

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

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

**Wednesday, June 15, 2016**

**4:30 PM**

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

**Members Present:**

Hanspeter Weber, Chair  
Dan Bartlett, Vice-Chair  
Thomas Powers, Councilor  
Jim Duffy  
Anita Carroll-Weldon

**Staff Present:**

Tara Kessler, Planner  
Rhett Lamb, ACM/Planning Director

**Members Not Present:**

Joslin Kimball Frank  
Dave Bergeron, Alternate

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

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM and roll call was conducted.

**2) Minutes of Previous Meeting** – May 18, 2016

Mr. Duffy made a motion to adopt the minutes of May 18, 2016 with the following changes/corrections: on Page 1 under Site visit - correct the spelling of Anita Carroll-Weldon, and on Page 13 of 16 (in the packet), 5th paragraph, 4th sentence delete the word “say”. Councilor Powers seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**3) Advice and Comment** -17 Washington Street Proposed Development

Chair Weber asked Ms. Kessler to provide an overview of the purpose of an Advice and Comment session. Ms. Kessler explained that this is an opportunity to ask questions about a project and is non-binding for both the Commission and the applicant. Ms. Kessler noted that she is able to work with the applicant after this meeting to advise him on the HDC processes and procedures to be followed. Chair Weber introduced Tony Marcotte, who submitted the request for Advice and Comment for 17 Washington Street and Alan Yeaton, the Architect working on the project. Ms. Kessler noted that a conceptual site plan for the project was included in the agenda packet. Ms. Kessler reminded everyone that this is not a public hearing. Mr. Duffy asked if members of the public were allowed to ask questions. Ms. Kessler noted that this would be at the discretion of the Chair.

Tony Marcotte addressed the letter, dated February 23, 2016 on behalf of the owner/developer/contractor, noting the property was purchased a little more than three years ago. Mr. Marcotte said he was happy to be before the Commission and to be beginning the process of developing the property. Mr. Marcotte noted the intent is to construct a 26,000 square foot residential building on the rear of the property of the former Middle School at 17 Washington Street. This building will house 134 units with two-thirds being one-bedroom units and the other one-third being two-bedroom units. Mr. Marcotte noted that interior demolition of the existing building has begun. However, he clarified that they are not taking down any of the existing structure.

Continuing, Mr. Marcotte reported that they intend to replace the windows of the former Middle School building. He recognized that the Commission has input over this issue and noted that what is being proposed is much better than the existing windows. The proposed windows are vinyl, double-hung (reddish in color) with a fixed top sash (one-third/two-thirds). Mr. Marcotte pointed out that when the sashes are too large the windows are less operable. Mr. Marcotte indicated this change would be a huge improvement to the building.

Mr. Marcotte reported that they have tenant that wants to occupy approximately 60,000 square feet of space in the existing building. Mr. Marcotte outlined the tenant's proposal to rejuvenate the auditorium to hold concerts, and to turn a portion of the building into a restaurant with a bar area. Mr. Marcotte noted he has not had discussions with Rhett Lamb yet, and they will be moving quickly on the auditorium side of the property renovating 100% of the space.

Mr. Marcotte addressed the intent of the new apartment building, which would be a 4-story wood-frame structure, to serve as a transition between the nearby brick buildings and the residential areas. Mr. Marcotte stated that they have enough parking on site for the new structure and the existing building, and they plan to utilize other off-site parking options. They spoke about busing people in for special events. Mr. Marcotte noted the auditorium's capacity for 1,000 seats plus another 100 for standing room. He pointed out the tenant is hoping to hold large events four to five times per week. Mr. Marcotte reported that both projects will be constructed at the same time with the residential building being constructed as soon as permits are obtained. Mr. Marcotte noted the intent to have the windows replaced by the winter and the project 100% complete by fall of next year.

Mr. Marcotte explained that the developer is a drywall contractor and can bring in staff as needed and make changes quickly. He also noted some of the doorways might have to change. Mr. Marcotte suggested this might be the only other change that may affect this Commission. Mr. Marcotte indicated that the property will look a lot better when the project is completed than it does today. Mr. Marcotte reported that he would be on the property two to three days a week working with staff and can easily accommodate any issues. At this point Mr. Marcotte turned the floor over to Alan Yeaton, Architect to describe the building finishes and details.

Mr. Yeaton reported they have been looking for a new use for the school for the past two years. He noted that the existing school building could easily accommodate new uses without extensive modifications. Mr. Yeaton referred to the floor plan that he had displayed on the wall before the Commission, noting that it depicts the capacity for some of the spaces. The bistro will have a capacity for 200 people, there will be a dance venue for 200 people, and there are plans for a bakery, office area and residences in the building. Mr. Yeaton noted that he met with the current tenant this morning and suggested putting out a sign outside the building to let people know what is going on.

Mr. Yeaton addressed the new residential building, noting the site is a little challenging as one corner is a fill site. The first floor of the building will have residential scale windows and brick veneer. The upper three floors will be hardy plank siding, and in the center of the building there will be something to identify the building (e.g. a logo or sign) and some décor. Mr. Yeaton reported samples will be provided at the formal meeting. Mr. Yeaton noted this building is 450 feet long and 44 feet tall. He added that the challenge has been to break it up so that it does not appear to look monumental. Mr. Yeaton noted that they have assembled a full team to design this facility and make sure it meets all the standards and code issues. Mr. Yeaton is looking to schedule a meeting with both the Fire and Code Departments to explain the egress requirements

for this project and the existing school. Mr. Yeaton said he was interested in hearing any concerns the Commission might have and is willing to answer any questions.

Mr. Marcotte commented having real brick added too much weight to the footings. Instead, they will be using thin applied brick for this project which has the same look and meets the weight requirements.

Chair Weber asked for questions/comments from the Commission. The following are questions/comments from Commission members.

Mr. Duffy:

1. Is the old Middle School/existing building a primary resource? Chair Weber replied in the affirmative.
2. Mr. Duffy noted that new buildings have to be compatible with the existing historic streetscape. He then asked why the building is sited so that it runs between Roxbury Street and Spring Street. Mr. Marcotte noted many different options were evaluated. He noted that an L-shaped building presented more problems than other shapes, especially for the parking. A rectangular building elevation was displayed.
3. What will the south facing elevation of the building look like? Mr. Yeaton replied both ends of the building will be treated identically, and they thought the narrow end fit in better with the neighborhood sequence of spacing and building widths.
4. Mr. Duffy addressed the issue of going higher than four stories. Mr. Marcotte noted you can go six stories high with a Special Exception, but then you start getting into a much different loading. Mr. Marcotte noted they are trying to provide a nice product at an affordable price. The intent is to be a step up from workforce housing and to target people ages 25-35 years. Mr. Marcotte added that they are carpenters not steel erectors so tried to stay with a wood structure.
5. Have you done workforce housing in New Hampshire? Mr. Marcotte replied that they are looking for tenants with an income of \$35,000 to \$50,000 (middle-class) and they tend to stay away from subsidized housing. Mr. Marcotte said the owner and three banks feel the need for workforce housing is here, and the owner believes if you build it they will come. Mr. Marcotte described other projects and shared their current occupancy rates.

Mr. Bartlett:

1. Will the auditorium remain and become a restaurant? Mr. Marcotte noted the cafeteria will become a restaurant and the auditorium will remain as is, except for the removal of the stage to accommodate 100 more people.
2. What are the directions of the displayed building elevations? Mr. Yeaton stated that the elevations display only the west-facing elevation, which is broken into two segments for display purposes. Mr. Bartlett clarified that this is the west elevation facing the parking lot.
3. The bump-out doesn't show on this drawing. Mr. Yeaton confirmed it is not seen on this drawing; he noted it has been developed and all elevations will be presented at the formal hearing.
4. Is the parking that is depicted close to what the actual parking will be? Mr. Yeaton noted it is close and they will probably lose a few spaces as they look to design a loading area for the restaurant, install transformers, and an underground propane tank. Mr. Marcotte noted that they will be conducting an Advice and Comment with the Planning Board in a week and a half. He briefly discussed parking and green spaces. The intent is for every tenant to have at least one parking space.

