

ADOPTED

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 20, 2017 4:30 PM 2nd Floor Committee Room, City Hall

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Joslin Kimball Frank, Vice Chair
Hans Porschitz
Nancy Proctor (Left Early)
Andrew Weglinski (Arrived Late)

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Peter Poanessa
Councilor Thomas Powers

1) Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM and Ms. Kessler conducted roll call.

2) Approval of Minutes – July 19, 2017

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to approve the minutes of July 19, 2017, which was seconded by Ms. Proctor and carried unanimously.

3) Public Hearings

COA-2017-06 – 37-39 Roxbury Street Green Energy Options - Applicant, Green Energy Options, on behalf of owner Aubuchon Realty Company Inc., proposes renovations to the building at 37-39 Roxbury Street. The proposed work includes alterations to the storefront façade, installation of new windows, and the installation of a solar awning. The parcel is TMP # 022-01-018 and is located in the Central Business District. The existing building is ranked as a Non-Contributing Resource.

Ms. Kessler recommended this application be accepted as complete. Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to accept the application COA-2017-06 as complete, which was seconded by Ms. Proctor and carried unanimously.

Chair Weber welcomed Pablo Fleischmann, new owner of the building at 37-39 Roxbury Street. Mr. Fleischmann said he has been before this Commission in the past and is seeking to move his business from its location on Emerald Street to the former Aubuchon building on Roxbury Street. He is seeking to have a showroom and office space at this new building and to also have some rental space. The building was built in 1908 and very little of the interior has been updated. He plans to enhance the exterior to make it more inviting. He noted the building appears to have a courtyard because of the adjacent Hanna Grimes building and he has considered that with respect to window balance in the design. The proposed design moves the entrance to the parking lot and most windows on the parking lot side will appear where they did historically. He anticipates

revisiting the roof with this Commission in the next few years and hopefully will install roof-mounted solar arrays as well. He reviewed the design plans with the Commission.

Chair Weber asked why the entrance is being moved. Mr. Fleischmann replied the entrance is not inviting on the street side. He is sacrificing a parking space but feels it is worth it. It also enters the space better, as an airlock is required. This will make the front of the building fairly symmetrical.

Mr. Weglinski asked if the front façade will remain recessed. Mr. Fleischmann replied no, the front will be flush. Mr. Weglinski asked the material of the front windows. Mr. Fleischmann replied aluminum, likely all bronze and divided into four panels (currently there are three). Mr. Weglinski noted windows on a typical storefront are 2.5” thick so this design will be significantly different from what is there now, where the windows rather disappear. He asked why they are choosing to do divided lights on one side and simulated light on the other side. Mr. Fleischmann replied that the divided lights will only be on certain windows to aesthetically resemble the Hannah Grimes building and neighborhood. Mr. Weglinski said these gelled windows look very thick on an already small window, making them much more visible and pronounced. Mr. Porschitz asked if the window divisions were driven by architecture. Mr. Fleischmann replied there are currently three divided lights and he chose to change to four because if one breaks, it will be cheaper to replace. There are already some architectural details above the windows so he decided to continue that. Mr. Weglinski said it may appear more bulky and dissimilar from the adjacent flat facades. Mr. Fleischmann replied it depends on the color that the exterior will be painted, which will likely be darker than it is now.

Chair Weber noted this Commission cannot regulate color, but members are curious. Mr. Weglinski asked if this Commission comments on potential reflections/obstructions from solar arrays. Chair Weber replied that the Commission is only focus on visibility from the right of way. Ms. Kessler said because this project is predominantly about changing aesthetics it will not go before the Planning Board; so if there were concerns about reflection, with respect to the Historic District Commission standards, it could be reviewed. Ms. Kimball Frank asked Mr. Fleischmann to explain the solar awnings proposed. Mr. Fleischmann replied they will be on the west and north façades awnings to offset the electricity costs of the building. Typically these arrays are recommended at 42 degrees; this is only a problem on the west side because he only owns 18 inches before the property line. He eventually hopes to have a large, community solar project on the roof as well. Mr. Porschitz added it is also a good demonstration to customers on their building.

