18, 2017

4:30 PM

**2nd Floor Committee Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Thomas Powers, Councilor
Anita Carroll-Weldon
Joslin Kimball Frank
Nancy Proctor
Dan Bartlett, Vice-Chair (Late)

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

1) Call to Order

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM. Chair Weber welcomed Nancy Proctor as a new member to the Commission.

2) Approval of Minutes – November 16, 2016

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to accept the minutes of November 16, 2016 with the following correction: Ms. Carroll-Weldon's name is spelled incorrectly throughout the minutes; there are two R's and two L's in Carroll. Councilor Powers seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

3) Election of Officers –

Ms. Kimball Frank nominated Hanspeter Weber to continue as Chair and Dan Bartlett to continue as Vice-Chair. Councilor Powers seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chair Weber agreed to continue in the position as did Mr. Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett noted he would be happy to continue until a replacement is found for him on the Commission. Both Mr. Bartlett and Ms. Carroll-Weldon's terms expired in December 2016. A replacement is also needed for Mr. Duffy.

4) 2017 Meeting Calendar- (Page 9 of 13 in the packet)

Ms. Kimball Frank motioned to approve the 2017 Meeting Schedule as presented. Councilor Powers seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

5) Continued Review of and Discussion on the Downtown Historic District Regulations –

Chair Weber noted this is a continued discussion from the previous meeting. Ms. Kessler provided a recap of the previous discussion to bring Ms. Proctor up to date.

Ms. Kessler noted that she was not yet able to report back on what other communities are doing to address equipment such as above ground transformers in their historic district regulations. Ms. Kessler noted that the Commission, at its last meeting, discussed the Historic District Regulation standards pertaining to windows, and the possibility of including graphic illustrations to make them easier for the layperson to understand.

Ms. Kessler noted that the discussion at the previous meeting ended on the topic of materials. She explained that there have been applications before the Commission that involved replacing historic building elements with elements of the same color, design, texture, and appearance as the existing, but the material was not the same. In one example, Ms. Kessler noted that the applicant, St. Bernard Church, was proposing to use Azek, a plastic composite material, instead of wood, as a replacement material for bell tower louvers. The Azek would require less maintenance than wood and had the same visual appearance as painted wood. She noted that the Applicant, in this example, would not have needed to go before the full Commission if the material remained wood. She stated that there is a question of whether applications that involve the replacement of building elements/features with elements/features that mirror the existing with the exception of material type should require approval by the Historic District Commission. Ms. Kessler noted that the agenda packet included a handout containing all sections of the Historic District Regulations in which materials are mentioned. These sections are reviewed below.

Ms. Kessler advised the Commission that, at this time, this is a discussion only. She outlined the process for changing the regulations, which would include a public hearing.

Section XV.B.3. Wood (siding and architectural trim) -

1. Ms. Kimball Frank raised the issue of the term “economically feasible,” noting she would like to see applicants provide documentation of economic hardship. Ms. Kessler commented this topic would be discussed further in the discussion.
2. Chair Weber asked if the Commission wanted to keep the standard that states “Vinyl and aluminum siding are prohibited.”
3. Chair Weber suggested removing the word “ideally” from b.1.
4. Mr. Bartlett suggested adding a section to address acceptable substitute materials such as Azek or cement board. He also suggested creating a list.
5. Ms. Kimball Frank suggested the following edits to standard b.1. “Character-defining architectural trim shall be retained and repaired when technically ~~and economically~~ feasible. If the trim is sufficiently deteriorated that replacement is warranted, the new trim shall match the original in size, scale, placement, detailing, and ~~ideally~~ material. If substitute material is ~~used~~ *proposed, such as (add materials)* it shall convey the same visual appearance as the historic trim.” Ms. Kimball Frank suggested dealing with the economically feasible as a separate line.
6. Chair Weber suggested separating siding and trim.
7. Mr. Bartlett pointed out wood is a material and not an architectural component which is an inconsistency in this section.
8. Councilor Powers suggested removing the word “wood” from the section title.

Section XV.B.4. Roofs and roof structures (including chimneys, dormers, cupolas, iron cresting, flashing, gutters and downspouts) -

After discussion Commission members agreed no changes were needed in this section.

Section XV.B.5 Windows -

1. A short discussion ensued concerning XV.5.b.2 and the idea of having graphic depictions as noted at the previous meeting.

With respect to materials, Ms. Kessler noted that the two sections presented are the only ones in this section that deal with materials.

2. Chair Weber suggested the following change to the standard “If the historic window to be replaced is wood, the replacement window shall also be wood, or wood clad with aluminum or a material of equal quality ~~and~~ or approved by the Historic District Commission.”

3. Mr. Bartlett raised the issue of plastic/composite shutters; he did agree this could be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Section XV.B.6. Entrances, doors and porches -

1. Addressing b.1 under this section, Ms. Proctor suggested adding “materials to be of equal quality and/or approved by the Historic District Commission”. She also suggested adding the same language to the section on windows.

Commission members did not recommend any changes to this section.

C. Building Rehabilitation: Non-Contributing and Incompatible Resources -

2. Commission members agreed they had no objection to removing the word “metal”.

*There being no additional comments on materials discussion moved onto **Section XVI. Definitions – Economic Hardship -***

1. Ms. Kimball Frank reiterated her earlier comments regarding applicants providing written documentation and comparative bids. She also suggested the Commission should look at what other communities do. After discussion Ms. Kimball Frank agreed to forward onto Ms. Kessler any information she has researched in this regard.

In response to Ms. Carroll-Weldon, Ms. Kessler reiterated the process that would need to be followed to make amendments to the Commission’s regulations which would include a public hearing.

6) Opportunities for Education and Training of Historic District Commission Members

Ms. Kessler commented that she spoke with Chair Weber about the idea to have more opportunities available to the Commission members for training and networking with other communities. She noted that it might be good for the Commission to start a dialog or take a fieldtrip to learn from other communities working on issues similar to Keene.

Chair Weber suggested the NH Preservation Alliance as a resource for training opportunities. Ms. Kimball Frank noted she was in favor of the utilizing the NH Preservation Alliance. Ms. Kessler also noted NHDHR may be looking for sponsors to host community workshops. Ms. Kessler indicated she would start with the NH Preservation Alliance and work from there.

7) Historic District Commission Resource Ranking –

Ms. Kessler reported this is just a reminder there are buildings that need to receive a resource ranking. She noted that she does have the ranking sheets used previously and asked if anyone on the Commission was interested in volunteering their time to complete this work. Ms. Kessler reiterated the statutory five-year requirement. Ms. Kimball Frank and Chair Weber volunteered to assist Ms. Kessler with this project.

8) Staff Updates –

1. Ms. Kessler reported on the individuals she had contacted who for one reason or another are unable to join the Commission at this time. Ms. Kessler has reached out to Bart Sapeta, of KSC, and is waiting to hear back. She is also reaching out to a local architect. Ms. Kessler outlined the areas of expertise that would be helpful in a new member.

2. Ms. Kessler reported the Heritage Commission is applying for a CLG Grant to hold topic related workshops for homeowners relative to researching the history of their homes and preservation. Ms. Kessler noted the Heritage Commission intends to move forward with the workshops, on some level, even if the grant funding is not obtain. Ms. Kessler reported that Rose Carey was just elected as Chair of the Heritage Commission. Ms. Carroll-Weldon reported she is also working on a project that may fit in with what the Heritage Commission is planning. Ms. Kessler suggested the Heritage Commission would be interested in this collaboration. Ms. Kimball Frank noted she just gave Ms. Carroll-Weldon information on a program in Providence, RI on how to research your home.

9) Adjournment - Next Meeting- February 15, 2017

There being no further business, Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:04PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats-Hall, Minute Taker
January 19, 2017

Reviewed and edited by Tara Kessler, Planner
February 9, 2017