

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

4:00 PM

Trustee's Room, Library

Members Present:

Louise Zerba, Chair
Katherine Snow
Rose Carey, Vice-Chair
Ardis Osborn, Alternate
Robert O'Connor, Councilor
John Bemis (Late)

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Kevin Dremel
Susan D'Egidio
Marilyn Gemmell

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Zerba called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Roll call was conducted. Chair Zerba indicated Ms. Osborne would fill-in for Ms. D'Egidio.

2) Approval of Minutes – January 13, 2016

Ms. Snow made a motion to adopt the minutes of January 13, 2016 as submitted. Ms. Carey seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

4) Report of the Demolition Review Subcommittee

Councilor O'Connor agreed to serve on this Subcommittee replacing Councilor Clark.

Ms. Kessler shared the update she received from Ms. D'Egidio via email noting there have been three demolition applications since January. These applications include:

1. Roselane (the former Waste Water Treatment Facility)
2. 435 Winchester Street (B's Auto Repair)
3. 183 Arch Street (an old barn)

Councilor Clark and Ms. D'Egidio signed-off on all three. Ms. D'Egidio noted that the first two were of no historical significance and the barn is being "disassembled" rather than demolished by a contractor that will repurpose the wood. The owner of the barn noted that restoration of the barn was too cost prohibitive.

Ms. D'Egidio is still waiting to hear of Lynn Monroe's report on the property at 99 Wyman Road.

3) Demolition Ordinance Review Discussion

Discussion began with Ms. Kessler providing an overview of the previous discussions of the Commission on this topic. She reminded the group of the questions posed at the previous meeting. These include:

- Is there a need to change the criteria that determine whether a structure that is proposed for demolition would be subject to the City's Demolition Review Ordinance? Specifically, should the age of structures subject to review change from 50 years old to an older age such as 75 years old from the present date?
- Is it possible for the demolition review process to be made easier for an applicant, especially, when their property may not be historically significant?

Ms. Kessler referred to a handout from the previous meeting depicting the number of primary structures that are 50 years or older in Keene. She noted that there will be 825 additional structures that will turn 50 years over the next 5 to 10 years. Chair Zerba noted the Commission's previous decision to leave the threshold at the 50 year mark.

At the previous meeting, Ms. Kessler was asked to research other communities with Demolition Review Ordinances in NH. Her findings are as follows.

Concord: The City of Concord has an ordinance similar to Keene's in that the threshold triggering the review process is 50 years or older or 500 square feet. They have a similar sub-committee that reviews the demolition permit applications and they have 5 business days to determine whether or not a property is historically significant and/or if they want to hold a public hearing. If a determination of significance is made, there is a delay period that is not to exceed 49 days. A public hearing will be held if the City determines a structure is significant.

Windham: In Windham, any building that was constructed before 1940 and/or is on the community's Historic Resource List is subject to review before demolition. The Heritage Commission has 10 days to determine if a public hearing is necessary. In addition, the Community Development Department needs to provide the applicant a copy of the Ordinance, place signage on the property, and share a copy of the application with the Heritage Commission. If a hearing is deemed necessary, there is a 30 day period to place notice of the hearing, and 10 days to discuss alternatives with the property owner. They also have spelled out specific procedures for the Planning Board.

Laconia: Where most communities have adopted demolition review/delay as part of the zoning ordinance, Laconia has incorporated demolition review into its code in the building construction ordinance. The threshold for which structures are subject to review is that the proposed demolition is 700 square feet or greater, 75 years or older, and visible from the public right-of-way. The Code Enforcement Officer has 5 business days to determine if the proposed demolition meets this criteria and then the application is passed onto the Heritage Commission. The Heritage Commission reviews the application at its regular monthly meeting. There is no sub-committee. At the regular meeting, the Commission decides whether or not a public hearing should be held, and they have 10 days after a public hearing to discuss alternatives with the applicant.

Discussion continued with Chair Zerba referring to page 27 of the document, "A Policy Analysis of the City of Newton, Massachusetts' Demolition Delay Ordinance", which was included in the meeting packet, where it refers to using percentages as a trigger. In response to Mr. Bemis, Ms.

Kessler explained the current process utilized in Keene for demolition reviews. Chair Zerba asked what the next steps are for the Commission with respect to this topic. The Commission discussed looking for ways to educate and inform property owners about the significance of their structures and opportunities for preservation. Ms. Kessler reiterated the suggestion previously discussed to send out letters to property owners whose homes are turning 100 years old and to make them aware of resources available to them. Chair Zerba noted that Mr. Dremel had agreed to draft the letter.

Ms. Snow made reference to Windham's Historic Resource List and asked if this could be a tool for the Commission to use. Ms. Kessler agreed to do more research on this and report back at the next meeting. Ms. Carey suggested this would be a very interesting project to work on.