Mr. Weglinski said his concern is about glare on the west side. Mr. Fleischmann replied he chose not to use a shinier material on that side to reduce glare; he said it looks like a sheet of black, opaque glass. He said some products mitigate glare with anti-reflective glass but he does not prefer them aesthetically.

Ms. Kessler reviewed the District Standards of relevance to glare or shadow on an adjacent building:

Section XV.A.7.b)7) “In Order to minimize visual impacts, colors of equipment and assemblies should either be muted or should match nearby materials and colors.”

She said this standard is more specific to color but because this application is not going to the Planning Board, it is actually more relevant to the visual appearance of the building in addition to impact on adjacent buildings. Mr. Porschitz said he is less concerned about glare for vehicles but for casting patterns on adjacent buildings, disrupting the aesthetics of the historical surroundings.

Ms. Kessler reviewed the additional District Standards and provided staff comments:

- *Section XV.A.7.b)1) “The entire subject site for a proposed system should be examined to determine the most appropriate placement of the system...”*
 - The Applicant proposes to install two solar awnings on the building. A solar awning is an alternative to a ground-mounted or roof-mounted system that is mounted to the side of a building and resembles a canopy. The Applicant proposes to install one awning (approximately 40’ long by 3.5’ high) on the west-facing elevation. This awning would protrude approximately 1’-6” from the side of the building and would be composed of 7 solar panels/units. The other awning will be located at the rear of the building and will not be visible from Roxbury Street. However, a portion of this array may be visible from Church Street. This array is proposed to be approximately 49’ long by 4’ high and composed of 14 solar panels/units. Due to the placement of the building on the lot, there is limited room available for a ground mounted system. As the Applicant intends to install a roof-mounted array at a later date, they have selected the south- and west-facing sides of the building to install the solar awning. An image of a type of solar awning is included below. The Applicant has not yet submitted manufacturer’s specifications for the solar awning system.
- *Section XV.A.7.b)2) “The appropriateness of photovoltaic or solar thermal systems will be based on the historic character and architectural significance of the individual structure and its relation to its surroundings...”*
 - The building is ranked as a Non-contributing Resource and does not contain any architecturally significant features. The placement of the solar awning on the side and rear of the structure does not appear to have an impact of on historic character of the surrounding development. The building to the west at 25 Roxbury St is the Hannah Grimes Center, which is ranked as an Incompatible Resource. The building to the east at 43-45 Roxbury Street is ranked as a Non-Contributing Resource. The property across the street at 38 Roxbury Street had been the site of the former YMCA, which was ranked as a Primary Resource; however, this structure has been demolished and will be replaced with the construction of the new MoCo Arts Building.
- *Section XV.A.7.b)3) “Size and location of structures shall be in scale with the other features of the building.”*
 - The proposed solar awning will be at a scale that is compatible with the other features of the building. It does not appear to overwhelm the façade.
- *Section XV.A.7.b)6) “All supplementary equipment and supply lines shall be placed in inconspicuous locations and/or concealed from view with architectural elements (e.g. downspouts) or other screening.”*
 - The elevations provided by the Applicant do not display any supplementary equipment such as conduit or supply lines.
- *Section XV.A.7.b)9) “There should be no visible graphics on any systems to advertise or otherwise.”*
 - The Applicant does not propose to place any graphics that would be visible from the public right of way.

Mr. Porschitz asked if the front windows will be triple-glazed. Mr. Fleischmann replied no, all windows will be double glazed.

With no public comment, Chair Weber closed the public hearing.

Mr. Weglinski said he is less concerned about the solar impact because that can be easily fixed later if there were a glare complaint. He thinks the more significant impact is relocating the entrance to the west side of the building. With the area becoming active again he understands the change, but he does not understand why such a significant change is needed. He said it does seem that not having any recessed windows is a significant change to the façade as well. He thinks more viewable space and visible windows that look into the building would improve the west façade.

Ms. Kimball Frank said she thinks the building is in poor condition today, and she sees this application as an improvement and likes the solar idea. She thinks moving the entrance to the parking lot makes things easier. She said it looks like a well-planned, attractive improvement.

Ms. Proctor said with MoCo Arts opening the improvements will be a nice compliment. She likes the arched windows because they feel more classic than what is there now. She thinks it is a great improvement and the entrance location makes more sense.

