

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

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

**Wednesday, December 16, 2020**

**4:30 PM**

**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**Members Present:**

Andrew Weglinski, Chair  
Russ Fleming, Vice Chair  
Councilor Catherine Workman  
Hans Porschitz  
Hope Benik

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Planner  
Megan Fortson, Planning Technician

**Members Not Present:**

Sam Temple  
Joslin Kimball Frank, Alternate  
Hanspeter Weber, Alternate  
David Bergeron, Alternate  
Tia Hockett, Alternate  
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

**1) Call to Order & 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 stated their locations and who was in the room with them.

**2) Minutes of the October 21, 2020 Meeting**

Vice Chair Fleming moved to approve the minutes of October 21, 2020, which Ms. Benik seconded, and the motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote in favor.

**3) Public Hearing**

- a. COA-2019-07, Modification #1 – 89 Main St. – Alterations to Colonial Theatre Addition – Applicant Weller & Michal Architects, on behalf of owner The Colonial Theatre Group, proposes to reduce the height of the Colonial Theatre addition from 75-ft to 69-ft 10-in, alter the layout and size of the exterior metal panel siding, and change the screening for rooftop mechanical equipment from a full enclosure to**

**partial screening with parapet walls. The property is located at 89 Main St. (TMP# 575-008-000) in the Central Business District and is ranked as a Primary Resource.**

The Applicant has requested an exemption from providing a site plan as no changes to the site were proposed at this time. Ms. Brunner recommended that the Commission grant the requested exemption and find this application to be complete. Vice Chair Fleming moved to grant the exemption and accept Application COA-2019-07, Modification #1, as complete, which Mr. Porschitz seconded, and the motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote in favor.

Architect Charles Michal, on behalf of the Colonial Theater Group, presented on the application. He noted that this is a modification to a project that was previously approved by the HDC in 2019. Mr. Michal showed plans for the site and indicated where the building would increase at the rear of the property – approximately 150' west of Main Street – to accommodate an updated stage system. As a result of the addition, HVAC equipment that is ground-mounted currently is being relocated to the roof. He used images to show the difference between what was approved in 2019 and what is currently proposed. The building height was lowered from what was approved previously, bringing the bulk of the building down, while trying to maintain the aesthetic features that were approved and are important to The Colonial. Mr. Michal addressed the modification to the exterior materials specifically, saying that the color scheme remains the same with varying degrees of color, the size of metal skin remains the same; he recalled that the color and metal scheme were chosen to avoid the building appearing monolithic, which was described in more detail at the 2019 meeting. The only change is that the building profile would be lower now and so the skyline profile is more modest than in the prior approval.

Mr. Michal continued showing the view of the building from the Commercial Street parking lot, where he said the majority of the change was visible. In the original design, in order to conceal the large rooftop mechanical equipment, this Commission approved a new third story block at the back of the building. The new proposal is to use parapet walls to conceal the air handling units. Mr. Michal continued, however, that the duct work must enter the stage area at particular heights that he showed, to avoid the stage house machinery and pass to the auditorium. This duct work will be visible; however, it will be painted to match the color of the building. Mr. Michal concluded by showing the original plans that were approved.

Having not been a member of the Commission in 2019, Vice Chair Fleming asked for a brief explanation of the two existing Eversource transformers that sit in the parking lot and power the theater and adjacent properties, which Mr. Michal provided. Vice Chair Fleming said he never noticed them and Mr. Michal said that The Colonial plans to approach Eversource to paint those transformers to match the building.

Mr. Porschitz referred to views Mr. Michal provided of the north and south elevations and asked if they are real, noting that the ductwork appeared much more pronounced on the north view. He expected to see from the south the ductwork on the north side as well. Mr. Michal said there is a difference between the ductwork on the north and south sides due to northern ductwork moving further west to enter the stage house at the appropriate location. What is unseen in the flat southern elevation drawing is the northern ductwork that is behind and beyond what is illustrated, but no one would ever see the building from the vantage of these flat drawings. He said the northern ductwork would not be visible from Emerald Street.

Chair Weglinski understood that the southern ductwork was new but asked whether the northern ductwork was new as well. Mr. Michal said that all ductwork is new west of the stage. Chair Weglinski continued that the view of the theater is prominent from Gilbo Avenue and asked if there was thought to not enclose but rather screen from certain vantage points. Mr. Michal referenced glazed windows on that second floor façade, above which there is a wall that is almost 8' tall in an effort to screen the equipment, because the actual roofline is not at the top of the brick to the west but rather south at least 4' above the roof. Mr. Michal said everything he just cited was in an effort to conceal the equipment and it was decided not prudent to increase the parapet height to the line at which it would completely conceal the ductwork.

Mr. Porschitz noted that in the design approved originally it appeared that the outside metal panels would be flat, while the modified renderings show some corrugations. He asked if it could be assumed that there would be a mix of corrugated and flat metal panels. Mr. Michal said yes, that scheme was chosen deliberately to add texture and color on each façade to a small degree in an effort to break-up massing.

The Chairman said that on his computer screen the renderings appeared blue like the Kingsbury factory and asked if that was the intent. Mr. Michal said yes and recalled the original approval to use the color "Tahoe Blue," with some grey incorporated. The Community Development Department has a physical sample of the paint color.

Ms. Brunner stated that Per Section IX.C of the HDC regulations, "Modifications of Approved Projects," this work is classified as a "Major Project" for review by the HDC. As such, Ms. Brunner reviewed the HDC standards relevant to this application.

