

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, September 16, 2020**

**4:30 PM**

**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**Members Present:**

Andrew Weglinski, Chair  
Councilor Catherine Workman  
Hans Porschitz  
Nancy Proctor  
Hope Benik  
Tia Hockett, Alternate (Voting)

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Planner  
Megan Fortson, Planning Technician

**Members Not Present:**

Joslin Kimball Frank, Alternate  
David Bergeron, Alternate  
Hanspeter Weber, Alternate  
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

**1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Weglinski read the executive order authorizing a remote meeting – Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 – and he then called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM. Pursuant to this order, Ms. Brunner called roll and members present, all of whom called alone, stated their locations. The Chairman, Councilor Workman, and Ms. Hockett called from their home addresses. Ms. Benik called from 34 Court Street, Ms. Proctor called from 69 Island Street, and Mr. Porschitz called from 6 Blackjack Crossing in Walpole, NH.

**2) Minutes of Previous Meetings**

- a. August 19, 2020 Historic District Commission Minutes**
- b. August 19, 2020 Joint Meeting of the Historic District Commission and Heritage Commission**

Councilor Workman moved to adopt the minutes of the August 19, 2020 Historic District Commission meeting and August 19, 2020 joint meeting of the Historic District Commission and Heritage Commission, which Ms. Proctor seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3) **Public Hearings:**

- a. **COA-2013-05, Modification #1 – Bennett Block Renovations – 32-34 Washington St – Applicant Stevens & Associates, on behalf of owner Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation, proposes to renovate the Bennet Block building, including restoration of the storefront and replacement of all windows and doors. The property is ranked as a Primary Resource and is located at 32-34 Washington St (TMP# 568-065-000) in the Central Business District.**

Ms. Brunner said that the Applicant requested an exemption from providing a site plan because no modifications were proposed to the site. She said that Staff recommends granting that exemption and accepting this application as complete. Mr. Porschitz recommended accepting application COA-2013-05, Modification #1 as complete, which Ms. Benik seconded and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Chair Weglinski welcomed Diane Abate (calling alone from her home address) of Stevens & Associates, who represented the owner, Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation. Ms. Abate showed a series of photos included in the [meeting packet](#) to describe the proposed changes. She said that this building, located at 32-34 Washington Street, was built in approximately 1926 with a pared-down art deco style, including many geometric forms and pilasters on the storefront façade. She referenced the storefront elevation stating that changes over time were apparent. Ms. Abate continued using photos to describe changes proposed in the scope of work that are relevant to the Historic District Commission (HDC):

1. Windows – Replace upper residential windows on the south, east, and north elevations and the lower windows visible on the north elevation above electrical meters that would be replaced outside this scope of work. The Applicant also sought to replace the windows on the storefront elevation as well if the budget allows for uniformity. The proposal is to remove and replace the deteriorated double-hung white vinyl windows (with exterior storm windows) with Pell Impervia fiberglass windows, all within the existing brick openings. She showed a cut sheet of the proposed windows from the manufacturer to demonstrate the proposed dark bronze color that would be used on all windows replaced.
2. Doors – Replace all exterior doors to be both more uniform and energy efficient than the existing. The existing storefront wood trim is mostly rotting and blistering with paint peeling. There are two entry doors from Washington Street and two tenant doors on the south façade. There is A.D.A. access for the first floor community multipurpose space and the proposal is to replace that door and sidelight to also be more cohesive. Ms. Abate showed photos of door options from the manufacturer to demonstrate the style and dark bronze color that matches the proposed windows.
3. Elevator Penthouse – This structure is minimally visible from Washington Street. The Applicant proposed replacing the deteriorated wood lap siding with HardiePlank lap

siding, which would match the profile and width of the existing wood slats. The Applicant did not propose changes to the height or shape of the penthouse.

4. Storefront Façade – In the one historic photo available from 1938 that shows the façade minimally, a transom line is visible that is aligned with the storefront and upper windows. Ms. Abate said that although it is a black and white photo, the transom appeared to be a lighter color, and the Applicant sought to repaint the transom in a cream color. To improve the building's appearance and return to an art deco aesthetic within a reasonable budget, the Applicant sought to further strengthen the building's lines by mimicking the storefront transom over the doors as well, despite not proposing glass in those locations. To enhance that aesthetic further, the Applicant sought to resurface the spandrel stucco in the same cream color proposed for the transoms, pilasters, and storefront trim work. The Applicant proposed removing the applied geometric panels on the storefront, for which Ms. Abate could find no historic precedent. Finally, decorative grills on the lower storefront façade were proposed for replacement with a style she depicted in a photo.

