

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

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

**Wednesday, January 20, 2016**

**4:30 PM**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Committee Room**

**Members Present:**

Hanspeter Weber, Chair  
Dan Bartlett, Vice-Chair  
Dave Bergeron, Alternate  
Anita Carroll-Weldon

**Staff Present:**

Tara Kessler, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Joslin Kimball Frank  
Jan Brehm

**4:00 PM Site Visit:** A site visit to 5 Central Square, Central Square Terrace, was conducted at 4:00 p.m. on January 20, 2016. Commission members present included Hanspeter Weber and Dan Bartlett. Staff present included Tara Kessler. Also present was Alan Berry, of Stevens Associates, and Linda Mangones, of the Keene Housing Authority.

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

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call was conducted.

**2) Minutes of Previous Meeting** – December 16, 2015

Mr. Bartlett made a motion to adopt the minutes of December 16, 2015 with the following changes/corrections: on Page 4, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph, first line, remove the word “window” after the word “the”; on Page 6, change “Tara Germond” to “Tara Kessler”. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**3) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair -**

Ms. Carroll-Weldon nominated Hanspeter Weber and Dan Bartlett to continue in their current positions of Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Both Chair Weber and Mr. Bartlett agreed to accept the positions.

**4) Public Hearings**

a) **COA-2015-11 - 5 Central Square** – Applicant, Alan Berry, on behalf of owner Central Square Housing Associates, is proposing façade restoration improvements to the

building at 5 Central Square. This building is a Primary Resource (Tax Parcel #017-070-110000).

Chair Weber read the notice and asked for staff's recommendation on completeness. Ms. Kessler recommended the application be accepted as complete. Ms. Kessler clarified that the address should be 5 Central Square.

Mr. Bergeron moved to accept application COA-2015-11 as complete. Mr. Bartlett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing inviting the applicant to come forward.

Alan Berry, of Stevens & Associates was present to represent the applicant. He described the request and explained that the proposed work is needed to restore the façade of the building and to address issues with water infiltration that have caused damage to the exterior woodwork and trim. The work is expected to include brick and brownstone masonry restoration and repair, replacement of wood and wood trim where deteriorated beyond repair, flashing repair or replacement, and painting. No alterations to the slate roof are anticipated, although some minor repair work may be required. Mr. Berry described the procedures and materials that a contractor will use to conduct the proposed work. He noted that they propose using PVC synthetic wood material instead of wood to replace the bead-board underneath the storefront windows and some of the trim surrounding these boards. Mr. Berry indicated that the costs are the same. Mr. Berry provided specifications for the materials that will be used to clean the masonry and to consolidate the brownstone. He clarified that these materials are applicable to the unique masonry restoration process.

Chair Weber asked Mr. Berry to outline the timeframe for the proposed project. Mr. Berry explained that the work proposed for the storefront / ground level will be completed first, and due to funding limitations, the owner plans to address the restoration improvements to the upper levels at a later date – potentially, the next year or two. Mr. Berry indicated the conditions of the wood around the storefront are much worse than one would think. He continued, noting that as the funds are raised work will begin on the remaining floors. This work on the upper floors will have to be completed at the same time due to the costs of staging.

Chair Weber asked for questions from Commission members.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon apologized for not attending the site visit. She asked about the plastic wood that Mr. Berry mentioned. Mr. Berry referred to Pages 25-27 of the meeting packet. He noted that the existing material of the storefront's baseboards should not have been used on the exterior of the building. He explained that Azek® is one of the most common brands used as a wood substitute. Addressing the brownstone, Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked if there were any products that could be used to restore/reconfigure the brownstone. Mr. Berry noted that the only option here is to use stone patching mortar. He referred to Pages 20 and 21 of the meeting packet and noted that there are areas of the brownstone that are falling off onto the sidewalk. Referring to the material they propose

to use to consolidate the brownstone, he noted that this product is tried and proven, and is also breathable. He also explained the use of the spray-on consolidation material.

Chair Weber asked Mr. Berry to explain the process for patching the brownstone. Mr. Berry outlined the process noting that it is essentially mortar formulated to match the consistency and color of the stone. He explained that the process is very similar to repairing a tooth filling. Mr. Berry also commented that it took many years to develop a product that would hold color; additionally, he has been successfully using this product for almost 20 years.

Mr. Bergeron asked about the applicant's timetable. Mr. Berry indicated work would start in the spring.

Mr. Bartlett asked if a contractor has been selected. Mr. Berry stated that the project has not yet gone out to bid.

Mr. Bergeron asked if the concrete issues on the sidewalk would be addressed at the same time. Discussion continued with Ms. Kessler indicating that from her memory the sidewalk work was included in the Project Manual submitted by the applicant. She noted that staff would work with the applicant to discuss this with the Public Works Department. She also pointed out this should not impact today's decision, but is an important issue to note.

Discussion ensued regarding the building's history and the fire of 1865. Mr. Berry noted the photos on Page 13 of 32.

