

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 18, 2018

4:30 PM

**2nd Floor Committee Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Andrew Weglinski, Vice Chair
Erin Benik
Hans Porschitz (Arrived Late)
Joslin Kimball Frank, Alternate

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Planning Technician
Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Nancy Proctor
Councilor Thomas Powers

1) Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM and Ms. Brunner conducted roll call.

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – May 16, 2018

Mr. Weglinski made a motion to approve the minutes of May 16, 2018, which was seconded by Ms. Kimball Frank and carried unanimously.

3) Update: Keene Walldogs Festival, “A Magical History Tour” – Discussion with Peter Poanessa about the Keene Walldogs Festival

Chair Weber welcomed Peter Poanessa and Judy Rogers to discuss the Keene Walldogs Festival. Mr. Poanessa shared pictures with the Commission of proposed buildings with approximate outlines showing the area of the walls that the murals would cover; however, because the walls are not chosen yet and the artist might change, he noted that these are just approximations. The murals will average 200 square feet or less. Ms. Rogers noted they included a list of 20 priority walls in the meeting packet. Alan Rumrill, the Executive Director of the Historical Society of Cheshire County, has been consulted on this project and he has indicated that all the proposed locations are suitable. The Commission reviewed the photos of the proposed mural locations in Keene and asked clarifying questions. Details about the anticipated 12-15 murals include the following:

- Murals will not be on the front of buildings,
- Murals will not cover historical or architectural features,
- Some murals might be visible from Main Street (e.g., Bagel Works building),
- Murals will be spread through the back allies and less-traveled parts of the City, where the murals can bring life back to the buildings and bring foot traffic to other parts of the downtown,
- Several murals will be placed on masonry surfaces that are already painted, and
- Some murals are proposed on newer buildings, like the Coop, where they will be placed on non-masonry surfaces.

Mr. Weglinski noted the murals appear designed to match the advertising era of the building; however, some are proposed on newer buildings and he does not think the murals should mimic older styles on those buildings. Mr. Poanessa replied the Walldogs only paint old-style advertisement signs, even on newer buildings. Some murals might represent the era of the building, but that is not the standard. Mr. Weglinski wonders if more modern paintings are appropriate for the newer buildings. Mr. Poanessa replied that the mural artists and sign painters will design the murals; the host community can pick the theme but the mural design is up to the Walldogs. There is no guarantee that the mural will be from the era of the building.

Chair Weber reviewed the HDC regulations relevant to this project:

- *Building Rehabilitation – Masonry, section b.5*: “If currently unpainted, masonry shall not be painted unless there is physical, pictorial, or documentary evidence that the building was historically intended to be painted.”

Mr. Poanessa recalled in the City code, the HDC is given the authority to amend the HDC regulations if it fits with the City’s overall plan. Ms. Brunner agreed the Commission has the power to amend HDC regulations, which would require a public hearing and Commission vote.

Ms. Kimball Frank noted she visited Pawcatuck, CT, where the 2017 Walldogs Festival took place. She said it was a lovely town, smaller than Keene, and she was pleasantly surprised and impressed by the beauty of the murals, how they reflect the history of the town, and how they enhance the town. Ms. Kimball Frank will share the photos with Ms. Brunner. The Commission reviewed pictures from Pawcatuck, made comments, and asked questions:

- Murals can be on raised board panels to preserve brick, though brick is preferred to ensure the legacy of the piece in town,
- Walldogs will not paint on brick in poor condition. Some walls are already painted by the City, but the Walldogs will not paint outside the designated mural area and would not paint a wall first before placing a mural. The mural size will be primed in advance,
- Tourists travel to see these exhibits, and
- Pawcatuck is an example where the City codes were changed to allow the murals with a sunset clause that reverted back after the festival; Mr. Poanessa would

prefer to amend the regulations so there is the possibility for artwork on the building in the future.

Organizers will seek community input to choose final themes for the murals at the end of September. Specific walls must be chosen and approved by the beginning of November to ensure artists have time to create designs in time for placement in June 2019. Ms. Brunner confirmed that if the Commission does not amend their regulations, the applicants will need a waiver to paint on unpainted brick. She suggested that the Board consider changes for adoption at the August meeting. If the Board is inclined to adopt changes, a public hearing could be noticed for the September meeting to all owners of property within the historic district; postage to notify property owners is handled by the City because the Board is considering the changes, not the applicant.

Chair Weber reviewed the waiver criteria to amend a regulation, which include the statement "*Strict application of these regulations would result in particularly exceptional hardship for the owner.*" He does not see how this waiver criteria applies to this project. The waiver criteria can be amended, though Chair Weber does not think this is the best option; he prefers to update the regulations. Ms. Brunner offered to draft possible amendments for the Commission to discuss. She continued listing details for each proposed building that will need HDC approval:

1. 1-3 Central Sq. – rear on Roxbury Street, east facing wall
 - a. The section of building selected for a mural is ranked as a non-contributing resource; the property itself is ranked as a primary resource.
2. 35 Main Street – Apothecary – north facing wall
 - a. The front of the building, historically called the Latchis Block (1877), is ranked as a primary resource. The back theatre that was added on (1923) is ranked as a contributing resource.
3. 3 Washington Street – City Hall – north facing wall
 - a. Constructed in 1848 & ranked as a primary resource. There is a note in the resource ranking form that says due to alterations, the police station addition could be considered a contributing resource.
4. 42 Main Street – Communications Inc. – north facing wall & south facing wall (2 walls)
 - a. Original building known as the Woolworth Building, current building constructed 1964 and ranked as a contributing resource.
5. 147 Main Street – Walpole Creamery – north facing wall
 - a. Historical name is Occhipinti Block, constructed 1926, ranked as a contributing resource.
6. 64 Main Street – Cherry Garden – south facing wall
 - a. Historic name is Phone Company Building, constructed 1973, ranked as a non-contributing resource.
7. 88 Main Street – Amicci's – south facing wall
 - a. Constructed 1930, storefront renovated in 1950s (north storefront) and 1960s (south storefront). Ranked as a contributing resource.
8. 1-9 Main Street – Urban Exchange – south facing wall

- a. Historically known as the Elliot Block, constructed in 1815 (4th floor removed ~1960), ranked as a primary resource.
9. 19 West Street – New England Photo – west facing wall
 - a. Historically known as the Howe Block, this building was constructed in 1927 and is ranked as a contributing resource.
10. 101 Main Street – Deep Roots – south facing wall
 - a. Historically known as the Exchange Building, it was constructed 1907; the south storefront aluminum and brick window system was added sometime in the 1970s. The building is ranked as a primary resource.
11. 7 Court Street – Tilly’s – north facing wall
 - a. Historical name is Museum Block, constructed 1885 and ranked as a primary resource.
12. 16 Church Street – Cracker Factory – east facing wall
 - a. Historically known as the Gurnsey Block, constructed in 1900, ranked as a primary resource.
13. 20 West Street – Comic Boom – south facing wall
 - a. Constructed 1911, known as Chase’s Block, ranked as a primary resource.

Ms. Rosie Bernardi, 51 Cottage Street, Keene, noted that the murals often deter unwanted graffiti activity; Ms. Rogers agreed.

Ms. Brunner will notify the applicants if they need to be at the August meeting.

4) **Continued Discussion & Review of Historic District Commission Regulations**

Ms. Brunner noted the Commission began discussing revisions to the HDC regulations at the May meeting. The purpose of this discussion is to consider ways to make the regulations clearer and streamline the process for applicants. The Commission asked staff to recommend revisions and Ms. Brunner included the regulations with proposed changes tracked in red in the meeting packet. She noted one addition she discussed with Chair Weber: as currently written, applicants would have to seek approval from the Board for painting on unpainted concrete masonry units. As she understood, the masonry painting prohibition was more about brick and unpainted stone masonry than concrete, so she clarified that. As proposed, applicants would not need approval to paint on unpainted concrete masonry.