Mr. Porschitz stated that while he agreed with the proposal to remove the applied geometric panels for the sake of aesthetic uniformity, he asked his peers what the HDC's purview was on maintaining a feature if it cannot be proven whether it was in the original historic design. From her perspective, Ms. Abate stated her confidence that the panels were not original but applied much later and said the proposed elevation would reflect better its historic likelihood. She said data was simply unavailable beyond the photo presented to say definitively what was on the original building beyond the upper windows and transom. Chair Weglinski said the decorative applications did not seem like a significant architectural feature, that the work occurred before the HDC was established, and so it is difficult to say definitively without examining extensive archives. The Chairman said it might be more significant if it were a question of removing the well-known insignia closer to the roof but he was unsure that the smaller geometric applications were important at present. Ms. Proctor agreed with the Chairman, and stated that the Applicant did their best with the resources available, and thought the proposal looked good. The Chairman and Mr. Porschitz agreed that there is subjectivity in interpreting historical architecture for which data does not exist.

Chair Weglinski referenced page 26 in the meeting packet where the color "Black Bean" was circled for the door color, which was different than the dark bronze Ms. Abate had described. Ms. Abate confirmed that the color was circled by mistake and that all windows and doors would be replaced to match in the same dark brown/bronze color.

The Chairman requested Staff comments and Ms. Brunner reported that this property was first owned by Josiah Richardson, who sold the lot to Nathaniel Briggs in 1803, who owned the lot until 1806 and constructed a house there during that time. That house was then sold to Whitcomb French and used as a livery stable for some time. Eventually the building was moved to 77 Spring Street. The building located at 32-34 Washington Street today was constructed in 1926 by Frank J. Bennett to serve as a mixed-use building with retail space on the first floor and

apartments on the upper floors. The current building owner, Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation, acquired the property in 2009.

Ms. Brunner said this building's design incorporates many significant architectural features, including the three-story brick commercial block; a façade clad with buff brick, which wraps around two bays on the side elevations; cast stone decorative details, including a diamond-shaped tablet inscribed with a "B" above the 3<sup>rd</sup> story windows, as well as cast stone sills and window corner blocks; a stepped roof parapet; size and spacing of window openings; and storefront divisions of buff brick piers. Despite major alterations to the storefront over time, including replacement of window frames and doors, Ms. Brunner said all of the architectural features described above still result in this building's ranking as a Primary Resource.

Ms. Brunner continued explaining the Applicant's proposed changes. The Applicant proposed to remove and relocate the existing electrical panels and meters from their current locations on the rear of the building and on the adjacent building to be inside, which is outside HDC purview because they will not be visible. Ms. Brunner explained that the Applicant proposes to replace the existing wood trim and sheathing on the storefront and the wood siding on the elevator penthouse, which is located on the south end of the roof and is partially visible from Washington Street. The Applicant described rotting conditions of the existing wood siding and proposed replacing it with HardiePlank Lap Siding in a khaki color that would match the lap width of existing wood siding. Ms. Brunner said the Applicant had confirmed that the overall size and shape of the elevator penthouse would remain the same.

Regarding windows, Ms. Brunner said the Applicant proposes to replace all 46 windows on the second and third floors and three first-floor windows on the north façade. The Applicant also proposed to replace the storefront windows on the north façade of the building. The existing windows on the upper floors are single-pane white vinyl, with exterior bronze storm windows. The Applicant proposes to replace all 49 windows with Pella Impervia Fiberglass Double Hung windows in a dark brown/bronze finish in various sizes to match the current brick openings. The Applicant confirmed that the new windows would match the size and configuration of the existing windows and replaced in those same openings.

Regarding doors, Ms. Brunner said the Applicant proposed to replace six existing exterior doors, including one on the south façade, two on the east façade, and three on the north façade. Doors on the south and north façades of the building are unoriginal to the building. The tenant entrance door on the south façade is proposed to be replaced with a three foot by seven foot fiberglass door with a central glass panel and transom. Two of the three doors on the north façade are proposed to be replaced with three foot by seven foot Polystyrene Foam Core doors and one door is proposed to be replaced with a three foot by seven foot fiber glass door with a vision panel.

