

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 16, 2015      4:30 PM      2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Committee Room

**Members Present:**

Hanspeter Weber, Chair  
James Duffy, Councilor  
Joslin Kimball Frank  
Anita Carroll-Weldon  
Jan Brehm

**Staff Present:**

Rhett Lamb, Planning Director  
Tara Germond, Planner

**Others Present:**

**Members Not Present:**

David Bergeron, Alternate  
Dan Bartlett, Vice-Chair

**Site Visits:**

At 4:00 p.m., in advance of the meeting, members of the Commission conducted a site visit at 34 Cypress Street to review the site conditions for the application to install a solar array on the lower roof of the Monadnock Food Co-op. Commission members present at this site visit included Hanspeter Weber, Joslin Kimball Frank, and Jan Brehm. City staff present included Tara Germond, Planner. Others present included Megan Straughen, the Applicant for COA 2011-13 Mod. 4, and John Kondos. At 4:15 p.m. Hanspeter Weber, Joslin Kimball Frank and Tara Germond of City staff conducted a site visit of 185 Main Street, St. Bernard Church. Others present included Mike Forrest, the Applicant for COA 2015-07.

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

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:36 PM. Roll call was conducted.

**2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – September 3, 2015**

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to adopt the minutes of September 3, 2015 as submitted. Councilor Duffy seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

**3) Public Hearings**

a) COA-2011-13 Mod. 4 - 34 Cypress Street – Monadnock Food Co-Op - Applicant, Megan Straughen, requests the installation of a 30 kilowatt (kW) or larger photovoltaic system on the rooftop of 34 Cypress Street, currently home to the Monadnock Food Co-Op, to generate electricity. The property is Tax Map Parcel 023-04-027-8000. This building has not yet received a resource ranking by the Historic District Commission.

Chair Weber read the notice and asked for staff's recommendation on completeness. Ms. Germond recommended the application be accepted as complete.

Councilor Duffy moved to accept application COA-20111-13 Modification 4 as complete. Ms. Brehm seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing.

Megan Straughen, Sustainability Coordinator for the Monadnock Food Co-Op addressed the request noting the Food Co-Op is looking to take on some projects that reduce their environmental impact, and benefit the local community and economy. Ms. Straughen introduced John Kondos of the Monadnock Sustainability Network who has been working on the technical elements of this project.

Mr. Kondos commented that they have put together a unique approach to community solar, which is an emerging way to pursue renewable energy projects. Mr. Kondos explained how community energy differs from a private individual installing a solar system. He continued to note that all of the control and funding for this project will be local. Ms. Kondos stated this is a model project that they hope to replicate throughout the region and state. He provided information on his personal background, and addressed concerns related to climate change. Mr. Kondos suggested that a photovoltaic module should not be considered in the same light as an awning, sign, or air conditioner by the Historic District Commission. Mr. Kondos indicated that the photovoltaic module is a benefit to society.

Chair Weber asked Mr. Kondos to describe the project. Mr. Kondos stated that the issue before the Commission is a proposed solar array that would be located on the lower roof of the Monadnock Food Co-op. As there is no parapet on the lower roof, the panels may be visible from a public street or space. Mr. Kondos pointed out that the goal is to put as much solar energy on the roof as possible. Continuing, he noted that the panels placed on the upper roof would be completely invisible and they will plan to install as many panels there as they can. Mr. Kondos referred to the plan elevation noting that the blue depicts the panels that might be visible on the lower roof. He referred to the earlier site visit explaining whole panels would not be visible, only corners of a few of the panels would be visible.

Chair Weber asked for Commission questions/comments.

Ms. Kimball Frank noted those who participated in the site visit have already asked many of their questions; indicating the project is pretty clear and the drawings were helpful.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked for clarification that the applicant intends to add more panels on the lower roof. Mr. Kondos replied in the affirmative; adding if more panels were added they would be in front of the row depicted in blue on the sketch. Mr. Kondos also noted a contractor has not been selected yet. He continued they could/could not be visible depending on the angle and your position in the parking lot. Ms. Carroll-Weldon clarified Mr. Kondos is asking for approval of what is presented plus a contingency plan (adding more panels). Mr. Kondos replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Brehm clarified the goal is to install as many kilowatts as possible. Mr. Kondos replied in the affirmative noting the more panels they can install on the roof the more energy that can be generated. He also noted the front section being discussed may or may not be an option at all. Mr. Kondos verified during the competitive bidding they are seeking a system that can provide 30 kilowatt hours or greater. Mr. Kondos suggested the bid would be awarded to the company that can put the most power on the roof.

In response to Ms. Carroll-Weldon Mr. Kondos noted the angle would be set (fixed) at 20-30 degrees (a shallow pitch not vertical).

Councilor Duffy referred to future development of the Railroad property asking if any development to the east would affect the efficiency and if the applicant had considered any further needs or adjustments that would require coming back to this Commission. Mr. Kondos replied the answer to the second question is no, they wouldn't need to come back. The panels wouldn't need to be changed and it would depend on how high the building was. A building as high as the Marriot Courtyard might provide some shade but wouldn't affect the section being discussed; there would be no change in the panel angles.

Chair Weber referred to the 20 degree angle on the lower section and asked if this was the ideal angle. Mr. Kondos noted the angle is usually steeper, but the proposal is to stay low so the panels are not subject to wind uplifting. Mr. Kondos also noted the standards are different for flat roofs. In response to Chair Weber, Mr. Kondos also noted the back edge of the panels would be visible to the brick above the flashing on the lower roof. Chair Weber asked what percentage of the Co-op's energy demand the 30 kilowatts would cover. Mr. Kondos indicated it would never cover the total usage. Chair Weber then referred to the blue section and asked if moving the panels to the left would make them less visible. Mr. Kondos noted the right hand corner would show slightly then disappear again; he reiterated that a whole panel would never be seen.

There being no further questions Chair Weber asked for staff comments.

Ms. Germond noted discussions regarding conduits or other elements coming down off the roof. Mr. Kondos replied in the affirmative reporting they would be disguised as rain spouts. He continued that by Code there has to be an external disconnect switch that would be located near the fire box (gray triangular shape). Ms. Germond clarified there would be no other conduits or elements coming off the roof. Mr. Kondos agreed.

Ms. Germond continued referring to the staff report and the fact the project is still in the conceptual phase and the applicant doesn't know what the mounting system will be or the exact placement of panels, final approval (COA) would be contingent upon submittal of the final engineering sketches and drawings before moving forward with the project. Mr. Kondos pointed out the project will require a Building Permit from the City and noted his displeasure with having to go through another review. Ms. Germond clarified this would be an administrative review by the Planning Director or his designee. Mr. Kondos continued and Councilor Duffy called for a point of order noting the Commission hasn't decided whether or not this application will be accepted.

There being no public comments or further questions from the Commission Chair Weber closed the public hearing for deliberation.

Councilor Duffy commended staff on the thorough staff report. Councilor Duffy agreed this would be a welcome addition to our community and referred to the petitioner's earlier comments regarding a benefit to humanity. Councilor Duffy noted his approval of the project.

Chair Weber commented the Co-op is a wonderful resource for the community and although not historic it does fall under the HDC regulations. Chair Weber feels the impact will be minimal. He pointed out the applicant does not have a final proposal therefore there will be a final review by the Planning Department.

Mr. Lamb noted the perceived tension between maximizing the number of panels and minimizing the view with the addition of another row (lower roof). He asked the Commission how much more they are willing to accept on the lower roof. Continuing, he asked if the two rows (or more) were acceptable to the Commission or did they prefer the Planning Director make that decision.

Councilor Duffy commented that a similar example of this project is the solar panels on City Hall. Councilor Duffy noted that as the Co-op building was constructed in 2013 and given the way the Regulations are now, he doesn't see any issue that would have to come back to the HDC. He noted his understanding of where additional panels would be placed. Mr. Lamb clarified that it would be a second row between the row depicted and the edge of the roof closest to the parking lot. Councilor Duffy commented that he doesn't think this would have a negative impact as far as view.

Chair Weber reopened the public hearing.