Ms. Brunner continued summarizing the proposed changes to the regulations, which can be found in the meeting packet:

- Page 3, Minor Projects – repair and repointing of masonry were moved to *Minor Projects* from *Major Projects* so that staff can review applications. She also clarified the definition of *repair* with regard to masonry. In the definitions section, it would state “in terms of masonry repair, this may involve in-kind spot replacement of masonry units that are damaged or broken.” She also removed *design materials* from #2 under *Minor Projects* based on Commission discussion; if an applicant requests a waiver, they would have to come before the Commission.
- Sec. III.D #10 – corrected to be consistent with the *Minor Projects* section.

- Sec. V.C #9 & 10 – added request for information on cleaning products, etc. so that staff can make more informed decisions; same changes made in *Major Projects* to be consistent.
- Sec. XV.A.7 Renewable Energy Standards – changes made to streamline this section and make it more concise and clear.
 - She wrote a new background section that includes the importance of renewable energy systems. The overall objective is to protect historic architecture, and major considerations from the Commission include making sure that the systems are placed in the least visible location, are reversible, and do not alter the architecture and historic features of the building. Property owners are also encouraged to consult with the HDC early in their planning process.
 - Design Standards – she reworded and reorganized this section.
 - #1: Per Commission request, Ms. Brunner will clarify what *minimally visible* means in C & D. She will also add something about angle and glare; the renewable energy system on a neighboring building should not inadvertently change the appearance of a historic structure.
 - #2: she included this in case someone wants to remove historic materials for renewable energy materials, like solar shingles, when they are available in the future. The Commission decided to remove this and address it when it becomes common practice in the future.
 - #3 & 4: This section applies to all renewable energy systems, not just solar. Ms. Brunner will clarify that this is for pitched roofs only.
 - #5: The Commission agreed this should say that solar array grids should be, “regular in shape and jointed.”
- Sec. XV.B.2.b #3: removed because she cannot find a product list and staff do not have capacity to develop a list right now.

Ms. Brunner concluded summarizing changes she made to the *Definitions* section; she consulted with City Code and State definitions. The Commission agreed the changes are straightforward.

5) **Committee Membership**

6) **Staff Updates**

Ms. Brunner shared flyers for community forums on the City Code and Land Use Regulations updates.

7) **Next Meeting – August 15, 2018**

Before adjourning, the Commission discussed next steps for the Walldogs application. Ms. Brunner will draft regulation amendments to allow for the Walldogs festival for next meeting. Ms. Kimball Frank expressed concern about painting on primary resources; she suggested communicating with the Village of Pawcatuck to see if they had to make changes to their historic district regulations. She said no matter how beautiful the paintings are, the historic district is an important characteristic of our City. Ms. Brunner will contact Pawcatuck representatives.

Mr. Weglinski expressed concern about painting historic elements on modern buildings. He interpreted the application as the Walldogs replicating advertisements based on the period of the building and he does not think that makes sense for a building like the Monadnock Food Co-op; Ms. Benik agreed. Ms. Kimball Frank clarified the murals do not match the exact era of the building but the history of the town; Chair Weber agreed.

Chair Weber agreed he is hesitant about painting on the brick of primary resources, even tastefully. He suggested the Commission might have to judge each wall individually. Mr. Weglinski expressed concern about the percentage of a wall the murals will cover; Ms. Brunner replied that based on conversations with Mr. Poanessa and Ms. Rogers, most are only about 25% or less of the wall and that the areas that will be painted will have no important architectural features that would be covered up.

The Commission agreed they should judge each building individually; Ms. Brunner does not think this will hurt the project timeline and the Commission can approve/deny each wall at the September meeting. Before the August meeting, staff will draft options for how the Commission can adjust the regulations to allow this project.

8) Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planning Technician