Regarding the storefront, Ms. Brunner said the Applicant proposes several modifications to replace the existing storefront trim, baseboards, windows, and doors. The Applicant proposed to replace the existing wood storefront trim with new Azek PVC trim in a "warm white/creme

tone.” The Applicant stated that the existing wood trim and sheathing is deteriorated and cracking, which necessitates replacing with new material. The replacement trim and sheathing would retain the same scale as the existing sheathing and pilaster covers. However, based on the proposed elevations submitted by the Applicant and as the Commission discussed during this hearing, Ms. Brunner noted that some of the detailing in the existing wood trim would be lost with this replacement, including the raised panels on three vertical columns and in the baseboards below the storefront windows. This same trim would also be used to create panels that would be installed above the storefront entryways. In addition, the Applicant proposed to re-surface the existing light brown lintel by applying a cream-colored stucco skim coat. Ms. Brunner said the Applicant believed the new lintel color would emphasize its character-defining role within the building façade and serve to visually separate the retail uses on the first floor from the residential uses on the upper floors.

Ms. Brunner briefly reviewed the HDC regulations relevant to this application. She said the Applicant proposes to replace the existing storefront windows with Pella Impervia Fixed Frame Windows. In the project narrative, the Applicant stated that the new storefront windows would “more closely resemble proportions of what might be expected for this building.” Section XV.B.5.b.4 of the HDC Regulations specifies that “If the size or location of the original opening has been altered, owners shall be encouraged to restore those openings if replacing windows.” The Applicant did find one historic photo to support their proposal that showed windows extending as high as the lintel. Ms. Brunner said the Applicant also proposed to enlarge the storefront windows to their original size, using a portion of the storefront window that is visible in the historic photo as a guide. She said the property inventory form noted that, “Should the storefront be renovated in the future, strong consideration should be given to introducing full-height glazing in the display windows and restoring the lintel, which was probably stucco or (and more likely) cast stone,” and Ms. Brunner thought the applicant made an effort to do so. Below the new windows, the Applicant also proposes to install decorative metal architectural grilles in a bronze satin finish or medium bronze powder coat color, with the stated goal to give the storefront a more cohesive appearance. Finally, Ms. Brunner said the Applicant proposes to replace the two existing doors on the building's east façade, which are part of the storefront. The door on the south end of the façade is proposed to be replaced with a three foot by seven foot Fiber Glass Door with a side lite, and the door in the center of the storefront is proposed to be replaced with a three foot by seven foot Fiber Glass Door with a center glass panel. The finish of all new doors will match the dark brown/bronze finish of the new windows.

With no questions, the Chairman closed the public hearing. Commissioners also presented no further questions or deliberation.

Ms. Proctor made the following motion, which Councilor Workman seconded, and a roll call vote proceeded. With a vote of 6-0, the Historic District Commission approved COA-2013-05, Modification #1 for renovations to the Bennett Block building located at 32- 34 Washington St (TMP# 568-065-000) as presented in the elevations identified as “Proposed Façade/Existing

Façade” prepared by Stevens & Associates, P.C. at a scale of 3/16 inch = 1 foot and dated February 20, 2018 with no conditions.

**4) Collaboration with Heritage Commission**

In August 2020, the HDC and Heritage Commission agreed to meet more often and Chair Weglinski asked for any Staff updates. Ms. Brunner summarized the August discussion of the Certified Local Government (CLG) grants offered annually, with applications due in November. The program funds 100% of approved research projects and 60% of education projects, with an in-kind match allowed. Keene has a CLG grant currently for a carriage barn inventory and another application would be submitted this November to fund web developer support to create a public database of historic properties. In August, the two Commissions discussed ideas for future applications including: an Emerald Street resource inventory; aspects of the Stone Arch Bridge project; education and outreach to Downtown Historic District property owners to deter retroactive approvals; and HDC member training.

Given the time it takes to prepare these grant applications, Ms. Brunner suggested that the two Commissions hold their annual joint meeting in July or August moving forward. The Chairman supported the two Commissions collaborating and suggested that if more is needed throughout the year, perhaps a joint subcommittee could form. Ms. Brunner would confirm what month the Heritage Commission prefers. She recalled that City Code mandates an HDC member liaison to the Heritage Commission and there is not one currently; contact Ms. Brunner if interested.

**5) Staff Updates**

**a. Committee Membership**

The final vacant membership has been filled by Mr. Russ Fleming, who will be confirmed at the September 17, 2020 City Council meeting.

**6) New Business**

Per the Chairman's request, Ms. Brunner will agendize the nomination of a Vice Chair for the October meeting. Members were asked to consider filling that role in the interim.

**7) Next Meeting – October 21, 2020**

**8) Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Weglinski adjourned the meeting at 5:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker  
September 18, 2020  
Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner