

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

4:00 PM

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

Members Present:

Rose Carey, Chair
Susan D'Egidio, Vice Chair
Charlotte Schuerman
Cauley Powell
Louise Zerba

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Erin Benik
Christine Houston

1) Call to Order / Roll Call

Ms. D'Egidio called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Minutes of September 11, 2019

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the minutes of September 11, 2019. Ms. Powell seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Rose Carey arrived at 4:02 PM.

3) CLG Grant FY 2020 Urban Barn Survey

Ms. Kessler stated that the grant agreement has been approved by the Division of Historical Resources, approved by the City Council, and signed and executed, and is ready to go. She continued that the City will be issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) but has not yet been able to dedicate staff time to it. The draft is started and needs to be finalized. It is a \$15,000 grant award, and she/the Community Development Department will talk with the Purchasing Department about the best process for soliciting consultant services. She feels they are still on track for having a consultant come and do the work in the spring.

Ms. Zerba asked if she needs the Heritage Commission's approval to issue the RFP. Ms. Kessler replied that it is preferred to have the Commission's input on a draft. She continued that either she could send it electronically and members could give her comments individually, or the Commission could give her the authority to work with Chair Carey.

Ms. Zerba made a motion for the Heritage Commission to authorize Ms. Kessler to work with Chair Rose Carey to do whatever is necessary to issue the RFP for the Historic Barn Inventory. Ms. D'Egidio seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) CLG Grant FY 2021 Letter of Intent

Ms. Kessler stated that the City is one of 21 communities in the state considered "Certified Local Government Communities." She continued that they are eligible for funding that comes from the Division of Historical Resources, through the Department of Interior. The National Historical Preservation Act money gets directed to states and they open up grant rounds to the Certified Local Government communities to apply for activities such as historic resource surveys, like the one the Heritage Commission is doing for the barn inventory. The Commission has used this money for supporting workshops and outreach events. It can be used for bricks and mortar projects but that is competitive and it is hard to get funding. There is a match requirement. If the Commission were doing, say, a historic survey of a neighborhood, that is 100% reimbursed by the federal government, but if they were going to do outreach activities for that, it would require a 40% match requirement locally. Anything else other than a survey requires a 40% match locally. The City submits a letter saying what the Commission is interested in doing, by December 1, and the Division of Historical Resources let them know if that is a good idea, and it would be competitive in a grant round. Usually the application is due in January or February and about a month later, they would hear whether they were awarded the grant. This year, they received the most they had ever applied for, \$15,000 for the survey. In previous years, it has been between \$3,000 and \$5,000.

Ms. Zerba asked if the letter of intent would be for continuing the barn survey. Ms. Kessler replied that they have funding for the barn survey for FY 2020. She continued that this would be a new round, for FY 2021.

Ms. Kessler stated that at the last meeting they discussed the Stone Arch Bridge project. She continued that she learned that there is federal transportation money available for projects like that but that grant round got pushed out for three or four more years. The urgency in the City for planning the Stone Arch Bridge project has been pushed out a little. But for the final improvements of adding capstones to the Bridge, it would be prudent to begin seeking funding for design work.

Ms. Zerba asked what the time limitation is once the letter of intent has been approved. Ms. Kessler replied that they would be notified of the award in the spring, and the grant would be

executed July 1 at the earliest, and they would have until September 30, 2021 to complete everything.

Ms. Zerba asked what would happen if the City could not meet that deadline. Ms. Kessler replied that they would request to extend the grant agreement, although the Division of Historical Resources limits how long you can extend it for. She continued that they do not want to apply for something they cannot get done in a year.

Chair Carey asked if they should focus on a specific aspect of the bridge, so they know they could get it done. Ms. Kessler replied that the Stone Arch Bridge project has become part of a bigger one, which the City Engineer has named the "Transportation Heritage Trail." A component of the Stone Arch Bridge work could be hiring someone to do a design for what the work would look like to restore the capstones and to spec out the costs.