Mr. Porschitz said he is in favor of the project and likes the solar component. He thinks the architects have taken a lot into consideration for the building to fit in. He understands the concern about impacts of changing the façade but he does not think it is something people will notice when they walk by all the time. He thinks moving the entrance improves usability of space.

Chair Weber said it is a bland building and he is pleased to see the potential. He is concerned about the glare from the west facing solar array but is sure Mr. Fleischmann will ensure there is no impact on the neighbors. It is a non-contributing resource and he thinks it will bring more life to the building.

Ms. Kimball Frank made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Proctor.

On a vote of 5-0, the Historic District Commission approves COA-2017-06 for alterations to the storefront, installation of windows/window openings, and installation of solar awnings at 37-39 Roxbury Street as described in the project application and on the building elevations, "Additions and Renovations for Green Energy Options 37 Roxbury Street, Keene, New Hampshire" submitted to the Planning Department on September 7, 2017.

Mr. Fleischmann noted the motion did not mention doors. Ms. Kessler said this is ok because the door is included in the drawings, which were approved as part of the motion. Mr. Fleischmann asked what happens if this project takes longer than one year. Ms. Kessler replied he could apply for an extension later if needed.

COA-2016-06 Mod 2 – 17 Washington Street Washington Park – Applicant and owner, Washington Park of Keene LLC, seeks to install a 2,240 square foot concrete patio with a wrought iron fence at the front of the building in the northwest corner of the lot at 17 Washington St. The Applicant is also seeking retroactive approval for the installation of cement board siding in the window openings on the northern elevation of the existing building. This parcel is TMP# 017-07-007 and is located in the Central Business District. The existing building is ranked as a Primary Resource.

Ms. Kessler recommended this application be accepted as complete. Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to accept application COA-2016-06 Mod 2 as complete, which was seconded by Ms. Proctor and carried unanimously.

Chair Weber welcomed Tony Marcotte, Senior Project Manager at Washington Park of Keene, who noted this project is moving along. He first addressed the retroactive portion of this application. The owner made a last minute decision to change the siding material in the window openings on the north elevation of the building when they were installing the new windows. This was not included in the original application. The window opening was partially filled with Hardie plank to match the rest of the proposed building changes. The owner saw this as an improvement and it was inadvertently left out of the original application for this building but matches the approved design. Chair Weber asked if the windows are being installed in the existing openings. Mr. Marcotte replied yes, the openings are framed with lumber to match the building next door.

Mr. Marcotte continued explaining the new application for a patio at the front of the building. He wanted to make clear that he does not represent The Spot, but rather he represents the owner of the building. The property owner would like to complete this patio before the front of the building is repaved. While the intent is for exterior restaurant seating on the patio, it could be far in the distant future because it is unknown when the restaurant will open; still, it makes sense to complete the foundation now. He noted the plans show plain concrete but a stucco material can be used to better match the color of the building, with a brush or stamp finish. He said similar work was done with the concrete on the building and it matches well. The access to the patio would be from within the building so that all pedestrians and ramps remain at the building entrance. There will be one solid iron railing along the entire perimeter of the patio and Ms. Kessler also suggested landscaping to help offset the visual impact. Mr. Porschitz agreed landscaping is a good idea, especially on the lawn side of the patio. Mr. Marcotte agreed there is a small strip of grass there now that can be expanded and the existing pavement can be reduced some.

Ms. Proctor asked if the patio will be used exclusively by the restaurant. Mr. Marcotte replied yes, by any tenant that has an outdoor seating area. Chair Weber asked if there has been consideration of connecting the two entrances. Mr. Marcotte replied no, they are using the area at the front of the building that was available without impeding the parking lot.

Mr. Weglinski asked if there is any curb height. Mr. Marcotte replied yes, the highest it will be above grade is approximately 30 inches. Mr. Weglinski said the rendering may be inaccurate because it appears the patio ends at the windows (further right) than the plans, which show it continuing right to the door. Mr. Marcotte agreed it is hard to capture a rendering from that angle. Mr. Weglinski said due to the grade, it appears the top of the patio slab would cut into the bottom portion of the windows. Mr. Marcotte replied no, there is a four-inch concrete slope below the bottom of the windows and the patio will begin a few inches below that. The patio slopes away from the building so no water can enter. Mr. Weglinski asked why a raised platform was chosen as opposed to something at grade that would be less visible and avoid the need for a ramp. Mr. Marcotte replied this is what the owner asked for and a ramp is needed regardless for the handicapped entrance to the building. Mr. Porschitz agreed that not raising the patio would require an additional ramp out onto the patio. Mr. Marcotte said the railing around the patio is required for anything higher than 18 inches and he thinks it would be necessary, even at grade, in order to serve alcohol. He said he can look into doing the patio at grade with a ramp; he agreed it would be less obtrusive.