Chair Weber noted he would prefer the option of mahogany wood rather than the proposed PVC material for use on the ground level storefronts. Mr. Berry noted there is no cost difference; however, he believes that the Azek® material will hold up longer and holds paint better than the wood. Discussion continued with Chair Weber noting that durability is an important aspect in this area. In response to Chair Weber, Mr. Berry indicated the bead-board would be Azek® or a similar type product.

Mr. Bergeron noted that Azek® comes in a white color. Mr. Berry noted that he always treats this as a primer and that he would paint the material to match the existing painted wood.

Mr. Bartlett commented that he feels the synthetic materials are appropriate for the long-term health of the building.

There being no further questions/comments Chair Weber asked for staff comments. Ms. Kessler addressed the Staff Report beginning on Page 8 of 32.

The following is a review of the HDC Regulations relevant standards in relation to the proposed application:

Section XV.B.2 b) 2)

*“Masonry shall be cleaned only when necessary to halt deterioration or remove heavy soiling.”*

The applicant proposes to clean the surface of the brick and brownstone to remove plant growth and efflorescence. The photo survey provided by the applicant in their application indicates that extensive efflorescence is apparent on the exterior of the building, especially in the area of the third floor.

Section XV.B.2 b) 3)

*“Masonry shall not be sandblasted or abrasively cleaned, but cleaned with the gentlest method possible, such as low-pressure cleaning at garden hose pressure, using water or detergents.”*

The applicant proposes to clean the brick and brownstone with a low-pressure wash. Prior to application, the applicant will test the cleaner on a small area of masonry (eight square feet) for possible adverse reactions. The applicant will not be cleaning with any high-pressure application. The applicant notes that they will clean the surface in a manner that does not streak or damage the masonry surface.

Section XV.B.2 b) 5)

*“If currently unpainted, masonry shall not be painted...”*

The applicant does not propose to paint any masonry surface.

Section XV.B.2 b) 6)

*“Repointing shall be undertaken only to address deteriorated masonry or in areas where moisture infiltration is a problem. The amount of wall area to be repointed shall be limited to the affected area. The new mortar joints shall match the original as closely as possible in terms of profile, width, and mortar composition. The new mortar shall match the color of the mortar used when the building was built; or it shall match aged or weathered mortar color, whichever is more appropriate. The color of all mortar shall come from the aggregate and not the binder. Upon completion of the repointing, all remaining mortar and residual film shall be cleaned from the façade of the building.”*

The applicant proposes to rake out cracked or damaged mortar joints on brick masonry to a minimum depth of  $\frac{3}{4}$ ”, or deeper if necessary to reach sound mortar, using appropriate pointing tools. They propose to repoint with lime mortar (Jahn M110) so that it matches the original joint and will duplicate the color of the existing mortar as closely as possible.

For stone masonry, the applicant proposes to remove areas of loose and color-mismatched stone patching mortar and spalling brownstone. The applicant proposes to tool the surface to simulate natural stone, and to match the color of the mortar as closely as possible. For badly deteriorated stone that requires consolidation and protection from water, the applicant proposes to use the Conservare™ H Consolidation Treatment, which is specified for use on sandstone and brick. All patching and pointing would take place prior to application of this material.

Section XV.B.3 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, it shall convey the same visual appearance as the historic trim.”*

The applicant proposes to restore the storefronts, which are primarily composed of plywood, including the sign band and storefront cornice. Most of the material will be replaced to match the original in size, scale, placement, detailing and material. However, the applicant proposes to replace the wood bead board and flat stock trim located at the base of the storefront windows with a cellular PVC material that is recommended for exterior use. The material will match the original in size, appearance and placement. The features proposed to be replaced with PVC are not considered to be architecturally significant.

Section XV.B.2 b) 3)

*“Wood surfaces shall not be sandblasted or high-pressure washed.”*

The applicant does not propose to sandblast or high-pressure wash the wood trim or surfaces. The applicant proposes to remove peeling and loose paint by scraping and gentle sanding.

Ms. Kessler referred to the extensive staging required for the second phase of the project and asked the Commission for its thoughts on how to proceed if issues arise that are not currently identified in this proposal when the applicant reaches that stage. Would the Commission like the applicant to come back to the Commission?

Mr. Bartlett indicated he had absolute confidence the applicant could proceed with unforeseen conditions that may come up. Mr. Bergeron agreed. Chair Weber noted the Commission could appoint someone as the liaison in case something should arise. Ms. Kessler recommended working something into the proposed motion to address this issue.

Chair Weber asked for additional questions/comments from the Commission members.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon referred to the plastic wood and clarified that it will be painted. She also noted her concern that it will look like a plastic fence. Mr. Berry verified it will be painted white and that it does not look like a plastic fence as it is a different type of plastic.

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

Mr. Bergeron noted that COA's are typically good for one year. He asked if this could be extended to grant the applicant an additional year to get the funds for the second phase. He also pointed out this is a Major Project and any changes would typically come back to the Commission. Mr. Bergeron commented that both these issues need to be addressed in the motion.

Discussion continued with Chair Weber noting he also is in favor of the project. He is also in favor of extending the COA, how to deal with changes that might arise over the course of the project, and the materials chosen. Discussion concluded with Chair Weber asking for a motion.