Ms. Zerba asked, was not that done previously? Ms. Kessler replied no. She continued that the previous contractor gave a rough estimate that the City does not think is realistic. They did not have much to back up the quote. The City does not know what the cost would be; they need to have a design to get an estimate. That is something they could apply for. She has tried to speak with Amy Dixon from the Division of Historical Resources about the eligibility of something related to the Stone Arch Bridge for the CLG Grant, but they have not been able to connect yet. She can do that before December 1, if this is one of the Commission's top items.

Ms. Zerba asked if the Stone Arch Bridge on Court Street needs research done. Ms. D'Egidio asked if it is in disrepair. Ms. Zerba replied that she does not know. Ms. Kessler replied that she does not think they have a historic resource inventory documented for it. She continued that she does not believe anything has been done but she is not sure. Ms. Zerba replied that she has a feeling nothing has been done, so that is another possibility. Ms. Kessler replied that they could hire someone to do that work. She continued that it would potentially be background work and investigation into whether it is eligible to be on the register.

Ms. Zerba made a motion for the Heritage Commission to authorize Ms. Kessler and Ms. Carey to proceed with this.

Ms. Kessler stated that staff needs to know what projects this group is interested in applying for to include in a Letter of Intent. Chair Carey stated that they need to broaden their scope to think about what else is out there. She continued that a second Stone Arch Bridge is of interest, agreed that they should survey it, though.

Ms. Kessler asked about workshops. Chair Carey replied yes, and maybe there is a different way to support the Transportation Heritage Trail, such as increasing public awareness, doing outreach, or clearing some of what is already in existence to bring awareness to it.

Ms. Zerba replied that maybe that could be done in conjunction with Pathways for Keene. Ms. Kessler replied yes, members from Pathways are in the City's Bicycle Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC). She continued that they would be a partner with this, and they also have their own master plan. One of the BPPAC's priorities is the Cheshire Rail Trail Phase IV, which is the continuation of the trail from Eastern Avenue to the Stone Arch Bridge.

Ms. Powell stated that she was confused by the discussion in last month's meeting minutes, during which people were talking as if the Stone Arch Bridge is not accessible. She continued that she has been up there and did not realize people were not supposed to be – many people bike on it.

Discussion ensued and Ms. Kessler stated that the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) owns it, not the City. She continued that there is no fall protection/railing.

Ms. Kessler asked if the group could identify their top 3 projects and prioritize them. She can pursue the group's top project in a letter of intent, but if Ms. Dixon suggests that is unlikely to get funding, she can move down the list.

Chair Carey stated that she would like to meet with Pathways for Keene (PFK) and the City's Bicycle Pedestrian Pathways Advisory Committee (BPPAC) to discuss their interest and plans for the Transportation Heritage Trail. Ms. Kessler replied that should could coordinate with Will Schoefmann, the staff liaison for BPPAC, to arrange for a time to meet with BPPAC and potentially PFK members.

Chair Carey stated that the outreach piece on the Transportation Heritage Trail is number three. Ms. D'Egidio stated that number one is the Stone Arch Bridge, and number two is the Stone Arch Bridge on Court Street. Ms. Zerba asked if the Court Street Stone Arch Bridge proposal would be for a historic resource inventory. Chair Carey responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Kessler asked if the group is their number one priority is the design for the Stone Arch Bridge capstones, and the second is a resource inventory for the Stone Arch Bridge on Court Street, and the third is outreach/building support for the bigger plan for the Transportation Heritage Trail. Chair Carey and others replied yes.

Chair Carey stated that she agrees with Ms. Zerba that outreach should be priority two and the Stone Arch Bridge on Court Street inventory should be priority three. Ms. Zerba replied that she changed her mind; she could go either way with the order. She continued that maybe they would get enough money to do more than one project. The capstone design would take most of the money. Ms. Kessler replied yes, that would probably be the scale of this grant funding.

Chair Carey asked if the capstones were put back on the Stone Arch Bridge on Court Street. Ms. Kessler replied that she does not know, but she can ask the Public Works Department.

Ms. Powell asked, what about the follow-up to the barn survey, and how they might use that information or expand on it? Ms. Zerba stated that last month's meeting minutes said that Commission members were going to receive a copy of what was said on the barn tour. Chair Carey replied that she thought she sent that out. Ms. Kessler stated that she will send that out to everyone right now.

