

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 16, 2019

4:30 PM

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

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Andrew Weglinski, Vice Chair
Hans Porchitz
Nancy Proctor
Erin Benik (Left at 5:15 PM)

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Planning Technician

Members Not Present:

Councilor Thomas Powers
Joslin Kimball Frank, Alternate

Site Visit: At 4:00 PM before the meeting, Commission members conducted a site visit of 81 Court Street.

1) Call to Order & Roll Call

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

2) Election of Officers

Mr. Weglinski nominated Chair Weber to continue as HDC Chair in 2019, which Ms. Benik seconded. Chair Weber nominated Mr. Weglinski to continue as HDC Vice Chair in 2019, which Ms. Proctor seconded.

Ms. Proctor made the following motion, which Mr. Porchitz seconded. On a vote of 5-0, the Historic District Commission approved the nominations of Hanspeter Weber as Chair and Andrew Weglinski as Vice Chair of the HDC for the 2019 term.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – December 19, 2018

Mr. Weglinski moved to approve the minutes of December 19, 2019, which Ms. Benik seconded. Commission members and Ms. Brunner noted corrections to the minutes:

- Any references to Chair Weber should be eliminated; he was not present at the meeting.

- Any references to Vice Chair Weglinski should be changed to Chair Weglinski, as he acted as chair of the meeting.
- Page 2, Paragraph 1: “He stated he believes the current windows were installed around 1917-1918,” should read, “He stated he believes the prior windows were installed around 1917-1918.” Ms. Brunner will confirm this correction with the meeting audio.
- Page 2, Paragraph 2: “...two-blade T-14000 system with dyed aluminum,” should read, “...Tubelite T-14000 system with anodized aluminum.”

The motion to approve the minutes of December 19, 2018 as amended carried unanimously.

4) Public Hearing:

- a. COA-2019-01 – 81 Court Street – Joslin-Prouty House Renovations – Applicant KCS Architects, on behalf of owner Nathan Alexander, proposes renovations to the building exterior including removal of the unoriginal front porch structure and vinyl siding, restoration of the original siding and trim, construction of a new stoop and accessible ramp to match the Greek Revival style of the building, and restriping of the driveway and parking lot. The property is ranked as a Contributing Resource and is located at 81 Court Street (TMP# 568-044-000-000-000) in the Office District.**

Per Ms. Brunner’s recommendation, Ms. Proctor moved to accept application COA-2019-01 as complete, which Mr. Weglinski seconded and the Historic District Commission carried unanimously.

Katie Sutherland of KCS Architects and Mr. Alexander explained the application. Ms. Sutherland showed before and after site plans to demonstrate the proposed design intent and demolition plan. The porch proposed for demolition obscures the original front of the building and is in poor condition structurally; it leans significantly more than the site plans depict. The applicant intends to uncover as much of the original building trim and clapboard as possible under the current vinyl siding and to restore or replicate (in the Greek Revival style) as necessary. The applicant proposes to remove the unoriginal porch and reconfigure the back of the building, where the parking lot is located.

There is no accessible access to the building, so part of the project goal is to create a handicap accessible entrance, in particular for the doctor’s offices on the first floor. The intent is to create a handicap parking spot near a walkway leading to a ramp and a new stoop at the front of the building, which will be designed with the original Greek Revival style; the ramp will be granite-faced to match the building foundation. Currently, there is a pressure treated, open frame stair at the back of the building, which they also plan to enclose to match the roofline better and create a safer entrance/exit. The back of the building was added in 1981, so there should be no historical features impacted. The applicant also proposes to replace the existing side porch with one smaller of similar character. There are two existing doors to the side of the building (doctor’s offices).

Mr. Weglinski asked if there was consideration to locate the ramp closer to the accessible parking space. Ms. Sutherland replied yes, but due to height and grade differentials, a ramp at the back of the building would be twice as long as one at the front, which is cost prohibitive. Additionally, the applicant does not want to increase the size of the current parking lot because there is a City easement at the back of the lot they do not want to interfere with.

Mr. Weglinski asked about landscaping at the front of the building after the porch removal. Mr. Alexander said he intends to add new vegetation, likely different than what is there now, to replace what is removed in construction and screen the new ramp.

Chair Weber asked about the materials of the current windows. Mr. Alexander replied the front windows and those on the north side of Court Street are vinyl replacement windows. He does not plan to change them as a part of this proposal. Ms. Sutherland added the intent is to uncover and retain the existing window trim and clapboard wherever possible; where there is significant rot, they will replace the materials in-kind. She does not anticipate problems with the newer windows fitting the original trim.

Ms. Benik asked about the structural integrity of the front porch. Mr. Alexander said the porch is leaning heavily and separating, which has resulted in many exposed nails. Ms. Sutherland added that the foundations have settled on one side of the porch and thus the whole porch is sinking and separating from the building. Because the porch is not original to the building and does not fulfill the owner's needs, it is more logical to demolish it and build something more useful and appropriate to the history of the building.

Chair Weber asked for additional details about the ramp materials. In addition to new shrubbery to screen it, Ms. Sutherland said it will have granite facing, with a simple painted metal pipe rail to match the building, and a concrete surface for durability. The new stoop and steps will also be granite.

Mr. Porchitz asked if the applicant will use wood or alternate materials to replicate wood siding in-kind. Ms. Sutherland said she has only considered wood at this point. In response to Ms. Proctor, she added that etched glass, trims, and doors will all be retained.

The drawings label areas for granite facing, but Mr. Weglinski asked who enforces that after this application is approved. Ms. Brunner replied that would be a Site Plan violation so staff would inspect the property and work with the owner to return to Site Plan compliance or request modification to the original application.

Ms. Brunner explained the background of this site. This building, historically known as the Joslin-Prouty House, was built circa 1854 by Roswell Weeks. In 1855, the house was sold to Luke and Lydia Joslin of Stoddard. The house remained in the Joslin-Prouty-Perreault family for over 120 years, passing through at least five generations of the family. The house was originally used as a single family residence, however sometime

around 1875 Dr. Ira F. Prouty established a physician's office at the residence, and following his death in 1882 his son Ira J. Prouty set up offices where he practiced as a physician and surgeon. Both Ira senior and Ira junior were active community members; Ira F. Prouty served on the Keene Board of Education from 1867 to 1875 and was elected to the state legislature for the 1872-1873 term, and Ira J. Prouty served on the executive committee of the Keene Natural History Society in 1871, as City Physician in 1887, and as one of three City Health Commissioners from 1886-1887. In 1908, Prouty served as the president of the Cheshire County Automobile Association and in 1920, he organized a clinic for the detection of tuberculosis. Following the death of Ira J. Prouty in 1932, the house was used solely as a residence until 1978, when it was purchased and converted for use as offices for an accounting firm. In 1981, the property was sold to the present owner and continues to be used for offices. The Joslin-Prouty House, which was built in the Greek Revival style, is typical of the houses built along Court Street in the mid-19th century. According to the property inventory form, the character-defining features include: 2 ½ story, broad gable front house with stepped-down rear two-story ell (i.e. a wing of a building that lies perpendicular to the length of the main portion); pedimented front gable; mid 19th-century porch (later extended to create angled corner) with pointed arch spandrels and lattice-work posts; tall brick chimney on lower slope near front of house; slate roof; size and spacing of window openings; 6/6 sash; and main entrance with etched glass sidelights, transom and historic door. Major alterations include changes to the southwest corner of the porch and south gabled projection circa 1900, and the addition of vinyl siding and subsequent loss of trim, probably done sometime around 1981 when an addition was added to the rear of the building.

The applicant proposes to remove the unoriginal front porch structure and vinyl siding, restore the original siding and trim, construct a new stoop to match the Greek Revival style of the building, install an accessible ramp to the main entrance, and restripe the driveway and parking lot. Per Section III.D.1 III.D.3 "Renovation, rehabilitation, or restoration of a building or structure" this work is classified as a "Major Project" for review by the HDC. Ms. Brunner continued explaining the HDC standards relevant for this application:

Section XV.B.1.a –Building Rehabilitation – General Standards

- “1) Each building or structure shall be recognized as a physical and cultural record of its time, place and use.*
- 2) The historic character of a building or structure shall be retained and preserved.*
- 3) The removal of historic materials or alteration of features that characterize a building or structure shall be avoided.*
- 4) Deteriorated historic features significant to the building or structure shall be repaired, rather than replaced. If replacement is necessary due to extreme deterioration, the new feature shall match the historic in size, design, texture, color and, where possible, materials. The new feature shall maintain the same visual appearance as the historic feature.*
- 5) All architectural changes shall be appropriate either to the original style or appearance of the building or structure (if it has not been significantly altered)*

or to its altered style or appearance (if it has been altered within the Period of Significance and those alterations have attained significance).

6) Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.”

- Ms. Brunner said the applicant proposes to remove the existing porch structure, which is not original to the house, and replace it with a stoop that matches the Greek Revival style of the house. The applicant has noted that they were unable to attain photographs that show what the house looked like when it was constructed prior to addition of the current porch structure, however the design of the proposed stoop is typical for houses of this style that were built during the time period that the house was constructed. In addition, the applicant proposes to remove the existing vinyl siding and restore the original wood siding if possible. If the original siding cannot be repaired due to deterioration, it would be replaced in-kind with wood siding and painted white. The original trim and architectural features would be replaced based on either any evidence that is uncovered when the vinyl is removed, or based on the appearance of similar houses that were built in the same style during the same time period as this house. The architectural elevations submitted by the applicant depict the proposed trim and architectural features to be replaced.

Section XV.B.3.b –Building Rehabilitation – Wood (siding and architectural trim)

“1) Character-defining architectural trim shall be retained and repaired when technically and economically feasible. If the trim is sufficiently deteriorated that replacement is warranted, the new trim shall match the original in size, scale, placement, detailing, and ideally material. If substitute material is used, it shall convey the same visual appearance as the historic trim.

2) If replacing missing architectural trim, the appearance and material of the new trim shall be based on physical, documentary, or pictorial evidence.

3) Wood surfaces shall not be sandblasted or high-pressure washed.

4) Vinyl and aluminum siding are prohibited.”

- Ms. Brunner said the applicant proposes to replace the original wood trim features that were removed when vinyl siding was added to the building with new wood trim features that are painted white. Features to be replaced include the frieze, architrave, pilasters, and Doric capitals. The original wood siding will either be restored or replaced in-kind and painted white.

Section XV.B.6.b.1 –Building Rehabilitation – Entrances, doors and porches

“1) Historic doors, entrances, and porches, including their associated features, shall be retained or replaced in-kind. If repair is necessary, only the deteriorated element shall be repaired, through patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the deteriorated section. If replacement

Ms. Brunner noted two letters from abutters and an email of support from Steven Bragdon and Cheryl Belair provided to members at the meeting; they were received after the meeting packet was posted.

Chair Weber opened the public hearing and welcomed JC Russel (83 Court Street), who expressed his support for this application as a neighbor. He thinks the proposal is thorough and will beautify the building.

Ms. Benik said she is concerned about removing a porch from the 1900s, even though it is unoriginal. To her, it still tells a story of the home and reflects community history. She understands the economic and structural necessity to remove it, but is disappointed to see the porch go.

Chair Weber closed the public hearing. Ms. Benik made the following motion, which Mr. Porchitz seconded:

On a vote of 5-0, the Historic District Commission approved COA-2019-01 for renovations to the building exterior and site improvements to the property located at 81 Court Street (TMP# 568-044-000-000-000) as presented in the plan set titled “Alexander Office Renovations, 81 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431” prepared by KCS Architects at varying scales and dated December 21, 2018 with no conditions.

5) Continued Public Hearing:

- a. **COA- 2018-03 – 34 West Street – Retroactive Approval for Window Replacement – Applicant Greg Johnson, on behalf of owner West Street Keene LLC, requests retroactive approval for replacement of all exterior windows. A waiver is requested from Section XV.B.5.b.2 of the HDC Regulations regarding window appearance and Section XV.B.5.b.3. of the HDC Regulations regarding design materials. The property is ranked as a Primary Resource and is located at 34 West Street (TMP# 575-033-000-000-000) in the Central Business District.**

Ms. Brunner noted the Commission already accepted this application as complete; this was a continuation of the public hearing. Chair Weber opened the public hearing and welcomed Mr. Johnson, who spoke about the quote for \$27,650 to furnish and install 45 external custom muntin grids. The quote was developed at the Commission’s request and created by Indian Falls Construction, LLC, who did all work on the building interior but did not install the windows. He recalled that Mr. Weglinski noticed a deviation between the numbers of windows in the quote and the number he counted on the building. The contractor provided a quote for 45 muntin grids, while Mr. Weglinski counted only 25 windows on the building. Mr. Johnson reached out to the company that provided the quote, and learned that the 45 refers to the number of window sashes that would require a muntin grid. Mr. Johnson said he provided the Commission with all the information he has and tried to bring the building owner to this meeting; he is in Florida but sent a letter to Ms. Brunner.

Ms. Brunner recalled that the Commission requested to continue the public hearing so the applicant could return with a quote for adding custom muntin grids to all of the building

windows. The applicant provided this quote to demonstrate economic hardship of adding custom muntin grids; the applicant requested a waiver to avoid installing the grids.

Mr. Porchitz asked the applicant's preferred muntin system. Mr. Johnson said he was unsure but his recommendation to the owner would be an anodized product with a dark bronze finish. He said anything they put on the windows will be difficult to maintain, so they avoided vinyl or wood. He said ultimately, labor will be the primary cost. He said you can see the between-glass muntins from the exterior at certain angles but they are not as visible from the outside as the Commission would prefer.

Mr. Johnson and Commission members discussed a photo comparison of the windows from 2012 and today, which were included in the meeting packet. Mr. Porchitz noted the complexity of determining how the photos actually compare because the exterior appearance is different from every angle. He added that he would prefer a more substantiated quote than the one provided. Still, because the windows are compliant with thermal requirements, he intended to grant the waiver.

Ms. Brunner recalled the background of this application. The HDC initially reviewed this request at the October 3, 2018 meeting. The public hearing was continued three times to the October 17, 2018 meeting, the November 20, 2018 meeting, and the December 19, 2018 meeting. At the December 19, 2018 meeting, the HDC voted to extend the decision deadline and continue the public hearing for COA-2018-03 to the January 16, 2019 meeting to give the applicant more time to comply with the Commission's request for written documentation that demonstrates how the waiver request from Section XV.B.5.b.2 of the HDC Regulations meets the HDC waiver criteria. The Commission noted that this information could include, but is not limited to, cost estimates from the window installer as to the cost of retrofitting the windows with permanently affixed exterior muntin grids, a cost estimate for the installation of the exterior muntin grids, and/or documentation that establishes the feasibility or infeasibility of installing permanently affixed exterior muntin grids on the windows. The Commission further stated that this information should be submitted to the Community Development Department in advance of the next HDC meeting to allow time for staff review and inclusion in the HDC agenda packet. The Commission stated that no further extensions for this application shall be approved.

The applicant submitted a quote from Indian Falls Construction, LLC, which estimates that the cost to furnish and install 45 external custom muntin grids, single sided, with a dark bronzed anodized finish would be \$27,650. This quote was submitted to the Community Development Department on January 8, 2019 and was included as an attachment to the meeting packet. The applicant requests retroactive approval for the replacement of all exterior windows and requests waivers from Section XV.B.5.b.2 of the HDC Regulations regarding window appearance and Section XV.B.5.b.3. of the HDC Regulations regarding design materials. Per Section III.D.6 ("Replacement of more than two windows or doors") this work is classified as a "Major Project" for review by the HDC. The HDC criteria for granting a waiver request are:

