

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 17, 2016

4:30 PM

2nd Floor Committee Room

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Dave Bergeron, Alternate

3:30 PM SITE VISIT – The Commission conducted a site visit of 64 Washington and 17 Washington Street in advance of the meeting. Commission members present included Hanspeter Weber, Joslin Kimball Frank, Councilor Tom Powers, and Dan Bartlett. Staff present included Tara Kessler, Planner. Mark Fraser and Laurel Boivin of Eversource were also present.

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 – July 20, 2016

Councilor Powers made a motion to adopt the minutes of July 20, 2016 with the following changes / corrections: on Page 9, first paragraph, second to last sentence add the word “have” after “not”. Mr. Bartlett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

3) Continued Public Hearings -

a) **COA-2016-06 - 17 Washington Street – Washington Park Apartments of Keene** - Applicant and owner, Washington Park of Keene LLC, proposes renovations to the former Keene Middle School building at 17 Washington Street, and to build a new apartment building and adjacent parking lot on the site. The parcels are TMP #s 017-07- 007 and 017-07-30. The existing building is ranked as a Primary Resource.

Chair Weber read the notice and asked staff for a recommendation on the application’s completeness. Ms. Kessler advised as this is a continued public hearing the application had already been accepted as complete at the previous meeting. Chair Weber opened the public hearing and invited the applicant to address the application.

Tony Marcotte introduced Alan Yeaton, of Amoskeag Architectural Group, and Mario Plante, the property owner. He noted that they have incorporated and/or considered many of the comments addressed at the previous meeting on the proposed project. He distributed a handout, entitled “Supporting Community Pictures for the Proposed Residential Building,” that contained images of the following:

- 1) Proposed brick façade for new building pictured on a building under construction
- 2) 80 Roxbury Street Elevation facing project
- 3) 47 Spring Street existing tree buffer

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- 4) Mid-day shadows
- 5) Historic District Map.

Mr. Marcotte also distributed a revised rendering of the proposed apartment building to members, which staff incorporated into the application file.

Mr. Marcotte stated that he feels they have made some significant changes to the proposed design of the building. One of the biggest changes made was to add a section of the building along Roxbury Street. They have added French doors on all four floors of this portion of the building with Juliette balconies (aka balconettes). Mr. Marcotte noted that the main entrance of the building on the west facing elevation has been drawn out 6' to distinguish this area as the primary entrance and to break up the massing of structure along this elevation. He also addressed the vertical panels that have been added beneath the windows to assist with adding visual interest and breaking up the massing of the building.

Referring to the number of units, Mr. Marcotte reported the proposed number of 136 units might come down. He noted that there would be a greater number of two-bedroom units.

Mr. Marcotte explained that a suggestion was given earlier in the day at a site visit conducted by the Planning Board to have a full brick façade on the portion of the building along Roxbury Street. Mr. Marcotte reported the owner has agreed to this suggestion using the faux brick panel that is proposed for the first level of the building. Mr. Marcotte added that this change will help to unify the building better with the surrounding brick buildings. Referring to the faux brick panel sample submitted at the previous meeting, Mr. Marcotte referred to an image in his handout, which depicts what the brick panel material looks like on the façade of an existing building.

Mr. Marcotte addressed the question of shadows during the day, and the impact the building would have on solar access to the abutting properties. He showed photographs of the shadows produced at the noon hour on the existing fence at the eastern border of the property. He noted that the shadows are directed to the west of the fence, and not onto the adjacent properties to the east. These photos were taken to address the Commission's concern that the building would cast a shadow on the neighboring properties.

Mr. Marcotte referred to the last page in his handout noting that much of the Historic District consists of building blocks. He referred to the areas outlined in orange on the handout and suggested that the applicant would be creating a block with the addition of the new apartment building in this area of Roxbury Street. Mr. Marcotte also noted that the proposed parking for the new apartment building will be to the rear of the frontline of the building, and will be screened by the extension of the building along Roxbury Street. Mr. Marcotte noted the goal of a having a ratio of slightly greater than 1 parking space per unit.

Mr. Marcotte noted the residential buildings to the east of the proposed structure are very tall, and that the proposed building would transition between the building heights to the west and east of the property. Mr. Marcotte explained the proposed building line on Spring Street has been set back by approximately 20-feet to the south. He reiterated the owner did consider what the Commission asked, noting that they did break up the building and there will be a covered main entranceway that connects to the parking area on the west-facing elevation.

Mr. Marcotte commented that they have relocated the proposed driveway on Roxbury Street to create some distance between their site and site of the former YMCA, where MoCo Arts is proposing to construct a new building. Mr. Marcotte feels they have extended the building as far as possible along Roxbury Street, while still allowing for a driveway into the parking area.

Regarding the former Middle School building, Mr. Marcotte noted that the owner has conducted a market analysis. Mr. Marcotte commented that they have always looked at this as a mixed-use development. They have

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owned the building for five-years and have maintained it. Mr. Marcotte noted that a window sample arrived and that Commission members that attended the site visit had the opportunity to view this window in person. This window is proposed to replace the existing windows on the former Middle School. Mr. Marcotte noted that the proposed grid arrangement is more closely aligned with the arrangement on the original windows to the building, which are no longer present. He noted that these are custom-made Harvey windows. Mr. Marcotte reiterated that the intent is to renovate the interior of existing building.

Mr. Marcotte turned the floor over to Alan Yeaton who noted he had nothing further to add but would be willing to answer any questions the Commission might have.

Chair Weber asked for questions/comments from the Commission and requested that the existing and proposed buildings be addressed separately.

Ms. Kimball Frank:

1. Has the number of entrances on the proposed apartment building changed? Mr. Marcotte replied in the negative. He noted there is one on Spring Street, the main entrance on the west-facing elevation, and the one near the Roxbury Street side of the building.
2. When you go in those doors can you go all the way through the building or are you in a unit? Mr. Yeaton replied you can go all the way through the building as required by Code. Mr. Yeaton also noted the internal design of the units is not fixed yet. Mr. Marcotte noted a walkway was added from the main entrance.

Mr. Bartlett noted he appreciates the applicant's efforts and made the following comments and/or asked questions:

1. The comment to dress the Roxbury Street block in a brick-like material is interesting. It serves to separate that building from the rest, which is a positive.
2. Are the panels beneath the windows the same material as the siding and just a different color? Mr. Marcotte replied in the affirmative.
3. In addition to breaking up the massing, the Applicant has also pulled that center section out at the main entrance. He asked if the whole center pediment could be a different color? Mr. Marcotte replied in the affirmative noting the cement board comes in many colors and is also paintable. Chair Weber asked Mr. Bartlett if he was talking about using a brick material or paint. Mr. Bartlett replied he was just asking if they would consider a different color. Mr. Bartlett also noted the proposed changes are closer to what an urban street looks like, which he poses no objection to. Mr. Yeaton suggested the color chart could be submitted or the colors could be changed on the rendering for all to see. Mr. Marcotte also indicated this could be a condition of approval.
4. Would this building have the same horizontal flashing that is presented on the image of the building with the faux brick panel? Mr. Marcotte replied in the affirmative noting they have a black flashing that he would suggest become more of a red flashing. Mr. Bartlett did not object to the black (contrast). Mr. Marcotte noted they are open to suggestions from the Commission on this point.
5. Do the panels come in 2'x4' sheets and how do they fit together? Mr. Yeaton replied they come in 18" x 6' sheets and are interlocking panels. The joints are not visible depending on whether or not the panels are cut. Mr. Yeaton also noted the big corner boards will remain as they add detail to the building.

Chair Weber commented he likes the addition to the streetscape on Roxbury Street and the brick. He asked the following questions:

1. Would you consider adding brick to a portion of the center pediment rather than just a separate paint color? Mr. Yeaton replied suspended brick in the air does not always look right as it needs to start from the base and head up. Mr. Yeaton would prefer Chair Weber look at it from the standpoint of a color change to get it to stand out better.