Ms. Kimball Frank commented that she is not troubled by the addition of another row. She continued, noting that the applicant is trying to make it look the best it can and generate the maximum amount of power.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked if just one more row would be the ultimate possibility. Mr. Kondos replied in the affirmative noting it would be a much shorter row than the one depicted with the same angle and same amount of visibility. Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted she sees no problems with this.

Chair Weber asked if the Commission could add a condition that limits the maximum exposure as shown on the current drawing. Mr. Lamb agreed this could be added; pointing out the consensus from the other three members seems to be the Commission does not mind another row. Mr. Lamb indicated this gives him the guidance he needs with respect to evaluating the proposal when it comes back.

Chair Weber again closed the public hearing.

Ms. Kimball Frank moved to approve application COA-2015-07 Mod. 4 submitted by Megan Straughen, for the installation of a 30 kW Photovoltaic system or greater on the roof of the Monadnock Food Co-Op building located at 34 Cypress Street with the following condition: Submittal of final plans, specifications, and a cross sectional drawing of the lower roof with the PV array, is submitted to and approved by the Planning Director or his designee. Councilor Duffy seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

b) COA-2015-07 - 185 Main Street – St. Bernard Church - Applicant, Michael Forrest, requests the replacement of louvers on two bell towers and the re-caulking and leveling of granite steps at 185 Main Street, St. Bernard Church. The property is Tax Map Parcel 048-03-003. The building is ranked as a Primary Resource.

Chair Weber read the notice and asked for staff's recommendation on completeness. Ms. Germond recommended the application be accepted as complete.

Councilor Duffy moved to accept application COA-2015-07, 185 Main Street, St. Bernard Church as complete. Ms. Carroll-Weldon seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing.

Mike Forrest, of St. Bernard Parish addressed the request noting that the building is 125 years old and has two bell towers at the north and south ends of the front of the building, facing Main Street. The north tower contains the bells and the south tower is empty. Each tower has wooden louvers, painted white with a scalloped edge, on three sides. Louvers are absent from the side of the bell towers facing the center of the building. Mr. Forrest continued that they are proposing the replacement of these wooden louvers, which are in poor condition due to exposure to the elements, with PVC louvers of the same shape and color as the originals. The inside of the louver will be lined with stainless steel square wire mesh with ½” opening to keep birds, bats, and other animals out of the towers. Mr. Forrest noted that the wooden louvers do not stand up to the weather and are expensive to paint and maintain.

Mr. Forrest noted that the project also proposes re-caulking the front granite steps of the building with a granite-colored caulk and leveling one or two of the steps, which have shifted out of place. The applicant has noted that all of the proposed work will be completed by a qualified and experienced professional. Mr. Forrest also pointed out that there are large gaps in the granite side pieces. He noted the proposed use of backer rod for filling in the gaps. In reference to future projects Mr. Forrest assured the Commission there would be no painting of unpainted brick.

Chair Weber asked for questions or comments from the Commission.

Ms. Kimball Frank read from the standards noting the applicant appears to be maintaining the character of the building. She addressed the standards regarding replacement of deteriorated materials, pointing out that the applicant meets all the requirements except for the materials (PVC replacing wood). Ms. Kimball Frank indicated she has no problem with the different material because of the height (56 feet up). Ms. Kimball Frank asked Mr. Forrest if he knew the difference in costs for the materials. Mr. Forrest indicated the cost is doubled for the PVC. Continuing he explained the costs is probably equal when you consider the paint, caulking, and maintenance of a wood product. Mr. Forrest also explained the ease with which PVC can be formed compared to wood.

Councilor Duffy clarified the PVC is more expensive because there is so much work after the wood is made. Mr. Forrest agreed.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon addressed the work on the stairs noting the proposal implies keeping the original granite, railings, and side pieces. Mr. Forrest affirmed this as correct. Regarding the louvers Ms. Carroll-Weldon made note of an existing composite wood product with the color imbedded in it which also eliminates painting. Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted her concern for setting a precedent of using plastic materials on other projects (architectural trims/cornices). Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked Mr. Forrest if the applicant had looked into using materials other than PVC, such as a wood composite material. Mr. Forrest suggested he would be more concerned with the material if he was at eye level. He added that at 56 feet high one would not be able to detect what the material is. He continued that what will be visible over time is that it will be white, and not peeling.

Ms. Brehm asked if the trim would be in PVC also. Mr. Forrest explained the trim is part of the louver. The louvers, including the frame would be built off-site and put in place via a crane. Mr.

Forrest added that the sills are also part of the louver. In response to Ms. Brehm, Mr. Forrest added the screen would be installed from the inside after installation of the louver.

Chair Weber confirmed that the trim is painted white, and asked how the Applicant will be able to ensure the white color of the PVC matches the paint. He also asked Mr. Forrest for a durability forecast. Mr. Forrest explained the color is called pure white, and he will ensure they match. Mr. Forrest indicated the PVC should last at least 40 to 50 years because it doesn't rot, dries faster, and scratches don't cause the same damage as with wood.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked if the PVC had a shiny finish. Mr. Forrest suggested it could be called a semi-gloss. Chair Weber confirmed the local product (Azek) does have a sort of semi-gloss finish; it is not like the plastic fences you see.

Chair Weber asked for staff comments.

Ms. Germond noted the caulking color for the granite steps hadn't been addressed. She pointed out it would be a granite color so it would blend it and Mr. Forrest confirmed. Mr. Forrest added that when the contractor is selected the color chart for the caulking will be provided to the Planning Department. Ms. Germond indicated she had no additional comments.

Chair Weber referred to the caulking for the steps and asked Mr. Forrest if he had explored all the options for maintenance of the steps with a mason. Mr. Forrest outlined the process of building up the caulking a layer at a time instead of all at once. Mr. Forrest noted he has met with one mason, and indicated he would meet with others as well.

Ms. Kimball Frank asked if mortar had been considered for use or just caulking. Mr. Forrest indicated caulking only because it contracts and expands. He clarified caulking will be used between the riser and the run.

Chair Weber pointed out there is a broken stone on the right hand side of the steps. Mr. Forrest replied he would have it looked at, the stone straightened, and the joint caulked.

Ms. Kimball Frank asked if the caulking color would match the granite. Mr. Forrest replied in the affirmative.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon expressed her concerns and appreciations noting she doesn't want the louvers to look like plastic. Ms. Germond advised the Commission that they are able to add conditions on material or color choice. She noted the prepared motion does not include any information on either.

Ms. Kimball Frank referred to the applicant's letter noting the mention of work on a door. Mr. Forrest noted the door is not mentioned because it is in the back and not visible from a public way.

There being no questions from the public or further Commission questions Chair Weber closed the public hearing for deliberation.

Councilor Duffy thanked the applicant for providing such a thorough explanation. He noted his preference would also be wood. He added that due to the height he doesn't think it will detract

from the overall beauty of the church. Councilor Duffy commented that he is comfortable with the motion recommended by staff with no conditions.

Ms. Kimball Frank also noted her appreciation for all the detail provided. She also agreed with Ms. Carrol-Weldon it should look like wood. Ms. Kimball Frank read from the regulations indicating the applicant has met the intent.

Chair Weber commented that it seems the applicant wants the same things as the Commission with regards to maintenance and care of the building. Chair Weber noted his understanding for the choice of PVC, adding that he feels it would be indistinguishable from a wood product at that height. Chair Weber addressed the steps explaining he hopes the applicant will be open-minded when it comes to the mason's recommendations as they may recommend mortar over caulking.

Ms. Brehm commented her sentiments echo those of the other Commission members. She added she feels the project is in good hands as Mr. Forrest is the former City Code Enforcement Officer.

Councilor Duffy motioned to approve COA-2015-07 submitted by Michael Forrest, for the replacement of wooden bell tower louvers with PVC louvers of the same design and color, and the re-caulking and leveling of granite steps at St. Bernard Church, 185 Main Street. Ms. Brehm seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Councilor Duffy commented the Commission may be seeing more of this type of request in the future (noting the issues discussed above).

#### **5) Communications/Notifications-**

1. Ms. Germond reported there are two items for the Commission's information which are both Section 106 project reviews from the NH Division of Historic Resources.

1. The cell tower at 196 Main Street- comment was provided during the July 2015 meeting.
2. The site of Key Collision at 451 Winchester Street- they are requesting a construction general permit. Ms. Germond reported no request for comment by this Commission has been received.

#### **6) Other Business-**

##### **a) Review of HDC Regulations/Role of HDC-**

Ms. Germond noted the impetus for this discussion was the question of whether a change in materials should warrant classification as a major project if the materials are the same color, design, texture, finish etc. She addressed the time remaining for the meeting, pointing out this was meant to be a discussion. Commission members agreed this should continue to the next agenda to allow full discussion. Chair Weber recommended all members ensure they all have the most recent set of regulations (updated in 2014) prior to the discussion. Ms. Germond will make copies for anyone in need.

Councilor Duffy asked to be excused from the remainder of the meeting due to other commitments. A quorum was still present.

##### **b) Resource Ranking-**

Ms. Germond indicated that the Commission is to review the resource ranking of buildings in the Downtown Historic District every five years. She noted there are a handful of buildings added after the initial ranking done in 2011. In response to Chair Weber, Ms. Germond noted the deadline to revisit the resource ranking is October 2016.

c) HDC Ordinance Review Subcommittee-

Ms. Germond presented a brief update noting staff is working on the draft ordinance for presentation to the Sub-Committee on October 8, 2015.

d) Keene Public Library Renovations-

Ms. Germond reported that she spoke with Nancy Vincent, Keene Public Library Director, who advised that the architect for the Library renovations can attend the November 18, 2015 meeting. Ms. Vincent asked for the Commission to provide more guidance on the information they are seeking as part of this update. Ms. Germond also reported the Library is looking for guidance from the Commission as to when they should start the HDC approval process. Ms. Germond noted staff will attend an informal meeting with the architect on September 23, 2015.

Ms. Kimball Frank noted Ms. Carroll-Weldon had raised concerns at the last meeting and she asked Ms. Carroll-Weldon to share her concerns. Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted that having attended the presentation on the proposed renovations at the Library she feels the preliminary design for the connector to Heberton Hall is a very contemporary looking addition that has little to do with the two buildings. She addressed the stair addition to Heberton Hall suggesting it is very reflective of Heberton Hall. Ms. Carroll-Weldon suggested the existing addition is very complimentary to the original building. Noting the two buildings are Primary Resources Ms. Carroll-Weldon questioned whether acceptance of this very contemporary design by the HDC sets a precedent for other historic buildings. She added her reason for bringing this up was that she wanted to discuss this with other Board members. Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted she didn't realize the architect would have to be present. Ms. Germond explained that it was Mr. Lamb's recommendation to keep the Library informed of discussion on the renovations so they have the opportunity to be present. Ms. Vincent preferred the architect be present to address any concerns that were not presented at the last meeting. Ms. Germond noted the Library's desire to work with the Commission through the design phase. Ms. Germond clarified Ms. Carroll-Weldon's concern. She then asked Ms. Carroll-Weldon if she had future interest in having them come in again to weigh in on the design and where it stands.

Ms. Kimball Frank commented she really liked the design and shared what she liked about it. She explained her understanding of the glass connector which is set back so it features both of the buildings. Ms. Kimball Frank shared the architect's comment that the National Register didn't want to see the connector look like one building or the other; new parts should stand alone and not be in disharmony with the existing buildings. Ms. Brehm noted she also liked the design but for different reasons. Ms. Brehm shared her understanding of the goals for the connector.

Discussion continued with Commission members agreeing an update from the staff meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, along with any materials that may be presented at that time would be sufficient. Ms. Germond agreed to obtain the update from the architect and present it at the October meeting. Continuing she added at that time the Commission can decide whether or not it's necessary to



bring the architect in for further conferencing at the November meeting. She noted the Library's desire to begin fundraising by the end of the year; thus designs need to be finalized before then.

e) Other – Nothing at this time.

**7) Next Meeting** - October 21, 2015

**8) Adjournment** - Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6: 13 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Mary Lou Sheats-Hall, Minute-taker  
September 17, 2015

Revised by,  
Tara Germond, Planner  
October 9, 2015