Chair Carey stated that she still would like to do something with the write-ups from these walking tours, which the group has not yet pursued, such as posting them on the City's website, the Chamber of Commerce's website, or publishing them in some other way. She would like to get all of the work that they have done out there so it is available to people. Ms. Zerba stated that she thinks it is important. Chair Carey agreed and continued that the Commission has two years of work that they have not completed by getting it out to the public. Ms. D'Egidio agreed and stated that at the tour, people expressed interest in having a copy of it. Chair Carey replied that they could even consider printed material, although that would cost money.

Ms. Kessler stated that another CLG grant project idea could be printing the material, or having someone other than her put the information online as a virtual walking tour. Ms. Powell replied that the town she grew up in had a walking tour via headset that patrons could borrow from the library. Ms. Kessler stated that if the group is interested in adding this to the project list, they could think about institutionalizing a formal walking tour. Chair Carey replied yes. Ms. Zerba replied yes, but initially she likes the idea of just having it online, so they do not have to pay for it to be published. Chair Carey replied that even getting it on a website requires man-hours.

Ms. Kessler asked where this project falls on the list of priorities. Ms. Zerba replied that she would say priority two, because they should probably finish work they start. Chair Carey agreed. Ms. Kessler replied that she thinks the Division of Historical Resources would be open to it if she combined them in a letter of intent. Ms. Powell stated that it might depend on Chair Carey's discussion with the BPPAC Chair. Chair Carey stated that the question is whether they can get it into a letter by December 1. Ms. Kessler noted that should would draft the Letter of Intent with these priorities included.

- 5) **Stone Arch Bridge Improvements / Proposed Keene Transportation Heritage Trail**
- 6) **Updates**
 - a. **Demolition Review Subcommittee** – no demolition to report
- 7) **New or Other Business**

Chair Carey stated that the Commission is in need of another member. Ms. Kessler replied that they have two vacancies. She continued that they used to have a City Councilor on the committee. They could ask the new mayor if there is a Councilor who is interested. Discussion ensued about how this has worked in the past/who it was.

Chair Carey asked Ms. Kessler about the zoning email she sent out. Ms. Kessler distributed copies of a handout. She stated that on November 19 the City will have released a proposed draft

of changes to the downtown zoning ordinance. She continued that there will be informational sessions on November 19 and 20 to review what is being proposed and give the public – citizens, property owners, and anyone who is interested – the tools they need to get prepared for more in depth workshops in December. The sessions on the 19th and 20th are just introductory. The proposal is to change the boundaries of the downtown zoning districts, creating one larger downtown district with sub-districts within it, so there are regulations that preserve the pattern of development that exists and that they want to see, like building placement and types of activities. This zoning update would give the City tools to ensure that if new development were happening on Main Street it would continue to feel like Main Street. She gave examples.

Ms. Kessler continued that they want to preserve that pattern of development in other areas. They are proposing a “transition zone,” like a buffer between businesses and residences. She explained it more, and stated that the information sessions will provide the details. Discussion ensued about locations, parking, and what the definition of “downtown” is. Ms. Kessler stated that the boundaries of “downtown” are still open for discussion.

Ms. D’Egidio asked if the zoning updates affect the Historic District. Ms. Kessler replied yes, the City has been proposing changes to that. She continued that the City is proposing that new development goes just to the Planning Board for review, and not to the Historic District Commission first. It is hard to apply Historic District Standards to new development.

Ms. D’Egidio asked, what exists now in the Historic District that needs protecting would not be lost or shrunk, right? Ms. Kessler replied no, it would not; the Historic District boundaries would remain the same. She continued that some of the regulations might change. Demolition proposals would still need to go to the Historic District Commission. The City foresees their role to be more about addressing the historic elements of the district and less about focusing on things like new buildings, and aspects of development the Planning Board already looks at.

Discussion continued about the proposed zoning changes.

8) Next Meeting – January 8, 2020

Chair Carey stated that they will be selecting officers at the January meeting, so people should think about who to nominate for Chair or Vice Chair. She continued that they should also think about who to nominate for new members.

9) Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:47 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed & Edited by, Tara Kessler, Senior Planner