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Mr. Bartlett commented that he did not understand. Mr. Marcotte referred to the site plan, noting you can walk under the covered entranceway on the first floor (the entry door is bumped out six feet from the back). Chair Weber clarified that brick would not necessarily be the best choice from the second to fourth floor. Mr. Yeaton agreed.

2. Referring to the landscaping Chair Weber asked if it was possible to add more trees along the Roxbury Street facade. Mr. Marcotte replied in the affirmative. Ms. Kessler noted that the landscaping plan, submitted to the Planning Board, included a row of Holly and Day Lilies along Roxbury Street, and no trees were included in that façade. Mr. Marcotte noted this would be clear on the final submittal as it was not included in the packet prepared.

Councilor Powers:

1. How much did the building move away from Spring Street? Mr. Marcotte reiterated it was moved 20 feet to the south.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon commented that it is good the Applicant addressed the concerns on Roxbury Street. However, she noted the following concerns:

1. The applicant did not fully address the concerns about the massing of this building. The dimension of the extension along Roxbury Street is larger than 20 feet.
2. She would like to see the end of the building on Spring Street brought in even further.
3. She would like to see what the shadow line of the proposed building does to the neighborhood later in the afternoon. She wants to know what this will do to the trees that are there.
4. She would like to see what the stepped retaining wall adjacent to 47 Spring Street is going to look like and its impact on the house at 47 Spring Street.
5. She would like to see the building stepped in an amount equal to the square footage gained. Mr. Marcotte noted the L-shape was added to break up the massing.

Mr. Marcotte replied that the area of the property adjacent to 47 Spring Street, where trees are present, is currently fenced in due to the way the lot is laid out. They wanted to have flexibility with the stepped retaining wall to allow that tree to remain, which is one of the reasons they have moved the building 20-feet from the property line. The goal is to maintain the tree so the stepped retaining wall will be as close to our building as it needs to be to allow growth. Mr. Marcotte referred to Page 4 of his handout noting that tree will get sun most of the day. Mr. Yeaton pointed out the trees are 35-40 feet tall all along this property line and they extend from the street all the way to the abutter's rear corner, and are taller than his roof. In response to Mr. Bartlett, Mr. Marcotte agreed the goal is to terrace the retaining wall, noting that they have to wait until they have permission to access the adjacent property to determine if the trees are on their property.

Ms. Kimball Frank:

1. What happens to the space behind the building? Is this space for the residents to enjoy the outdoors? Mr. Marcotte replied in the affirmative. He noted it is a grassed area with no landscaping proposed.

Moving onto the existing building, Chair Weber asked for questions/comments on the new windows.

Noting she was the one concerned a lot about the windows Ms. Kimball Frank addressed the window handout provided by Ms. Kessler of the proposed window type. She noted she thinks this is an improvement. She noted her online searches detected no historic division from the company the applicant is using (Harvey). Mr. Marcotte verified Harvey does not have a historic division and that the windows are custom designed. Mr. Marcotte reiterated previous vinyl window testimony addressing the wind loading, lifecycle (30 years), energy efficiency per the Comprehensive Master Plan, and the fact that the grids are fused to the glass. Addressing aluminum windows, Mr. Marcotte noted the lead-time for ordering these is eight to 12 months. Ms. Kimball Frank also

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addressed the question of adding grids to the awning windows at the bottom of the window and asked if the applicant had thought about that. Mr. Marcotte replied in the negative, but added that the arrangement allows for this if it becomes a preference by the Commission. Mr. Yeaton noted this would be very difficult because the windows will not line up. Mr. Marcotte added each floor of the former Middle School has different sized windows.

Mr. Duffy commented he was okay with the full windows at the last meeting, adding this is an improvement and very satisfactory under the circumstances. They are more than adequate in conveying the 1912 design. Mr. Duffy thanked the applicant for his efforts.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon agreed with Mr. Duffy's comments. She referred to Page 35, Section F upper left hand image depicting seven arched windows, and asked if they will have the same kind of treatment. Mr. Marcotte replied in the affirmative.

Chair Weber asked for staff comments.