*5. Utility, Service and Mechanical Equipment b) Design Standards 1) On commercial and industrial buildings, mechanical equipment, such as compressor units, shall be set back on the roof of the building, so as to be minimally visible, or ground-mounted toward the rear of the building, with appropriate screening or landscaping to minimize visibility. 2) Every effort shall be made to position heating and air-conditioning equipment, fire alarm panels, telecommunications equipment, satellite dishes, and free-standing antennas and other equipment as low to the ground as possible, and where they are not readily visible from the public right-of-way. 3) New mechanical supply lines, pipes and ductwork shall be placed in inconspicuous locations and/or concealed with architectural elements, such as downspouts.*

Ms. Brunner recalled that in 2019, the Applicant received approval from the HDC to place all mechanical equipment and ductwork within an enclosure that would completely screen the equipment from view. Due to budget constraints, the Applicant proposed in this modification to install the mechanical equipment and ductwork on the roof of the addition, rather than place it inside an enclosure. The equipment and ductwork would be partially screened by parapet walls on the south wall (4-ft above roof surface), west wall (4-ft above roof surface), and north wall (9-ft above roof surface). The portion of the ductwork and equipment that would be visible would be painted to match the siding of the new addition to minimize visibility. As the building would be built up to the property line, there is no room to install this equipment on the ground. In addition, although the ductwork would be partially exposed to view, it would be less exposed than it is under current (pre-construction) conditions.

*1. Additions b) Design Standards -- Primary and Contributing resources 3) Additions shall be compatible in size and scale with the main building. 4) Additions that alter the front of the building, or that substantially increase the building's height above adjacent or nearby rooflines, shall not be allowed, unless it can be documented that the addition is historically appropriate for the building.*

Ms. Brunner continued that in 2019, the Applicant received approval to construct a 2,800-sf addition to the rear of the existing building that would be about 75 feet above grade. The Applicant received a Special Exception from Section 102-791 ("Basic Zone Dimensional Requirements) of the Zoning Ordinance to increase the maximum building height from 55 feet to 75 feet. In addition, the Applicant received a waiver from the HDC to permit an addition that would increase the building's height above adjacent or nearby rooflines. With this modification, the Applicant requested to reduce the height of the addition to be 69 feet and 10 inches above grade, or 12 feet taller than the existing structure. Since this request would reduce the height of the addition, it would be slightly more in keeping with the size and scale of the main building. As such, Ms. Brunner thought this standard appeared to be met.

*7) Materials used for siding on additions shall be compatible with existing materials on the building and shall be those that are common in the district. Acceptable materials include brick, stone, terra cotta, wood, metal and cement clapboard.*

Ms. Brunner recalled that the HDC approved previously two different siding materials for the new addition, including an insulated metal wall panel system (prefinished steel and/or aluminum) painted in shades of blue and gray and a brick veneer. No changes were proposed to the brick veneer product in this modification; however, the Applicant did propose to modify the layout/arrangement of the metal panels and increase their size relative to the original proposal that was approved by the HDC. In the project narrative, the Applicant stated that "The smaller discrete 'rain-screen' panel sizes planned and illustrated in COA-2019-07 have proved to be unachievable within the project budget, and the new layout uses both smooth-skinned and more three-dimensional textured skin panels to achieve project goals."

With no comments, the Chairman closed public hearing.

The Chairman stated that it appeared the Applicant made an effort to screen the equipment as best possible given that this ductwork is required and needs to remain the same size and at the same location despite being new equipment. He stated one concern that there had been many applications over the years for which screening standards were challenged and thorough thought was required. As such, he wanted to ensure Commissioners had no further comments. There was no further deliberation.

The official address of the parcel is 89 Main Street but the title of the architectural elevations in the motion below refer to the mailing address of The Colonial, 95 Main Street.

Vice Chair Fleming made the following motion, which Mr. Porschitz seconded.

On a roll call vote of 5-0, the Historic District Commission approved COA-2019-07, Modification #1 for modifications to the Colonial Theatre addition, as presented in the architectural elevations identified as “Building Elevations COA Application, 2021 Addition and Renovation, 95 Main Street Keene, NH” prepared by Weller & Michal Architects at a scale of ¼” = 1’-0” and dated December 1, 2020 with no conditions.

**4) Adoption of 2021 Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Benik moved to approve the 2021 Historic District Commission schedule, which Councilor Workman seconded, and the motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote.

**5) Staff Updates**

**a. 2020 List of Administrative Approvals**

Ms. Brunner recalled that once per year, Staff provide an update to the Commission on projects that were approved administratively during that year. Staff approved nine projects in 2020 and the full details of those projects are available for review on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of City Hall. Most of these applications met the criteria for a Minor Project as outlined in §3.C. of the regulations. In some instances (only one in 2020), if a request is for a building that is ranked as Incompatible or Non-Contributing but it technically meets the criteria of a Major Project, there is a provision that allows the Community Development Director to deem it a Minor Project due to the ranking; these decisions are made in consultation with the Chair.

Chair Weglinski said it is important for the Commission to review the projects that were approved administratively to ensure nothing was overlooked or that the Commission had no questions/concerns. He asked Commissioners to review the list and tell him or Ms. Brunner if anything seems amiss.

Vice Chair Fleming asked that acronyms be spelled out moving forward for newer Commissioners. For example, he asked what RTU meant, and Ms. Brunner replied rooftop unit.

**6) New Business**

No new business was brought forward for inclusion on the next meeting agenda.

**7) Next Meeting – January 21, 2021**

**8) Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Weglinski adjourned the meeting at 5:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker  
December 23, 2020

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner