

**ADOPTED**

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, March 15, 2017**

**4:30 PM**

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

**Members Present:**

Hanspeter Weber, Chair  
Dan Bartlett  
Anita Carroll-Weldon  
Nancy Proctor  
Joslin Kimball Frank  
Tom Powers, Councilor

**Staff Present:**

Tara Kessler, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

At 3:15 PM, in advance of the meeting, Commission members attended a site visit of the Millwork Masters showroom in Swanzey, NH to learn about window technology from David Wright. Present from the Commission were Hanspeter Weber, Anita Carroll-Weldon, Nancy Proctor, Joslin Kimball Frank, and Councilor Tom Powers. Staff present was Tara Kessler.

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM and Ms. Kessler conducted roll call.

**2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – February 15, 2017**

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to approve the minutes of February 15, 2017, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted the following corrections to the minutes:

- On page 2 of 5 in the last sentence of paragraph two, “The Commission agreed the better integrated the panels are into the roof, the better,” should be changed to, “The Commission agreed it is better to integrate the panels into the roof.”
- On page 3 of 5 in the second to last paragraph, “She recently found guidelines of how to act as a person on an HDC, questions you should ask, etc.,” should be changed to, “She recently found guidelines for how to operate as a member of an HDC, questions you should ask, etc.”
- On page 3 of 5 in the second to last paragraph, “She thinks that this is the type of training that needed by the Commission,” should be changed to, “She thinks that this is the type of training needed by the Commission.”
- On page 4 of 5 in the third paragraph, “She has been in contact with Sally Zimmerman from Historic New England to be the speaker, but has not contracted yet,” should be changed to, “She has been in contact with Sally Zimmerman from Historic New England to be the speaker, but has not contracted with her yet.”
- On page 5 of 5, “She has found a best management practices guidebook for the placement of aboveground transformers, which she will distribute with Commission members,”

should be changed to, “She has found a best management practices guidebook for the placement of above ground transformers, which she will distribute with Commission members.”

Ms. Kimball Frank noted a correction on page 4 of 5, “Mr. Monahan,” should be corrected to, “Mr. Monahan.”

Mr. Bartlett clarified his meaning on page 5 of 5: “Mr. Bartlett said that while this is case by case, he cannot imagine a beautiful historic slate roof covered by solar panels;” should be changed to, “Mr. Bartlett said that while this is case by case, he thinks it would be a shame to cover a beautiful, historic slate roof with solar panels.”

The motion to accept the minutes of February 15, 2017, as amended, carried unanimously.

**3) Keene Mural Month – Rosemarie Bernardi, Keene State College**

Chair Weber welcomed Rosemarie Bernardi, an art professor at Keene State College (KSC) and 20-year Keene resident. She is also a member of Keene Friends of Public Art. She has been using public murals to reinitiate public art in Keene. In 2016, she worked with students and artists to develop four temporary murals throughout the City. An additional mural remains on the side of the Brewtopia building. Leaving this mural was an effort to see how the mural would weather through winter. She hopes to see a new mural series in the City each year and envisions it being part of national art shows and awards. She shared photos of the 2016 murals.

In 2017, students will collaborate to create a mural, similar to what was done in 2016. She hopes it will follow the theme of Arts in Keene – e.g. Jonathan Daniels and Catherine Fiske sitting together outside a café watching a dance. She will guide students to incorporate Keene into the mural. Her colleague, John Roberts, will be using a teaching enrichment grant from KSC for his class to create a mural on biological life forms, and he will create a mural as well. She has also invited Beth Krommes, an award winning illustrator in Peterborough, as well as local artist Bob Askey, and Lyle Coskindive, a young artist at the NH Art Institute.

Ms. Bernardi said the idea has adapted over the last year into a series of alleyway art galleries along Main Street. They are currently looking at the alley between The Colonial Theatre and Miller Brothers, as well as the side of Margaritas. Last year there was an error when one of the Murals created for the Community Kitchen had the words “The Community Kitchen” in it. This was considered an off-premise sign per the Keene Sign Code and required a variance. There will be no further identifying text on murals and she will share all proposed images with Ms. Kessler in advance. She hopes 10 murals will be placed throughout the City this year.

The murals are not painted on the sides of buildings; they are printed on paper and pasted to the walls using wheat paste. In 2016, she found the task of taking them down to be very laborious and is considering working with Arts Alive in 2017 to seek grant funds to hire labor or rent equipment (a steamer) to take them down. Ms. Bernardi said the owners of the buildings have been happy with the project and many people were surprised to see them come down because they thought they were painted on. She thinks it has helped people experience art while not violating the traditional view of Main Street. They are still considering a permanent mural; she hopes a landscape by Jim Murphy will be possible in the future.

Ms. Kimball Frank noted a concern about permanent art is the maintenance over time and she worries that permanent might be too long term. Ms. Bernardi replied while she would like to see some more professional, permanent art eventually, she celebrates the students’ temporary ones.

She noted that she will retire within two years and she is disappointed there is not more art in Keene. Last year, the timing of the murals was difficult; they did not know how they would survive winter and took them down in less than six months. That is why they left one up through this winter to see if it would be possible for more to stay up longer in the next year.

Ms. Kessler noted that Ms. Bernardi is gracious to keep the Commission updated on the project. If a building is already painted in the Historic District, the HDC cannot regulate paint choice. This type of project has been determined to have no impact on brick work, so the HDC does not regulate this matter. Ms. Bernardi added that, for the brick, pasting is the least invasive mural application. Mr. Bartlett said he likes the idea of temporary murals, even for two to three years, because it keeps people interested and gives more people a chance to showcase their work.

Ms. Kimball Frank asked if there is anything displayed with the murals explaining what they are. Ms. Bernardi replied that some already do and all future murals will include a sign thanking the HDC, the Planning Board, the building owner, and information about the artist and city-wide project. Ms. Kimball Frank asked if Ms. Bernardi will continue with this project after she retires. Ms. Bernardi replied she hopes to continue as a resident of the City and member of Friends of Public Art, which has a mural subcommittee. She envisions this organization taking on the project. She has also reached out to middle and high school teachers about their students making murals as a part of their learning. She said she has ideas for two more years. She would like to see themes on the history of Keene, poetry, and animals. She can see this becoming a national activity because she is not aware of anything else like it across the country.

Mr. Bartlett asked if there is a selection process if someone has an idea for a mural. Ms. Bernardi replied that because this project developed from her class, she has a lot of control right now and would like to see it become a more organized, group effort. She did submit all images to Ms. Kessler last year for final approval. She would also like to see it become a bigger, regional collaboration. Mr. Bartlett noted the Cracker Factory building on Church Street and the Hanna Grimes building have great potential for murals. Ms. Bernardi agreed and noted there have been no issues with graffiti on any of the murals.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon stated she thinks it was a great project and it added a lot of life to the alleys along Main Street. She enjoyed the black and white approach because it felt like a cohesive, contemporary take on the historic pasting technique.

Ms. Proctor said she thinks it is a great idea to include middle and high school students in the future. Ms. Bernardi said she was surprised she did not receive a more positive response from teachers. She hopes to approach them more after her retirement.

Chair Weber said the murals are a wonderful addition to the town and thinks it is good they are removable, for now. He thanked Ms. Bernardi for her presentation.

**4) Advice and Comment – Eversource Downtown Electric Distribution System Project**

Chair Weber welcomed Laurel Boivin and Mark Fraser of Eversource. Ms. Boivin recalled that Eversource has been working over the last three years to improve electric distribution in the Central Business District. They are proposing five additional transformer locations in the Historic District that they would like advice and comment on from the HDC before completing the necessary applications. If combined with the other locations Eversource has brought before the HDC, these additional five transformers would bring the project to 80% completion. These transformers allow the removal of 15 of 21 pieces of oil-filled underground equipment. The five locations before the Commission were developed after Mr. Fraser and his team performed a

comprehensive review of 35 services fees and more than 291 individual meters in the downtown area. Through this analysis, they identified these as the five best locations for above ground transformers to further complete this project.

Ms. Kessler reminded Commission members that this is an opportunity to give advice and comment, the discussion is not binding. For each location listed below, Mr. Fraser provided photos indicating the proposed transformer location and potential impact on the property. Mr. Fraser said he will be working on agreements with all landowners for transformer screening maintenance.

*Location 1 – Railroad Street Condominiums Unit F*

- 500 kVA (medium) transformer
- Will serve customers at: The Works, Thai Garden, The Pawn Shop, The Monadnock Maker Space, and (future) Railroad Street Condominiums
- Proposed screening: two section fence, design consistent with future construction; close to the building corner for best incorporation
  - The transformer will be completed before the condominiums but can be enclosed with cedar fencing or plantings in the short term to minimize visibility
- Challenges: was proposed across the street but land owner agreement could not be completed
- Must be completed before location two

*Location 2 – TD Bank*

- 500 kVA (medium) transformer
- Will serve customers at: TD Bank, Clarke-Mortenson, In the Company of Flowers, Amicci's Pizza, and King's Garden
- Proposed screening: holly shrubs and greenery
- Challenges: it was hard to find a location close to the building without disrupting parking so it will be placed on an adjacent landscaped island
  - For this reason, the transformer cannot be fenced it as it could disrupt vehicle and pedestrian visibility
  - Eversource is not opposed to murals, as Ms. Proctor suggested, but it can be difficult on private property because of maintenance
- No construction will take place in the street, only the landscaped areas adjacent to the building will be disrupted to regain access to the manhole

*Location 3 – Mountain River Realty*

- 500 kVA (medium) transformer
- Will serve numerous customers from Winchendon Furniture on Main Street to 21 Bar & Grill on Roxbury Street
- Proposed screening: one section cedar fence
  - The Commission requested this fence be painted to match the building paint; Ms. Boivin and Mr. Fraser agreed
  - The Commission requested the fence attach to the building - Mr. Fraser said that should be possible
- There will be many benefits to the surrounding buildings as exposed secondary wiring will be removed

*Location 4 – Cheshire County (old Latchis Theater)*

- 750 kVA (large) transformer

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- Will serve numerous customers in the Greenwald Block from Ye Goodie Shop to Timoleon's and Hundred Nights building
- Proposed screening: three section cedar fence
  - A lot of salt is used in this location so a live fence is not recommended
  - The Commission requested this fence be painted to match the building; Ms. Boivin and Mr. Fraser agreed

*Location 5 – Citizens Bank*

- 150 kVA (small) transformer
- Will serve customers at multiple locations from the corner of West and Federal Streets to Citizens Bank on Main Street
- Proposed screening: enhanced plantings and greenery
  - Screening here is more difficult because it would obstruct the bank sign; there are already plantings in the proposed location that can be enhanced, as well as the curbing

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked how many more units, after these five, are required for 100% project completion. Mr. Fraser responded likely two or three more to address north of West Street and the end of Court Street. This project will enhance capacity for loadings in the future and eliminate all underground units. They hope these five locations will be completed in 2017 as the easements are granted and there has been a positive response from the business owners. Ms. Boivin said while this likely will not be the last Eversource project that comes before the HDC, they are seeking this advice to best develop applications.

Chair Weber thanked Ms. Boivin and Mr. Fraser for their presentation.

**5) Staff Updates**

Ms. Kessler noted the Heritage Commission received a Certified Local Government Grant and are moving forward with a series of workshops on historic preservation. Ms. Carroll-Weldon attended the last Heritage Commission meeting to initiate collaboration with the Horatio Colony House Museum and the Heritage Commission on a program for citizens on researching the history of homes. They are also discussing an historic plaque program to recognize those making efforts to preserve their historic homes in Keene.

**6) Next Meeting – April 19, 2017**

**7) Adjourn**

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Tara Kessler, Planner