Mr. Weglinski asked if there are any other schemes for different material options. Mr. Marcotte replied no but was open to ideas and recommendations. This application will still have to go before the Planning Board so there is the opportunity to come back before this Commission next month with recommendations implemented in a revised design.

Ms. Kimball Frank said she has always been concerned about how much asphalt is in front of this building and would like to see more green space. Mr. Marcotte replied the intention of the asphalt is to have enough turning radius for buses. He will look into how much asphalt can be removed for plantings. Ms. Kimball Frank added it may be more pleasant to look at green space while dining on the patio. Mr. Marcotte agreed trees would be an enhancement as well.

Mr. Porschitz noted there was an offer to match the vertical surface of the patio with the colors on the building; he asked if there was consideration to blend it with the brick instead. Mr. Marcotte replied he is open to that idea. Mr. Porschitz said the brick is an earth tone and starts to tie back into the vegetation and blend better. Mr. Marcotte agreed he can propose that to the owner; he added that perimeter can act as a frost wall. Mr. Porschitz asked if the back of the building will be painted to match the original foundation and act as a frost wall. Mr. Marcotte replied no, the heat of the building usually mitigates frost at that close proximity. Mr. Porschitz said he has seen differently. Mr. Marcotte said he will look into it with the structural engineer.

Ms. Proctor noted if the patio is at grade with a ramp down from the building, this could present a safety concern for transporting food. Mr. Weglinski suggested with the patio at grade there would be no need for a railing and a flat brick could be used to pave the area; Mr. Marcotte replied the railing would still be necessary for serving alcohol and there would have to be another entry point from the parking lot side.

Ms. Kessler reviewed the additional District Standards and provided staff comments:

- *Section XV.D.2.b)1) “New buildings or structures shall be sited so that the existing pattern of the historic streetscape – setbacks, spacing, lot coverage, scale, massing, height, orientation – in which they are located is not disrupted.”*
 - The Applicant proposes to install a 2,240 square foot concrete patio in the area in front of the building housing the auditorium (see image below). The Applicant does not propose to install any landscaping or lighting at this time. As the proposed patio would be level with the first story of the existing building, and would not be an enclosed structure, it would not have a significant impact on the pattern of the historic streetscape with respect to height, massing, and scale. However, the patio would be located to the front of the existing historic building, rather than to the side or the rear of the structure. The placement of this structure may have an impact on the historic streetscape as additions were not typically installed to the front of the existing building line. In this area of the City, there are no other examples of large exterior patios to the front of a building.
- *Section XV.D.2.b)2) “The shape, scale, and fenestration of new buildings or structures shall respect the established historic architectural character of the surrounding area.”*
 - The proposed patio would wrap from the middle entrance at the front of building to the front entrance at the northern end of the building, which leads to the auditorium. The primary access to the patio would be from the middle entrance. The shape of the proposed patio would follow the form of the building line. It is proposed to have a wrought iron fence surrounding the perimeter that would be similar to other styles seen in the District. The placement of the patio in front of the structure may detract from the architectural character of the former Middle School building, which is a Primary Resource.

- *Section XV.D.2.b)3) “New buildings or structures shall take into account the historic relationships of existing buildings and site features on the site.”*
 - Historically, the existing building was used as a school. There are three entrances at the front of the building. To the front of the building at the southern end of the parcel, there is a small parking area. The remainder of this front area is grass lawn with trees and some shrubs. The Applicant proposes this patio as an outdoor seating area. People accessing this patio would be coming from the building’s front middle entrance. Adjacent to the patio area would be a loading zone for buses and vehicles dropping off passengers to the building.
- *Section XV.B.5 Windows*
 - The Applicant received approval for window replacement in 2016; however, they did not receive approval for installing cement clapboard siding in the window openings on the north elevation of the building. Some of the original window openings on this side of the building were too large for a window and needed to be partially filled. The existing fill material was a beige metal panel. At the time of the window replacement, the Applicant chose to replace the metal panel with yellow cement clapboard siding. Images are included in the meeting packet of the pre-existing and the existing conditions. The Applicant is seeking retroactive approval from the HDC for this work.

