

**CITY OF KEENE
NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

Monday, July 22, 2019

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Chris Cusack, Vice-Chair
Michael Burke
Councilor George Hansel
Andrew Weglinski
Mayor Kendall Lane
Gary Spykman
Pamela Russell Slack

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, Asst. City
Manager/Community Development
Director
Mari Brunner, Planning Technician
Tara Kessler, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Douglas Barrett, Chairman
Martha Landry

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Vice-Chair Cusack called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and roll call was taken.

II. Minutes of Previous Meeting – June 24, 2019

A motion was made by Mayor Kendall Lane to accept the June 24, 2019 minutes. The motion was seconded by Councilor George Hansel and was unanimously approved.

III. Advice and Comment - Charles Michal, on behalf of owner Colonial Theatre Group, Inc. seeks input on proposed modifications to the main entrance and on the installation of an addition to the rear of the Colonial Theatre building located at 89 Main Street (TMP# 575-008-000-000-000). This property is 0.36 acres in size and is located in the Central Business District.

A. Public Hearing

Mr. Charles Michal of Weller and Michal Architects addressed Board on behalf of the Colonial Theater. Mr. Michal began by noting that Colonial Theater was built in 1923 and what is being attempted is to bring this 100-year old building up to date. He described the existing condition of the theater, noting that ropes and pulleys operate all mechanisms. He noted the changes being proposed require the building to go higher to allow for an open grid. The shape of the stage house also needs to be changed and the theater also needs to be deeper.

Mr. Michal went on to note this theater currently has three floors, the theater is on the first floor, offices on the second and apartments on the third floor. Mr. Michal noted the blue areas on the plan are the areas they intend to change in some way. In addition to going higher with this new

plan as well as going deeper, there is also the need to construct a building in the rear to handle the entire back of house for dressing rooms, etc.

The plan is for the building to be about 15 feet higher, which will require a special exception from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. This request has already been submitted. This building also lies within the Historic District and the plans for modifications to the building will require approval from the Historic District Commission.

Councilor Hansel asked whether the mechanical equipment in the rear would need to be moved to the rooftop units. Mr. Michal answered in the affirmative and added this is a very large mechanical system, which would need to be located on the roof.

Mr. Michal referred to a rendering of what the Colonial looks like right now and what it would look like post-construction. He noted they would not be going any closer to Main Street than they already are located. Mr. Michal went on to say they are not going to be attempting to replicate the historic detailing with this structure and explained it the Secretary of the Interiors standards state that observers should be able to figure out what are the historical elements of the building and the addition should not mimic the existing historic structure. Hence, they will be proposing exterior materials that differ from the existing building so that the new structure would look like it is an addition.

Mr. Spykman noted the proposed picture in the Board's packet looks different to what was being presented and asked whether it was correct to assume the design process is ongoing at this stage. Mr. Michal stated that was correct and that the applicant would be before the Board with a formal application in August. Mr. Spykman asked whether the loading area would be better than what exists right now. Mr. Michal stated unfortunately this area will not change, because of the limited area of this site and city parking that exists in the perimeter.

Mr. Alec Doyle Executive Director of the Colonial stated the improvements that are being made to the stage house in the interior will change the loading and unloading process; there will now be more area to unload and store boxes with this new design. It will also save on labor moving items back and forth.

Councilor Hansel felt his advice is the back house area should be much more pedestrian friendly and suggested shielding as much of the HVAC units as possible.

Mayor Lane asked about the mechanisms inside the theater, which are currently operated by hand. He asked how the new system for this operation would be. Mr. Michal stated 80% of it would still be done by hand but because of the new counter weight system the new operation would be easier to operate. The walking grid, which is located high, will be motor operated but this is a fraction of the operation. Mr. Doyle noted there are automated systems available but these are mostly used by theaters that have the same type of shows and this type of system requires programming.

The Mayor asked whether the theater will need to be shut down for a period of time while construction happens. Mr. Ted Schrantz, Chairman for the Design and Construction Committee stated they were looking at phasing the project; the front of the house is being planned for summer 2020 which is their slow period, reopen for the 2021 season and finish the rear portion during the summer of 2021.

Mr. Spykman asked what the front of the house changes are going to be. Mr. Michal explained the second floor of the Colonial is currently fully occupied by theater offices. This office area is going to be consolidated to provide for an entire suite of new restrooms which will be accessible by an elevator (the theater will be introducing an elevator). With the current design the elevator will be located on top of the two existing restrooms.

The ticket window will be taken down and there will be a much larger expanse of the lobby and bring more life to the building. There is now going to be more room for merchandising and concession. There is a room created on the second floor, which will double as a conference room and VIP Lounge. The elevator will also be moved up to the third floor, which will not be accessible by patrons. Mr. Michal added the two existing main doors are going to be moved closer to Main Street (the current existing slope of the entryway will be eliminated).

Mr. Schrantz noted they would also be adding a family bathroom. Mr. Michal explained the access from the mezzanine to the new restrooms. He explained anything that is constructed in the rear has to be at stage level to function. The stage is about 2.5 feet above ground so an external ramp for handicap access to the stage area will be required. However, the Colonial Theater's property line runs through the area where the ramp is going to be located. He also noted the location of transformers, which sit on city owned land next to the rear of the building. This concluded the applicant's presentation. The Board wished the applicants the best for a great project in the community.

IV. Community Development Director Report

Ms. Kessler addressed the Board with reference to an update on the land use code update Project. She noted the Steering Committee for this project have been meeting twice a month since May to review draft chapters being produced by staff. At the present time about eight chapters of the Unified Development Code have been reviewed and there are five left. A draft of the updated code is set to be completed by September and then the entire draft will be presented to the Joint Committee for its review.

Ms. Kessler stated they are still working with the consultants on the downtown form based zoning ordinance. Once staff has a draft they are comfortable with they will be conducting public workshops to get feedback (early September). There have also been monthly meetings with the development community.

V. New Business

VI. Upcoming Dates of Interest – August 2019

Planning Board Meeting – August 26; 6:30 PM

Planning Board Steering Committee – August 9; 11:30 AM

Joint PB/PLD Committee – August 12; 6:30 PM

Planning Board Site Visits – August 21, 8:00 AM – To Be Confirmed

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Krishni Pahl
Minute Taker

Reviewed by: Tara Kessler, Senior Planner