

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 15, 2017 4:30 PM 2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Joslin Kimball Frank
Nancy Proctor
Hans Porschitz
Councilor Thomas Powers

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Andrew Weglinski
Peter Poanessa

1) Call to Order & Roll Call

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

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – September 20, 2017

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to approve the minutes of September 20, 2017, which was seconded by Councilor Powers.

Ms. Kimball Frank noted a correction to the minutes: in the third paragraph on page eight, she was speaking about the cement board siding color, not the window color.

The motion to approve the minutes of September 20, 2017 as amended carried unanimously.

3) Advice & Comment

- a. Monadnock Food Coop Proposed Expansion – 34 Cypress Street – Katie Sutherland of KCS Architects and Rob Hitchcock of SVE Associates will present on concept designs for a proposed expansion of the Monadnock Food Coop at 34 Cypress Street, TMP# 023-04-027-8000, which is in the Central Business District.**

Ms. Kessler noted this Commission has the capacity to provide advice and comment on plan design and concepts that will come before the Commission. It is an opportunity for applicants and Commission members to ask questions and give feedback; this discussion is non-binding and the applicant can change their designs before returning to the Commission. Ms. Sutherland and Mr. Hitchcock are seeking advice on the expansion of the Monadnock Food Coop and plan to return for a public hearing in December.

Mr. Hitchcock showed the existing Coop layout on a map as well as the proposed 5,700sf expansion. There has been a temporary gravel parking lot next to the Coop for many years that will be used for the expansion along with the existing concrete patio. This will better connect the Coop to the oval shaped area to the rear of the Coop building. This oval area is shaped by the

Coop building, the Courtyard Marriot, and the building at 51 Railroad Street. The new area will be landscaped with four to five trees and shrubbery. There are currently two pole mounted lights and they do not anticipate adding any others, though they may add four or five bollard lights for the walkway. They are also considering linear planter boxes to divide the new patio area from the walkway.

Ms. Sutherland continued that a steel pergola is planned over an elevated concrete platform on the north side of the building; this will facilitate a stage, film screening, and picnic area. The building will extend in the same line as the south entry façade with the addition of some punched brick openings of similar scale to other buildings on Main Street. The canopy over the new patio door on the east side will be smaller than the main entrance canopy. This expansion will also allow for signage facing the bike path. She said the expansion was designed to respect the existing building (a Non-Contributing Resource), for which the HDC provided a Certificate of Appropriateness in 2011. She believes the plans are consistent with the HDC design standards for a Non-Contributing Resource; the character of the building will remain unchanged – a brick and aluminum framed storefront.

Chair Weber asked if this expansion is anticipated to meet future growth and demand, including parking. Michael Faber, Coop General Manager, replied that parking is encompassed in the plan; there are 20 spaces on the east side of the lot currently used by Cheshire Medical. The hope is to relocate those parking spaces to the Wells Street Parking Garage. In total, 30 parking spaces will be added, which is more than the size of the building's demands. The store has doubled in sales since opening in 2013 and that has created many challenges, particularly for office space (some have had to relocate to other buildings), and challenges are now arising for retail space. This additional space will alleviate these challenges.

Ms. Kessler noted this application would also go before the Planning Board so this Commission only needs to focus on HDC standards.

Chair Weber asked if the expansion would be two stories. Ms. Sutherland replied no, although the appearance will be similar with a 20-ft parapet wall and screening of mechanical equipment; but there will be no mezzanine or second level. Ms. Proctor asked if they still plan on outdoor seating. Ms. Sutherland replied yes, they estimate 17 tables as opposed to the current 10.

Councilor Powers noted that there are no parking related requirements at this location because it is in the Central Business District. Chair Weber recognized Jack Dugan who went before the City Finance Committee the previous week to recommend leasing parking spaces in the Wells Garage to Cheshire Medical. He noted that this will hopefully be approved by Council the week following this meeting. He thinks this is an ideal situation for everyone as it creates more spaces for the Coop, Cheshire Medical staff and patients can park closer to their building, and the City will gain a long-term lease in an underutilized parking structure. Councilor Powers thinks this is a good approach to meet customer demand because of the high parking turnover at the Coop and Cheshire Medical.

Ms. Kessler asked about the timeline of the expansion. Mr. Dugan replied that a component of funding this project is a \$1.5 million federal Community Development Block Grant. There is still grant money available this calendar year, but the grant has been eliminated entirely from the proposed 2018 federal budget. Thus, there is a time crunch to apply for these funds before the end of the year, which is why they are seeking advice before formally applying in December. The grant application will likely not be approved until February, then it will go to the Governor and Executive Council in April; construction will not begin before summer 2018.

Chair Weber said he liked the look of the expansion and that it will match the MoCo Arts building. Ms. Sutherland noted MoCo is promoting the stage area for art events. Mr. Dugan added the pergola area will hopefully increase Coop activity levels. Chair Weber added the work that has already been done to improve the parking lot is better, safer, and more inviting. He asked if interior café size will increase as well. Mr. Faber replied they hope to expand it as well as the outdoor patio.

Ms. Sutherland said if the HDC supports this plan it would be helpful if they indicated that to the Planning Board, which will review this application before the HDC in December. The Commission provided the following comments about these conceptual designs, recognizing that is a non-binding session and that the applicant may change their conceptual plans and that a formal review will be required at a noticed public hearing.

- Landscaping, greenery, and shade trees are important.
- The proposed expansion respects the aesthetics of the current building and the surrounding Downtown.
- The back of the Coop along the oval will be better utilized.
- The continuity of overall architectural materials and design will make the expansion look like it has always been there.
- Extensive windows on the south and east sides will help with thermal performance and natural light. Although, the south façade looks like a lot of glass in the drawings, the punched brick framing will help to break up that glass.
- The pergola appears to be an excellent opportunity for entertainment, picnics, and to expand Coop events.
- The Commission is familiar enough with the building materials and the applicants do not need to bring samples to the public hearing unless there are major design changes between now and then.

Ms. Kessler will follow-up with Commission members individually about their status as member-owners of the Coop, which they will have to disclose or recuse themselves if they feel it presents a conflict of interest. It will be important to make sure there is a quorum at the December meeting so the applicants can apply for their grant.

4) Resource Ranking Update

Ms. Kessler said this item has come up and been pushed aside many times. When formed, the HDC initially ranked each building in the Historic District with a scoring system to determine if the property is a Primary, Contributing, Non-Contributing (no historic contribution or less than 50 years old), or Incompatible Resource based on the value and significance of the structure. Per HDC regulations, these rankings should be revisited every five years, but this exercise has not taken place since the Commission was established. Ms. Kessler and Chair Weber suggested forming a working group to look at the resource rankings. The Planning Department has the original calculations and scores for each building. There are a few properties new to the district that have not been ranked and some buildings that were originally ranked have been significantly rehabilitated since. This does not need to be a full review of all properties in the District, just new additions and significantly altered buildings. Chair Weber, Ms. Kimball Frank, and Mr. Porschitz volunteered for a brief 30 minute meeting with Ms. Kessler to look at the documents and determine their willingness to be in the working group. Ms. Kimball Frank may be willing to help but wants to understand the rankings better first. Ms. Kessler will follow-up to schedule an early morning or evening meeting.

5) **Staff Updates**

Ms. Kessler had no updates.

6) **Next Meeting – December 20, 2017**

7) **Adjournment**

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 5:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Tara Kessler, Planner