Mr. Bemis asked if it would be feasible to have property owners voluntarily submit their property to the City for evaluation to determine historical significance prior to selling or demolition. He indicated that this would be similar to donating a property in trust. Councilor O'Connor suggested that this is similar to what Ms. Snow suggested, and perhaps, after more information is received on the Historic Resource List, the two concepts could be tied together. Ms. Snow commented that this could be similar to an Honor Roll of historic properties; perhaps, people would want to have their properties listed. Ms. Osborne questioned what it would mean legally to have your property listed on this list. Mr. Bemis suggested it would to recognize the fact that it is a historical piece of property, and if a demolition permit was sought, the Commission would have more information about it. Ms. Carey added that it will provide public awareness and that it would not be used to change any policies. Ms. Carey also noted the importance of collecting this information because things do get lost. Chair Zerba pointed out that the Commission would need to take the lead of this project.

In response to Chair Zerba's earlier question about next steps, Ms. Snow summarized that the Commission has two things it is addressing – the education/outreach to building owners and resolving Councilor Clark's original question about the adequacy of the Demolition Review Ordinance.

Ms. Kessler noted that Councilor Clark's letter was put on "more time" by the Planning, Licenses and Development (PLD) Committee and that the Commission has been reviewing and considering the request. It is expected that the Commission would make a recommendation to the PLD Committee and City Council. She reiterated the two parts of the letter, which include:

- A request to modify the Ordinance language to more aptly describe an historic property; and,
- A request that information be included with Demolition Permit

Ms. Kessler suggested that an outcome for this Commission would be to determine if the Ordinance should be changed, and if so, how. Discussion continued with Commission members ultimately agreeing that no changes should be made at this time.

Ms. Snow made the following motion, which was seconded by Councilor O'Connor.

On a vote of 6-0, the Heritage Commission recommends that no changes be made to the Demolition Review Ordinance at this time.

Ms. Osborne referred to the Newton document, specifically page 29, the Waiver of Demolition (which is not a part of the review process). Ms. Kessler read the passage and explained its intent. Commission members agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting.

5) Report of the Community Outreach Commission

a. Display at City Hall Update

Ms. Carey reported that a portion of the display at City Hall on the history of Main Street (south of the Marlboro Street / Winchester Street roundabout) has been taken down; however, the display in the glass cases remains in place.

b. Notice to Owners of Buildings 100 years or older

Discussed under agenda item #3.

c. Friends of Open Space April Event

Ms. Kessler reported that she will piece together a display on the work of the Heritage Commission, including the recent improvements to the Stone Arch Bridge. The event takes place on April 12, 2016 from 7:00 – 8:30 PM at the Keene Recreation Center. Ms. Carey and Ms. Kessler will work on the table display and Ms. Kessler will forward the invitation to Commission members.

d. Sunday Socials

Ms. Carey reported that she and Mr. Dremel have discussed holding only one Sunday Social this year. This event would take place at the Sumner Knight Chapel. A date has not yet been determined at this point; however, Ms. Carey will keep the Commission updated on this event in the future. Commission members were in favor of holding one event at the Chapel.

6) Report of the Research Commission

a. Historic District Commission (HDC) / Heritage Commission Sub-Committee Update

Ms. Kessler reported that the HDC, at its February meeting, heard a presentation on the draft Ordinance to establish a historic district in the area of Main Street between NH Route 101 and the roundabout at Marlboro Street and Winchester Street. Ms. Kessler noted that discussion on this draft Ordinance will continue at the March 16, 2016 HDC meeting. Ms. Kessler also reiterated the next steps of the approval process, noting that the draft is still at the review level with the HDC.

7) Staff Updates-

a. Certified Local Government Grant

Ms. Kessler provided an overview of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program and noted that Keene is one of 21 communities with this designation in the state. CLG communities are eligible to apply for funding through the CLG program at the state level. She noted that there is a call for Letters of Intent to apply for these funds with a submittal deadline of March 14, 2016. Ms. Kessler explained that this year there is \$65,000 available statewide and outlined the categories of funding available.

- Survey and inventory (100% reimbursed)
- Public awareness and education (40% match required)
- Preservation planning (40% match required).
- Architectural Design, Bricks and Mortar

After discussion Ms. Snow made the following motion which was seconded by Ms. Carey.

On a vote of 6-0, the Heritage Commission agrees to submit a Letter of Intent to the Certified Local Government Grant Program to apply for grant funding.

Commission members agreed to apply for two categories; 1) survey work, and 2) public awareness and education. Ms. Kessler reported that she has informed the City Manager of this opportunity. Discussion continued regarding the Court Street stone arch bridge and who it is owned by, and if it is on the National Register. Ms. Kessler noted funding is available to apply for National Register status.

b. Other

Ms. Kessler shared a “Walking Tour” brochure sold at the Cheshire County Historical Society (\$2.00 each) and suggested that there might be an opportunity for the Commission to make these available to community members as a potential project.

8) New or Other Business –

9) Adjournment – There being no further Commission business Chair Zerba adjourned the meeting at 5:22 PM.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, May 11, 2016

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats-Hall, Minute-taker
March 10, 2016

Reviewed and edited by,
Tara Kessler, Planner
May 4, 2016