Ms. Kessler reported her staff report focused on the revisions from the previous plan. She noted the applicant has addressed many of the comments made in the staff report. Ms. Kessler made the following comments:

1. The revised site plan brings the shape of the building into greater conformity with the Historic District Commission standards. The L-shape extension along Roxbury Street reduces the gap between the former YMCA site and the proposed apartment buildings and provides greater screening of the parking area.
2. The dense mix of landscaping in the area adjacent to Roxbury Street and to the west of the proposed site driveway will also provide some screening of the parking area. The applicant has also indicated they will add landscaping along the western boundary of the property in the area adjacent to the former YMCA site.
3. While the shape and orientation are a significant improvement, the height is still quite high in comparison to the adjacent area. She noted that this area is a transition zone from the downtown to a more residential district. The building form is compatible with building forms in the Central Business District.
4. Regarding material choice Ms. Kessler feels the decision to apply a different treatment for the building for the shape of the building on Roxbury Street will go a long way in breaking up the visibility and the massing of the structure. She noted in her staff report the combination of brick and clapboard style could serve as a transition zone between what is predominantly brick in the downtown.
5. There is significant improvement in the fenestration of the building with the French doors and Juliette balconies on the Roxbury Street side. Trees placed in front of the building would be an improvement as well.
6. Comments were made regarding the entranceway at the previous meeting; the applicant has made an adjustment by pulling the middle section out that abuts the parking lot and providing a covered entrance.

Ms. Kessler said these were the key comments she had and she would be happy to answer any questions the Commission might have. She continued her comments with respect to the existing building. Staff feels the window choice meets the standards and is more complimentary to the window style originally on the building.

Chair Weber asked for public comments.

Nathan Ojala, of 63 Spring Street commented he lives in the shadow line of this building. Mr. Ojala thinks this building is a great addition to the community. He added that the apartments will provide a great choice for housing in Keene, something different. The commercial space is something Keene also doesn't have and will bring a lot to our economy by bringing in music and culture.

There being no further public comments Chair Weber closed the public hearing for deliberation.

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Mr. Duffy said this has been one of the most challenging issues for the Commission. He feels at this point that the applicant has satisfied all the standards and worked to make changes in a very congenial way, which is not always the case. Mr. Duffy noted that he had hoped this area would become a green space or park. He addressed the massing by commenting he feels the applicant has satisfied our concerns as realistically as possible. He noted earlier comments regarding creating opportunities downtown. Mr. Duffy also referred to an article addressing how high rents are in the southern tier of the state suggesting it is a landlord's market. Mr. Duffy concluded by noting affordable housing in this area is critical.

Councilor Powers also commented he had other ideas for this location, but he is glad there is an owner and somebody that wants to develop it. Although he feels a smaller building would be preferred, Councilor Powers feels the project fits the Commission's criteria and that the applicant did a good job at addressing many of the concerns. Councilor Powers noted competition in the housing area is needed and this project should provide that. He continued parking is always an issue and perhaps people will use this to walk and shop downtown, and not own a car. Councilor Powers concluded by noting he feels the applicant has come close to meeting our criteria and it is time to let the Planning Board and others do their jobs.

Ms. Kimball Frank echoed earlier comments, adding she loves the greenspace back there. She hopes the front of the building can become a greenspace that the City and people can be proud of. Ms. Kimball Frank would like to see it become a place where people could sit and eat their lunch. Ms. Kimball Frank noted she appreciates the fact that the applicant listened to what people have said, and she hopes it goes well.

Mr. Bartlett commented this is one of the most consequential buildings proposed to go up in the City recently. He also echoed the previous comments of the Commission members. Mr. Bartlett agrees the project meets the general spirit of the standards. He added that he is comfortable with the proposal and the windows chosen. Mr. Bartlett noted he will support this project.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon reiterated her earlier comments regarding the massing, which she feels has not been addressed and is still concerned about it. She noted the number of abutters speaking out against the massing at the previous meeting. Ms. Carroll-Weldon thanked the applicant for his choice of windows and noted she agrees with Ms. Kimball Frank about the greenspace.

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett to approve COA-2016-06 for window replacement and brick repointing of the existing building and the construction of a new 124,096 square foot apartment building and adjacent parking area at 17 Washington Street as described on the building elevations, "Washington Park at Keene Apartments Roxbury Street Keene, New Hampshire" prepared by Alan Yeaton of Amoskeag Architectural Group on August 5, 2016 and on the site plan, "Washington Park Multifamily Housing 17 Washington Street, Keene, New Hampshire" prepared by Bedford Design Consultants dated April 6, 2016 and submitted to the Planning Department on August 8, 2016 with the following condition:

1. Approval of the Planning Department of a mock-up of the mortar color, thickness, and type prior to conducting any masonry repointing.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon proposed the two projects be separated. Ms. Kessler advised this is one application and the Commission is voting on the whole project. She also advised the motion could be amended to change the conditions.

Ms. Kessler noted the applicant has proposed changes to the exterior of the structure that are not documented in the plans presented (material type and color choice). She noted it is important for the Planning Department to receive plans that demonstrate those changes. In response to Mr. Duffy, Ms. Kessler noted another condition could be added to authorize the Planning Department to approve the final revised building elevations.

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Councilor Powers motioned to add a second condition to the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Duffy.

2. Submission of a revised plan with the color and material changes discussed at the August 17, 2016 meeting.

The amendment carried on a vote of 5:1 with Ms. Carroll-Weldon voting in opposition.

Chair Weber asked for a vote on the amended motion. The vote was 5:1 with Ms. Carroll-Weldon voting in opposition. The recommended and amended motion read as follows:

Approve COA-2016-06 for window replacement and brick repointing of the existing building and the construction of a new 124,096 square foot apartment building and adjacent parking area at 17 Washington Street as described on the building elevations, "Washington Park at Keene Apartments Roxbury Street Keene, New Hampshire" prepared by Alan Yeaton of Amoskeag Architectural Group on August 5, 2016 and on the site plan, "Washington Park Multifamily Housing 17 Washington Street Keene, New Hampshire" prepared by Bedford Design Consultants dated April 6, 2016 and submitted to the Planning Department on August 8, 2016 with the following conditions:

1. Approval of the Planning Department of a mock-up of the mortar color, thickness, and type prior to conducting any masonry repointing.
2. Submission of a revised plan with the color and material changes discussed at the August 17, 2016 meeting.

4) Public Hearings-

a) **COA-2016-10 - 17 Washington Street – Eversource Washington Park Equipment** - Applicant, Eversource Energy, on behalf of owner, Washington Park LLC, requests the installation of two pad-mounted transformers and two sector cabinets in various locations on the property at 17 Washington Street. The property is Tax Map Parcel #017-07-007.

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

Mr. Bartlett motioned to accept application COA-2016-10 as complete. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion, which carried on a vote of 5-0. Ms. Carroll-Weldon was not present for the vote.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing and invited the applicant to address the application.

Laurel Boivin of Eversource, introduced Mark Fraser, also representing Eversource, before addressing the application. Ms. Boivin reported that this installation is part of a much larger plan to upgrade the electric distribution system in the Central Business District. Ms. Boivin has been before the Commission several times already on related projects. Ms. Boivin continued, stating that the work proposed at 17 Washington Street combined with the work proposed at 64 Washington Street totals a half million dollar investment. She noted Mr. Fraser would discuss the equipment and the area it would serve. Ms. Boivin noted the alternative to the proposed above ground equipment is an expansion of the overhead line system. She added that in order to preserve the look of Main Street they are looking for opportunities to continue the underground installation and to replace some of the obsolete equipment with above ground pad-mounted transformers. Ms. Boivin reported the proposed equipment would replace one of the underground pieces of equipment in front of City Hall. Another transformer and two sector cabinets would provide and allow for the redevelopment of the Washington Street Park Apartments and the redevelopment of the former Middle School. Ms. Boivin outlined the areas to be served noting that this would allow the existing 4kV system to be upgraded to 12kV in order to serve current and future

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development. Ms. Boivin noted they have tried to incorporate feedback received from the Commission at previous hearings regarding the screening and minimizing the visual impact. Ms. Boivin turned the floor over to Mark Fraser to discuss the technical details of why this equipment is needed.

Mr. Fraser reported that the owner and developer of Washington Park were approached for a location for this equipment. They have worked with Eversource to create feeds to their building and through their property over to Roxbury Street. Mr. Fraser also noted working with Bedford Design Group for assistance in designing the screening for the proposed transformers. Mr. Fraser commented everything they are proposed to do is integrated with what the developers of Washington Park are doing.

Mr. Fraser referred to Page 34 of 52 for an overview of the three locations on the site at 17 Washington Street where transformers and sector cabinets are proposed. The first location (Location #1) is a lawn area to the front of the former Middle School building near Washington Street. A transformer is proposed for this location with screening in the form of two rows of Dwarf Alberta Spruce on three sides. Mr. Fraser noted that these Spruce will reach 10-feet at maturity. The second location (Location #2) is to the south of the former Middle School and will be largely out of view from the public right-of-way. Mr. Fraser noted that a transformer and sector cabinet are proposed in this location and will be screened by a wooden privacy fence. The third location (Location #3) is a landscaped island adjacent to Roxbury Street, to the west of the proposed site driveway. The equipment proposed for this location is a 3-foot high sector cabinet that would be screened by a diverse mixture of landscaping.

Ms. Boivin explained the direct/express feed will come from Location #1 and nothing will be fed from that feed until they get to Roxbury Street so it really is a direct line (12kV). She explained one of the goals is to create duplicate feeds or loops to reduce the number of outages.

Chair Weber asked for questions/comments from the Commission.

Ms. Kimball Frank said she does not like Location #1 because it is right in the middle of the greenspace. She asked if the applicant would consider locating the transformer on property the City already owns (e.g. parking garage). Mr. Fraser replied there are a number of issues with the City-owned parking garage. Any changes to the parking garage would cause problems with the electric infrastructure. Secondly, he does not know anything about the weight limits for the infrastructure. Ms. Kimball Frank clarified that she was talking about locating the equipment on the ground level. Mr. Fraser noted the issues with the ground level equipment work because of the low ceiling height. Ms. Kimball Frank asked if one of the parking spaces in front of the former Middle School could be used as the location instead. Ms. Kimball Frank requested the applicant look at this and come back with a better location. Ms. Boivin noted the hard work by Mr. Fraser's team at identifying these locations. She explained the difference between long-term easements with private property owners and the license procedure if the equipment is on City property (no property rights). Ms. Boivin noted with long-term easements they have property rights. Ms. Kimball Frank said she would like to see the green space at 17 Washington Street to be preserved.

Councilor Powers agreed with comments about the greenspace. He added that he understands the difficulties of locating this equipment. He suggested the applicant seek to locate this transformer as close to the wall of the ramp leading to the upper deck of the City parking garage as possible. Councilor Powers also commented that he does not feel the applicant has other alternatives to accomplish their objectives. Councilor Powers referred to screening and the rendering provided, suggesting that the screening makes the structure look bigger than it actually is. Mr. Fraser suggested they might have the ability to slide the transformer back or closer to the wall, but this depends on where the roof drain is.

Mr. Duffy said he was sympathetic to the greenspace issue but noted this transformer (Location #1) is on private property. Mr. Duffy noted the perception that parking is at a premium. Mr. Duffy noted he thinks the proposed screening is sufficient. Mr. Duffy outlined the benefits of having greenspaces.

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Ms. Carroll-Weldon agreed with Mr. Duffy's comments regarding the parking. She referred to the rendering on Page 35 of 52 of the meeting packet and asked how many years is it expected for the trees to be that big. Mr. Fraser noted the planting height of the trees is five to six feet tall. Ms. Kessler referred Ms. Carroll-Weldon to the site plan on Page 36 of 52 noting that the plan indicates a mature height of 8- to 10-feet high. Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted that the Middle School is a Primary resource and she feels the location of the proposed transformer is inappropriate as far as the HDC regulations.

Mr. Bartlett clarified that they are really just talking about screening. He noted the applicant has been before the Commission on several occasions already. Looking around at the Historic District, Mr. Bartlett commented there should be a way to fit this equipment in accordingly. He encouraged the Applicant to look at the surrounding features and work with those rather than pick a location and plant trees around it. He noted that in general, the proposal is not very satisfying.

Chair Weber also values the greenspace. He suggested finding a different location for the transformer at Location #1 that is not in front of the former Middle School building. He noted that he is not in favor of spruce trees in the downtown area. Mr. Fraser noted the City Hall building would be the biggest energy user of this proposed transformer and there is not a lot of room behind City Hall to locate it nor are there alternatives for the feed. Chair Weber suggested moving the proposed transformer to one of the parking spaces on the first floor of the parking garage. Mr. Fraser noted this transformer is 84 inches tall and the parking garage has a relatively low roof. They would have to look at other regulations that might restrict this. Mr. Fraser reiterated his comments regarding the differences between easements on private property and licenses to use City property noting, he could look at this if forced to, but it is not preferred. Councilor Powers commented that putting it on the City Hall property is not going to work because there is no area suitable for that size equipment. Discussion continued with Mr. Fraser noting he could explore moving it closer to the concrete wall and sliding it back. Ms. Kimball Frank suggested going back to the owner and asking for another space on their property to locate the transformer. Mr. Fraser noted he is willing to explore this option, but the Commission needs to understand there are limitations.

Chair Weber asked for staff comments.

Ms. Kessler noted her staff report addresses the standards relative to the installation of this type of utility.

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"New buildings or structures shall be sited so that the existing pattern of the historic streetscape – setbacks, spacing, massing, height, orientation – in which they are located is not disrupted."

Ms. Kessler indicated that Locations 2 and 3 appear to be thoroughly screened from the public view.

Ms. Kessler reported information received at the meeting regarding the height of the transformer proposed for Location 1. She noted in the staff report the height is indicated as 73 inches high, but it will actually be 84 inches high. She noted Mr. Bartlett brought up an interesting point regarding adequate screening for the site. Ms. Kessler advised it is for the Commission to decide if the location and screening are adequate. Referring to other options for a location for this transformer, Ms. Kessler noted the first parking space adjacent to the parking structure, closest to City Hall is not a proposed parking space on the Washington Park site plan. Referring to the equipment being moved closer to the wall, Ms. Kessler noted that depending on the setbacks there may or may not be enough room. She also noted there is a roof drain in the area of the proposed location. Mr. Fraser noted the setback requirement is three feet. He continued, stating that if he slides the transformer back this will change the type of screening he can do, and if they were to go with fencing this would allow more greenspace. Ms. Kessler clarified the previous comments were in regards to the greenspace in front of the school (southeastern most corner of the greenspace).

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Chair Weber asked for public comments.

Doug Barrett, of 39 Page Street addressed Location #1, noting he shares the Commission's opinions on greenspaces and he hopes the Commission has the propensity to preserve that space. Mr. Barrett agreed moving the location onto the parking spaces sounds like a better plan. He suggested an agreement could be reached with the owners of Washington Park. Mr. Barrett also suggested the engineers have the ability to move the transformer 20 or 30 feet. Mr. Barrett also agreed with Mr. Bartlett's comments/concerns regarding the screening. Mr. Barrett also suggested another approach might be to move the transformer closer to the parking structure. Mr. Barrett noted the importance of our greenspaces and suggested Eversource put a little more thought/creativity into this project.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked Mr. Fraser for the applicant's policy on replacing dead trees. Mr. Fraser noted that screening is done on private property. He added it is their responsibility and they do have a landscaping plan in place.

There being no further comments Chair Weber closed the public hearing for deliberation.

Noting the Commission has an issue with Location #1, Chair Weber asked the Commission for their thoughts on how best to move forward.

Mr. Duffy asked if the Commission could vote on Locations #2 and #3 and come back to Location #1 after the applicant talks to the property owner. Ms. Kessler advised the motion could be divided and the public hearing continued. She reiterated it is one application and the preference of the applicant is to vote on the application as a whole. Mr. Duffy noted he is also wary about using the HDC to preserve greenspace (this is private property). He added the Commission has to stay within its charge. Noting the hour Mr. Duffy indicated he had to leave soon.