Councilor Powers:

1. What will happen to the cement retaining wall along Roxbury Street? Mr. Marcotte replied that this wall and the one along Roxbury Court will stay and be repaired and maintained. Mr. Yeaton also noted the environmental studies that were conducted. Mr. Marcotte noted the desire of the adjacent Keene Yoga Center to paint murals on the wall. He stated that they are in agreement with this idea and have requested that the Yoga Space receive approval from the City before painting. Mr. Marcotte reported the existing 12-foot fence did fall due to the vines and is temporarily bolted to the retaining wall. Stating that he is unsure of what the Commission or the Planning Board will require for fencing, Mr. Marcotte indicated that they need at least an 8-foot high fence for safety reasons. He continued, stating that chain link fence material can still have a neighborhood feel. Ms. Kessler clarified this project will go before the Planning Board, but this Commission has authority over Development Standard 19. Councilor Powers suggested a four foot high fence is adequate to keep people from falling off the edge. Mr. Marcotte pointed out there is a 10-foot drop on the other side. Chair Weber noted how unattractive the rust stains are on the wall. Mr. Marcotte agreed this could be addressed.

Chair Weber:

1. Noting the parking faces Roxbury Street, Chair Weber read from the standards and asked Mr. Marcotte to explain the design in relation to the standard. Mr. Marcotte said they were trying to maximize the number of parking spaces. They had an L-shaped building designed but it did not work. Chair Weber referred to the YMCA redevelopment project where they are pulling the building more forward to the street and trying to integrate the streetscape. Chair Weber provided Mr. Marcotte with an elevation of the project for consideration. Chair Weber said he is unsure how he feels about a parking lot pulled right up to the street. Mr. Yeaton pointed out that the building across the street has parking right up to the street. Chair Weber asked Mr. Marcotte if he would consider changes that would integrate better with the existing streetscape.

Anita Carroll-Weldon:

1. Thanked the applicant for bringing this to the Commission early in the process and she noted the Commission's major concern as the adaptive reuse of the original building.
2. Are the foundation and roof in good condition? Mr. Marcotte replied the entire roof will be replaced with a rubber membrane within the next 30 days. Addressing the foundation, he noted the only brick needing repair is due to water damage and no foundation work needs to be done. They are adding air conditioning to the building and there is talk about adding an outdoor patio facing Washington Street where the existing ramp sticks out. This is the only addition to the outside. They will be moving the front parking lot away from the building and add a four to six foot landscaped strip along the front of the building. Mr. Marcotte noted someone took the stone in front of the building, dedicating the trees to those who died in World War II. The trees will not be touched, and the front parking lot will be completed by this fall.
3. Have you given any consideration to installing a for-profit parking garage? Mr. Marcotte replied that they did look at the economics and the cost involved and it cannot be justified. Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted that she wants to avoid Roxbury Street looking like one big parking lot.
4. Has any consideration been made to the impact a long four-story building will have on the adjoining residences? Mr. Marcotte reiterated that they are in the Central Business District and the intent is to develop this District to its fullest potential. He stated that they will still get southern sun and they are not putting them in the dark. Mr. Marcotte continued, stating that they are not doing anything outside of what zoning allows.

Mr. Duffy:

1. Mr. Duffy verified that the applicant had the relevant standards in front of him and asked how he would address parking, fencing, and lighting; items that are under this Commission's purview. Mr. Marcotte noted all lighting will be downcast with enough lighting to be safe on the property and ends on the property line. He continued abutters may not want lighting at the entrance on Roxbury Street, but this is the most dangerous spot. Mr. Marcotte noted the lighting plan will not be developed by the time of the July HDC meeting. Mr. Duffy complimented the applicant's efforts to develop this property.
2. Referring to Section XV.D.2 (Page 27 of the Regulations) Mr. Duffy noted he would be looking very closely at numbers 3 and 4 which he read. Mr. Yeaton said they would like to contact the proposed development next door, at 38 Roxbury Street, to see if there is some potential for a shared access. Ms. Kessler noted she would share a link with the applicant to the full set of regulations. She also reiterated staff's willingness to work with applicants throughout this process. Mr. Duffy also referred to the Comprehensive Master Plan, noting a pedestrian friendly scale is something the City is trying to address. Mr. Marcotte stated that the reason the L-shaped building falls apart on Roxbury Street is due to a lot of dead corner space. He added that they feel the building design they have proposed makes the most sense when trying to take the whole project into consideration. Mr. Marcotte noted we are trying not to make this a cut-through path.

Chair Weber noted his appreciation for the applicant coming in early and for taking on this project. Chair Weber read from Section XV.D.2 (Page 27 of the Regulations) number 1, noting he feels the present design does not meet this standard and does not feel he could support it based on the current design. Mr. Yeaton asked what options were available for working with the streetscape in the right-of-way. Ms. Kessler noted this would be a separate discussion to be held with the Department of Public Works. Discussion continued with regards to massing and parking. Mr. Marcotte's take on the discussion is that adding more building along Roxbury Street is something that would be more desirable to the Commission. Mr. Bartlett joined the conversation noting one would never view this building head-on; it would be viewed from the sides. The facades that are on the street are very narrow in a pedestrian scale. He continued, stating that he has the same feeling about the parking area to a certain extent; it's an end view not a side view. Mr. Bartlett agreed parking is difficult. He provided breaking the new structure into two buildings with the same amount of parking and addressing the issue of massing. Mr. Marcotte commented that two buildings always becomes more expensive. Looking at the site flow, Mr. Marcotte suggested the applicant would lose 20 parking spaces in that tradeoff. Mr. Marcotte will bring this back to the owner for consideration.

Chair Weber continued, stating that sharing the entrance with 38 Roxbury Street makes a lot of sense. Mr. Marcotte indicated it would depend on what the owners of 38 Roxbury Street and the Public Works Department have to say. Mr. Marcotte agreed this would be considered.

Mr. Duffy referred to the plan elevation and the eight parkings spaces oriented east to west. He noted the parking is behind the existing building but in front of the new building. Mr. Duffy feels the eight spaces are obtrusive. Mr. Duffy suggested the use of appropriate screening and landscaping to deal with the parking. Mr. Marcotte suggested they could add a berm and make this area very dense to screen the parking lot from eye level.

Councilor Powers agreed the applicant faces a lot of challenges. He added that the applicant has taken a piece of property and made it productive, which is something needed in Keene. He looks at it similarly to Mr. Bartlett - while it is not exactly to the standard, you never see the

whole building. Councilor Powers agreed taking out the eight spaces and adding more greenspace might shed a new light on how people look at the project. He is also in favor of the shared driveway. Mr. Yeaton noted Spring Street is one continuous curb-cut and with these suggestions would be reduced to 24 feet with an added greenspace. Mr. Yeaton continued there are opportunities to improve the neighborhood everywhere you look. Mr. Yeaton said he appreciates the advice provided here.

Mr. Duffy again thanked the applicants for coming and after additional comments, he noted this is a good way to increase the City's taxbase.

The following comments and clarifications concluded the Advice and Comment session.

Chair Weber is concerned with the landscaping on Roxbury Street and the eight-foot wall. Mr. Marcotte indicated they would look at doing something creative with the wall and have options to present. Mr. Yeaton pointed out there are no trees on Spring or Roxbury Streets.

Mr. Duffy suggested wall gardens. Mr. Marcotte noted the retaining wall is right on the property line. Ms. Kessler clarified that Mr. Duffy was noting it would actually be attached to the wall. Ms. Kessler suggested the term for this design element green or living walls.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon addressed the Washington Street façade and asked if the applicant said they were going to move that forward so there would be more plantings along the building. Mr. Marcotte confirmed they will be moving it six feet closer to Washington Street, in addition the space between what's indicated as the parking area and the street will remain green. The existing curb line will be moved about six feet closer to allow some green up against the building. Ms. Carroll-Weldon suggested adding something to buffer the parking from Washington Street.

In response to Mr. Marcotte, Ms. Kessler advised the deadline for submitting an application for the July HDC meeting is June 29. Discussion on the type of windows to be used for the former Middle School building ensued with facts and comments from previous discussion being reiterated. Mr. Marcotte noted the dividers are in between the two panes of glass. Discussion continued with Chair Weber noting he heard no objections to the proposed windows. Mr. Marcotte added he would be talking to MoCo Arts about the shared access. Mr. Marcotte also welcomed the Commission to come for a walk-through of the building.

**4) Other Business-**

Ms. Kessler reported the presentation on bricks hosted by the Historical Society of Cheshire County has been postponed and no date or time has been established yet.

**5) Next Meeting- July 20, 2016.**

**6) Adjourn-** There being no additional business before the Commission, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Mary Lou Sheats Hall  
June 16, 2016

Reviewed and edited by,  
Tara Kessler, Planner  
July 8, 2016