

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

4:00 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Cauley Powell, Chair
Susan DeGidio, Vice Chair
Rose Carey
Councilor Gladys Johnsen
Louise Zerba, Alternate

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Erin Benik

Chair Powell read a prepared statement explaining how the Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04 issued by the Governor of New Hampshire, waives certain provisions of RSA 91-A (which regulates the operation of public body meetings) during the declared COVID-19 State of Emergency.

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Powell called the meeting to order at 4:06 PM. Roll call was taken.

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – January 13, 2021

Rose Carey made a motion to accept the minutes of January 13, 2021 as presented. Susan DeGidio seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) NH Preservation Award Nominations

Tara Kessler stated the annual NH Preservation Alliance Awards nominations are due March 25, 2021 and briefly covered them in case anyone had an interest in making individual, project, or entity nominations. She went over the four categories of awards, which include Restoration/Stewardship, Rehabilitation/Adaptive Use, Education and Planning, and Advocacy and Public Policy.

The Commission members inquired about eligibility requirements for the nominations. Tara Kessler stated there aren't any specifications with regards to time frames, so someone could be nominated for work completed outside of the past year. The only

requirements are a NH location and must fall under one of the four aforementioned categories.

A discussion ensued about possible nominations and the commission decided on one for each category. Their selections included:

1. Advocacy and Public Policy: Rose Carey as a representative of the Heritage Commission
2. Education and Planning: Walldog Magical History Tour
3. Restoration/Stewardship: 91 Court Street Property
4. Rehabilitation/Adaptive Use: Paragon Digital Marketing adaptive reuse of the former Grace United Methodist Church

Louise Zerba made a motion to support the previously discussed nominations for the NH Preservation Alliance Awards. Susan DeGidio seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Tara Kessler stated she will reach out to the initial round of nominees for consent and then they will plan from there.

Of note, there was interest from the commission in nominating the Stone Arch Bridge project and questions regarding the anticipated time frame for project completion. Tara Kessler stated the completion of that particular project is now part of the Transportation Heritage Trail Project. She went on to state that the city is in the process of applying for a grant with the Department of Transportation to extend the Cheshire Rail Trail from where it ends at Eastern Avenue to Route 101. She explained that this decision was made because the LCHIP grant needed for completion of the Stone Arch Bridge project requires a significant cash match, which the city decided was not in the budget for 2021. Rose Carey suggested they inform LCHIP staff that they are still working on the project and to keep them in mind for future years. Tara Kessler stated that was a great idea and suggested in April they could likely engage LCHIP staff about intents for future funding.

4) Urban Barn Inventory Project Discussion

Tara Kessler stated she has been in communication with their consultant who has narrowed down a list of about 200 properties within the study area that have a barn or carriage house 50 years or older. They asked that the Heritage Commission review the list and identify any properties that have had previous work done, as well as any properties with important structures they are aware of. That information will be used to reduce the number of properties on the list and to inform their field work, which they intend to begin within the next week or so. Tara Kessler stated that due to grant restrictions they will likely only perform formal inventories for around 40 or 50 properties. She reported that she has been working through the list of 200 properties and highlighting the buildings they already have information on. Once finished she will send the list to the commission.

5) Letter of Support for Transportation Heritage Trail

Tara Kessler reported that Chuck Redfern, representative of Pathways for Keene, has asked that the commission provide a letter of support for the Transportation Alternatives Program application. This grant would be for the extension of the Cheshire Rail Trail from Eastern Avenue to Route 101. Tara Kessler showed the commission a draft of the letter.

Rose Carey made a motion of support to send this letter as part of the Transportation Alternative Program application. Chair Powell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6) Continued Discussion on Neighborhood Heritage Project/Website

Tara Kessler stated that included in the meeting packet is a grant application submitted to the NH Division of Historical Resources for \$10,000. The grant is for funding to support the development of a crowdsourcing tool. The purpose of the tool will be to obtain information on buildings or places within specific historic neighborhoods in the City of Keene. The plan is for the tool to be utilized on the Commission's website, which is under development, so users can pick a building, lot, or area and upload photos, documents, videos, or any other information they might have. The commission would then be able to select which information would be displayed publicly to help with the project.

Tara Kessler noted that she was able to find a consultant and obtain a quote including development of the tool and ongoing support and maintenance of it for around 3 years. She mentioned that they don't necessarily have to work with that particular consultant, but she needed a cost estimate for the grant application. She reported that they should know within the next month if they received the grant or not, and could potentially begin the tool development in July.

Louise Zebra asked for an overview of the Neighborhood Heritage project. Tara Kessler replied that about a year ago the commission began discussion on the idea of identifying historic neighborhoods to work with, celebrate, and gain further understanding of their heritage. Some of their ideas have been the "Italian neighborhood" on Island Street and the Church Street neighborhood. As the conversation progressed they realized they didn't have a true sense of what the historic or current neighborhood boundaries looked like in the city. Additionally, there were concerns about the commission drawing these boundaries without obtaining input from people who live in the neighborhoods, or who have lived there in the past, as to what they feel like the boundaries are. As a result, the commission came up with the idea to create a tool as a way to engage the community and encourage residents of the City of Keene to share their ideas and photos, and sense of history of their neighborhoods. The commission could then sort through that information and see if it lends itself to the development of a historic neighborhood boundary.

Rose Carey added that Tara Kessler put together a website for the project which includes the walking tour. Chair Powell added that they had the idea to visit senior living facilities and help them log information, as well as direct people to the website.

Susan DeGidio asked when the commission should start approaching people they know who have information to offer. Tara Kessler stated that it will take at least a few months to develop the tool. Chair Powell added that the summer months would likely be used for preparing, creating outreach materials, and tool development, and then in the fall they would begin obtaining feedback and involvement from the community. She suggested that if Susan DeGidio knows someone in the Italian area it may be a good neighborhood to target first. Tara Kessler stated that she did note in the grant that they'd select a geographic area of focus to begin with, so starting with the Italian neighborhood would be good. Rose Carey mentioned that she was in favor of the idea. Louise Zerba mentioned the Butler Court area, noting that it had a lot of Italian families living there.

Chair Powell suggested they outline the boundaries of what they would consider the Italian neighborhood and decide that at the next meeting. Rose Carey mentioned that it's difficult to draw the boundary until they understand the use of the area a little bit better, so they will need to do some research and look at time frames. Chair Powell added that they will make a point to get a sense of the neighborhood history and community broadly so they can draw appropriate boundaries, and if awarded the grant they can move forward with that information. The commission agreed.

There was some discussion about West Street, with Louise Zerba mentioning it shouldn't be included in the Italian neighborhood boundary and Rose Carey noting it has fascinating history, suggesting it may be good for a separate project at some point.

7) Updates

Chair Powell mentioned that they need to think about finding more members for the commission and suggested, if anyone has people in mind, that they start reaching out.

8) Next Meeting

Chair Powell reminded everyone of the next meeting on May 12, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

9) Adjourn

Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 4:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by, Tara Kessler, Senior Planner