Mr. Bergeron motioned to approve COA-2015-11 for the façade restoration improvements to 5 Central Square as described in the photographic survey, “KH-5 Central Square Façade,” and project manual, “Façade Restoration of the Colony’s Building,” prepared by Stevens and Associates P.C., dated and received by the Planning Department on December 30, 2015 with the following conditions:

1. If additional work is needed other than the work proposed in this application, the applicant will work with staff and the Historic District Commission’s Chairperson to determine the necessary course of action.
2. If the proposed work is not completed within 2 years the applicant will need to seek an extension for the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Mr. Bartlett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**5) Notifications-**

- a. 817 Court Street, Savings Bank of Walpole, New Branch - Documentation included as Pages 30-32 in the packet.
- b. NH Route 12 Distribution Line, Eversource Energy - This project was recently reviewed by the Conservation Commission.

Ms. Kessler reported the above notifications were provided only as informational items and no Commission action is required.

**6) Update to Downtown Historic District Commission (HDC) Regulations**

a) Resource Ranking-

Ms. Kessler distributed a handout noting agenda items 6.a. and 6.b. have been on the agenda for some time and due to public hearings the Commission has been unable to discuss them. She noted the importance of starting the process for the update. She researched what the current regulations say and when the last update was completed.

Ms. Kessler noted the requirement (Sec. 2-1087 of the Keene Code of Ordinances) for the resource ranking to be completed every five years using the review criteria. She reported that there were 169 buildings ranked in the original resource ranking. Today, there are currently 16 unranked buildings in the Historic District. This includes nine buildings in the 2009 Gilbo Avenue extension of the Historic District, and seven new buildings built within the District.

Continuing the discussion, Ms. Kessler noted it is up to the Commission whether or not they want to revisit all 169 previously inventoried properties or just the 16 new ones. Ms.

Kessler asked for the Commission's thoughts on moving forward with adopting procedures for performing the ranking update, and a timeframe for completing the presently required ranking. In response to Mr. Bergeron, Ms. Kessler noted the five year requirement does not come from the State Statute, but is within the City Code. Discussion continued with regards to the four resource ranks (primary, contributing, noncontributing, incompatible).

Chair Weber suggested that there is no point in revisiting the 169 buildings unless changes have been made to them. He also suggested a sub-committee could be appointed to rank the remaining 16 new buildings. Continuing the discussion Chair Weber clarified that the work needs to be done, that someone needs to do the work, and that we need to set a timeframe for completion of the work. Mr. Bartlett suggested the fourth thing would be to change our regulations to set the methodology for carrying out these tasks and redefine the resource category definitions.

Discussion continued with the Commission reaching consensus on the following items:

- The ranking would be completed by June 30, 2016.
- A sub-committee will be set up to do the work when there are more members present.
- Only the 16 new buildings will be ranked along with those currently ranked buildings that have been changed (these have already been identified).

**b) Review and Discussion on HDC Regulations**

Ms. Kessler indicated she was not prepared to enter into this discussion today, and noted the hour. She suggested she would like to setup the timeframe for review and updating of the existing HDC Regulations. She noted that the Commission will soon be receiving the draft Ordinance and Regulations for the proposed Main Street Historic District, for review. Discussion continued with Commission members agreeing this discussion should take place at a meeting when there are no public hearings or at a special meeting scheduled before the end of 2016. Two items of importance were noted 1) changes in material, and 2) plastic versus wood. Ms. Kessler advised she would have information prepared for this discussion ready in advance.

**7) Other Business-**

a) HDC Member Terms- Ms. Kessler provided the following information noting there is still a vacancy on the Commission. She also reported no new letters of interest have been received.

Chair Weber's term ended in 2011.

Mr. Bartlett and Ms. Carroll-Weldon are on their second terms, which end in 2016.

Ms. Kimball Frank's second term ends in 2017.

Ms. Brehm has moved to Florida and is no longer on the Commission.

Jim Duffy will be coming back as a full member with a 3-year term (2018).

Mr. Bergeron is still an Alternate.

**b) HDC Ordinance Review Subcommittee Update-**

Ms. Carroll-Weldon reported at the last meeting that revisions were completed for the draft Regulations, and Chapters 18 and 102 of the Keene City Code of Ordinances. The sub-committee voted in favor of forwarding these documents to the HDC for review. She indicated the intent to present these documents to the HDC at the next meeting. Ms. Kessler noted the Commission could hold a public hearing for this review if it so chooses (not required). Ms. Kessler outlined the process pointing out if/when City Council adopts the changes to Chapters 18 and 102 this Commission would then be required to hold a public hearing on the draft proposed new District Regulations (submitted by the sub-committee). After discussion, the Commission consensus was to review the documents at the next meeting without scheduling a public hearing. Ms. Kessler explained the difference between a public hearing and a regular public meeting. Ms. Kessler noted the sub-committee did complete its charge.

c) Other – Nothing at this time.

8) **Next Meeting**- February 17, 2016

7) **Adjournment** – Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Mary Lou Sheats Hall  
January 22, 2016

Respectfully edited by,  
Tara Kessler  
February 9, 2016