She noted the applicant is willing to come back and address the Commission’s concerns.

Regarding the retroactive approval for the installation of cement board siding in the window openings on the north elevation, she noted there are no staff concerns regarding the HDC standards. She stated that while this Commission cannot comment on paint color they can comment on material being replaced.

Ms. Kimball Frank said she thinks the windows are great but the color is terrible, stands out, and does not go with the rest of the building. Mr. Marcotte agreed it looks yellow but is actually beige color and is still paintable. Chair Weber agreed about the color and that it would look better more grey as it was before. Mr. Marcotte will ask the owner, especially since this is a retroactive approval.

Mr. Marcotte said it felt the Commission would prefer a patio at grade and would like to know that definitively before going to the Planning Board.

Chair Weber opened the hearing for public comment. He recognized Mary Lou Caffrey from Bradley & Faulkner, which is located across the street from this property. She asked about the direction of patio lighting and how many people it might hold. Mr. Marcotte replied the lighting will be downcast and will not expand more than 10 feet from the patio; another reason to paint the patio grey is to reduce reflection from lighting. He does not envision the patio holding more than 20-25 people, depending on the size of tables.

Ms. Kimball Frank asked if there is any other place for the patio on the property, such as between the two buildings. Mr. Marcotte replied no, there is a cafeteria there and other areas have been reserved as accessible to residents; everything else is a parking lot or access way.

Chair Weber closed the public hearing. He said he was in favor of continuing the public hearing so recommendations about the patio can be addressed. He would prefer a lower, less visible patio with a green buffer. He thinks the retroactive windows are an improvement but the color is not preferred.

Mr. Weglinski said he is also okay with the retroactive windows but asked why the patio needs a permanent railing when it will only be used a few months of the year. He suggested a shrubbery row instead. He said it seems like unnatural materials against an important building and he does not find that acceptable.

Mr. Porschitz said it is not acceptable as shown in the rendering, but he believes and understands the benefit of patio elevation to be level with the building. He thinks measures to blend the vertical surface with the brick as well as vegetation might mitigate these issues. Mr. Weglinski said he was still unsure about where the raised platform begins and ends and does not want to see the entry compromised. Mr. Marcotte demonstrated on the rendering and said it just appears further right.

Mr. Marcotte asked for a vote on the retroactive windows at this meeting and more time to implement the Commission's recommendations on the patio. He asked if a raised patio is out of the question. Mr. Weglinski replied no, just as low as possible and blended in with the building. Ms. Kimball Frank said she is fine with the cement board siding, but asked if she could comment on the window color. Ms. Kessler replied the HDC can offer informal guidance when requested. Ms. Kimball Frank said they did not ask for guidance but because this is retroactive, she noted she does not approve of the color. Mr. Marcotte offered to discuss color with the owner.

Mr. Weglinski made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Kimball Frank.

On a vote of 3-1, the Historic District Commission approves COA-2016-06 Mod 2 for the retroactive approval for the installation of cement board siding in the window openings on the northern elevation of the existing building as described in the application submitted to the Planning Department on August 31, 2017. Ms. Kimball Frank opposed.

Mr. Weglinski made the following motion, which was seconded by Ms. Kimball Frank.

On a vote of 4-0, the Historic District Commission approves continuing the public hearing of COA-2016-06 Mod 2 until the October 18, 2017 HDC meeting.

4) Staff Updates

Ms. Kessler noted the Heritage Commission had their first of three workshops. More than 90 people attended to learn about researching old homes. The March workshop will be on old house do's and don'ts and she asked Commission members to think of any contractors they know that can provide tips for owners of older homes. The final workshop will be in June on the different architectural styles in Keene.

5) Next Meeting – October 18, 2017

6) Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Edited by Tara Kessler, Planner