Councilor Powers indicated he is confident the applicant has heard our concerns and suggested moving forward so the applicant can get some work done. He suggested approval with strong language that Location #1 needs to be moved slightly and addressing Mr. Bartlett's suggestion on softening the vegetation. Mr. Bartlett would like to see a condition added that requests something more urban for the plantings.

Discussion continued with Chair Weber asking if the Commission wanted to vote on the recommended motion. Discussion continued along this vein with Chair Weber noting we can continue the public hearing or vote. Ms. Kessler reported the applicant prefers the public hearing be continued.

Councilor Powers made a motion to continue the public hearing to September 21, 2016, at 4:30 PM. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

b) **COA-2016-11 - 64 Washington Street – Eversource Fairpoint Transformer** - Applicant, Eversource Energy, on behalf of owner, Northern New England Telephone Operations LLC, requests the installation of a pad-mounted transformer on the property at 64 Washington Street. The property is Tax Map Parcel #003-02-006.

Chair Weber read the notice and opened the public hearing.

Laurel Boivin introduced Mark Fraser noting the 500 kV transformer in front of the Fairpoint Building at 64 Washington Street is proposed to be replaced as it has become obsolete equipment. She continued, stating that the replacement is necessary to upgrade from a 4kV to 12kV system and it is necessary to support the development of Washington Park. Ms. Boivin reported that the alternative looked at by Eversource was the expansion of the above ground utilities pole system to larger, taller poles. Ms. Boivin also outlined the service area for this feed.

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Mr. Fraser referred to Pages 48 and 49 of the meeting packet to describe the location of the proposed transformer and the types of plantings that would screen this equipment. Mr. Fraser noted the intent to install a 6-foot white vinyl fence for screening on the south side facing the driveway. Mr. Fraser indicated this transformer could be moved back a little bit, noting they need enough space to be able to sweep the nearby grate.

Chair Weber asked for questions/comments from the Commission.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked if the bigger transformer proposed for the Washington Park development could be put here and the transformer proposed for this site, which is smaller in size, could be located at 17 Washington Street. She stated asked the applicant what would happen if the plants that provide screening were to die as a result of neglect by the property owner. Also, she asked if it is possible to have different kinds of screening and a different type of fence material. Mr. Fraser addressed the first question, explaining that this location is not feasible to serve the needs of City Hall, and the smaller transformer would not serve the needs of the customer. He continued, stating that they can talk to the property owner (FairPoint) about the maintenance of plantings and fencing material. Mr. Fraser noted they do maintain the plants outside their building now, and they will be leasing this transformer from Eversource due to its size.

Ms. Kimball Frank commented that it would be preferred if the applicant could move the transformer closer to the building.

Chair Weber noted he prefers the fence material be cedar. Mr. Fraser commented that they were trying to be consistent with the surrounding area, but that cedar fencing is not an issue.

Mr. Bartlett would also like to see the transformer pushed back, noting earlier testimony regarding continuing the historical pattern of any site. Noting the applicant has already said he would try to move the transformer back and adjust the plantings accordingly, Mr. Bartlett said he thinks this is the best we can do.

As there were no public comments, Chair Weber closed the public hearing for deliberation.

Chair Weber said he would like to add a condition regarding the fence.

Mr. Bartlett motioned to approve COA-2016-11 for the installation of an above-ground pad-mounted transformer on the property at 64 Washington as described in the project narrative and as shown on the plan, "Mitigation Planting for Washington Street – Planting Plan Option B" dated July 27, 2016 and prepared by LandWorks with the following condition:

1. Replace the vinyl fence with a wooden Cedar fence of the same size.

Councilor Powers seconded the motion, which carried on a vote of 5:0. Although, Mr. Duffy had left the meeting, a quorum was still present.

5) Other Business- None at this time.

6) Next Meeting- September 21, 2016.

7) Adjourn- There being no additional business before the Commission Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 7:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats Hall
August 20, 2016

August 17, 2016

Reviewed and edited by,
Tara Kessler, Planner