- A. “Strict application of these regulations would result in a particular and exceptional difficulty or undue hardship upon the owner of the affected property; and*
- B. An alternative design or materials meets the design objectives stated in these regulations and in the Historic District Ordinance equally well or better than would strict compliance with these regulations; and*
- C. The waiver may be granted without substantial detriment to the intent of these regulations and the Historic District Ordinance and the public good.”*

Chair Weber closed the public hearing. He said it is disappointing this project occurred without HDC input. He understands the need to replace old windows, but the HDC should have been involved because there is a significant aesthetic difference. Because the changes already occurred and the HDC process was disrespected, he was inclined to vote against the waiver.

Mr. Weglinski agreed with Mr. Porchitz about the impact of angle, the background reflection, and outside conditions on the window appearance, visibility of divided lights, and natural muntin shadows. He also shared Chair Weber’s disappointment but was inclined to grant the waiver because Mr. Johnson provided what the Commission asked for to demonstrate financial hardship. Ms. Proctor agreed and said replicating what was there before is more complicated than it is worth, unfortunately, so she was inclined to grant the waiver. Mr. Weglinski suggested a condition of any motion stating future building restoration must refer to the condition prior to this recent renovation; otherwise, this sets the precedent of being acceptable. The Commission agreed that would be too complicated for future Commission members and in ongoing debates about what is original and historical now. Ms. Proctor also noted the unpredictability of the necessary materials being available in the future.

Mr. Porchitz suggested a compromise to ask the owners to add muntin grids to only the prominent façade facing West Street, which has six windows equivalent to 12 muntin grids. Based on the quote provided, that addition would only cost approximately \$7,000. Because the building assessment is more than \$600,000, the Commission agreed \$7,000 is only a small percentage of the building’s assessed value. Mr. Johnson raised concern about a noticeable aesthetic difference from the corners of the building, where passersby can see both the side (without muntins) and front windows (with muntins).

Before the February 2019 HDC meeting, Mr. Johnson and the Commission agreed to the following:

- Continue the public hearing to allow Mr. Johnson to return with a window manufacturer to demonstrate what installing the muntin grid would look like for *one* window, so the Commission can make an informed decision about the appearance.
 - Although the Commission stipulated at the December 2018 meeting that no further extensions would be granted, the City Attorney clarified that is not binding and the public hearing can continue.

- Mr. Johnson will work with a window manufacturer to create a mock (stick-on) muntin grid to demonstrate the different angles and perspectives. They will place this mock muntin grid on window #6 in the set of photos provided at the meeting; the window is the furthest west on the West Street facade. This is a low cost exercise to mimic the permanent product.

Mr. Weglinski made the following motion, which Mr. Porchitz seconded:

On a vote of 4-0, the Historic District Commission extended the decision deadline and continued the public hearing for COA-2018-03 to the February 20, 2019 Historic District Commission meeting in order to review a mockup that shows what an exterior muntin grid would look like on the window located on the west corner of the primary façade of the building facing West Street.

6) Staff Updates

a. Resource Ranking Subcommittee

Ms. Brunner recalled there are still approximately 20 buildings in the Historic District that are not ranked as either Primary, Contributing, Non-Contributing, or Incompatible resources. She asked Commission members to consider their interest in serving on a resource ranking subcommittee, which she will also invite a Heritage Commission member to as well. Staff will be available to support the subcommittee. Ms. Brunner will email the list of buildings that are not yet ranked to the Commission before the February meeting.

b. Committee Membership

Ms. Brunner noted she contacted Sam Temple, owner of Fire Dog Breads, a new business in the Historic District. He seemed interested initially and Ms. Brunner will follow-up about this. She also spoke to Judy Rogers from Prime Roast, but Ms. Rogers has other commitments with the Walldogs festival. Chair Weber recalled all Commission members should be actively brainstorming and recruiting possible members and sharing those ideas with Ms. Brunner.

7) Adjournment –Next Meeting Date: February 20, 2019

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 5:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Acting Planner