

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

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

**Wednesday, July 19, 2023**

**4:30 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Sophia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Vice Chair  
Councilor Catherine Workman  
Hope Benik  
Gregg Kleiner  
Anthony Ferrantello

**Staff Present:**

Evan Clements, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Russ Fleming, Chair  
Andrew Weglinski  
Hans Porschitz  
Sam Temple  
David Bergeron, Alternate  
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

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

Vice Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM. Mr. Clements called the roll.

**2) Minutes of April 19, 2023**

Mr. Ferrantello made a motion to adopt the minutes of the April 19, 2023 meeting. Mr. Kleiner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vice Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos recused herself from the Public Hearing on COA-2023-03 because her property abuts the subject property. Councilor Workman made a motion to serve as Chair Pro Tem for the Public Hearing. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Pro Tem Workman presided over the Public Hearing.

**3) Public Hearing**

- A) COA-2023-03 – 18 Summer St – Addition - Applicants and owners Michael & Jennifer Zoll propose to construct an ~220 sf addition to the existing ~2,272 sf house on the property at 18 Summer St (TMP #568-024-000). A**

**waiver is requested from Section 21.6.3.C.1 of the Land Development Code regarding the requirement that historic rooflines shall not be altered. The property is 0.18 ac and is ranked as a Contributing Resource in the Downtown Transition District.**

Chair Pro Tem Workman read the above summary into the record and asked Mr. Clements if the application was complete. Mr. Clements responded that the applicant requested an exemption from submitting a site plan and product specification sheets. Staff concluded that a site plan and product specification sheets have no bearing on the merits of the application and recommended the Commission grant the exemption and accept the application as complete.

Mr. Kleiner made a motion to accept the application as complete with the requested exemption. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Pro Tem Workman opened the Public Hearing and invited the applicants forward. Applicants Jennifer Zoll and Michael Zoll introduced themselves.

Mr. Zoll explained that they want to put a small addition on the house to create a main bedroom suite. There is no closet or bathroom for the bedroom currently. They are currently sharing a bathroom with their teenage children, which is not ideal. They see the addition as somewhat necessary in these modern times. Otherwise, they want to restore the historic house.

Ms. Zoll stated that their intention is to bring the house back to its original luster. It is in great disrepair. Given the house's proximity to downtown, it is a shame. They want to modernize the house respectfully to function better for modern living. In addition, they believe the project will better incorporate a prior flat roof addition to the house, so it looks like it belongs on the house.

Chair Pro Tem Workman expressed appreciation to the Zolls for bringing the house back and invited comments or questions from Commission members.

Pointing to Elevation #3 in the application, Mr. Ferrantello noted concern that the "vee" created by the various rooflines would trap water. Ms. Zoll indicated the vee does, in fact, collect water, and it has been an issue for over 100 years. Pointing to Figure #3 in the application, Mr. Ferrantello asked whether adding a dormer instead would provide better balance to the house. Ms. Zoll responded that they discussed the idea with their designer, who told them that, due to the current structure, having a consistent roof pitch would not be possible, so the design is a bit of a compromise.

Chair Pro Tem Workman asked Mr. Clements to give a staff report. Mr. Clements reported that the 18 Summer Street property is located on the south side of Summer Street between the Court Street and Middle Street intersections. The house is a gable-front style Greek Revival built in 1865 and is known as the Taft House. The architect and builder of the house was Henry Chapman and features a front gable roof, clapboard siding, and brick chimney. James S. Taft owned the home from 1865 to 1872. Taft is best known for pottery that he made with his uncle

out of an old clothespin factory on Main Street. The J.S. Taft & Co. produced Hampshire Pottery, now highly prized by collectors.

The request is to add an ensuite bathroom and closet to a converted bedroom located at the rear of the house to create a master bedroom. The proposed ~220 sf addition will create a “bump out” on the second floor of the house. There is an existing addition on the first floor that the proposed addition will sit on top of and fill in the architectural gap that was left by the older addition. The project also includes adding a pitch to the existing flat roof above the entry way.

Section 21.6.3.C.1 of the Land Development Code (LDC) provides that the original or historic roofline may not be altered, and raising or lowering the existing roofline may only be allowed for the purpose of restoring the roof to its original profile. The applicant submitted a waiver request for the requirement on grounds the flat roof has contributed to water leaks and ice dams and is not a historic feature throughout the neighborhood.

The waiver criteria for the Commission to consider are:

- (1) Strict application of these regulations would result in a particular and exceptional difficulty or undue hardship upon the owner of the affected property;
- (2) An alternative design or materials meets the design objectives stated in the Historic District Regulations of this LDC equally well or better than would strict compliance with these regulations; and
- (3) The waiver may be granted without substantial detriment to the intent of the Historic District Regulations and the public good.

Section 21.8.1(A) of the LDC prohibits additions from radically changing, obscuring, damaging, or destroying character-defining features. According to the applicant, the new addition will blend with the existing ground floor addition, fill in the gap, and allow the structure to appear more complete. The Commission must determine if the project meets the standard.

Section 21.8.1(B) of the LDC requires additions to be designed to be compatible with, rather than imitative of the design of the historic building, so that they are clearly identified as new construction. According to the applicant, the proposed addition will be compatible with the historic design of the home by keeping with the same form and materials as the existing house but will also add a sense of completeness by smoothing and filling out the nonfunctional odd gap that the entryway addition left. The Commission must determine if the project meets the standard.

Section 21.8.1(C) of the LDC requires additions to be compatible in size and scale with the main building. According to the applicant, the size and scale of the proposed addition will fit in with

the form of the existing house and is compatible with the historic style of the building. The project appears to meet the standard.

Section 21.8.1(E) of the LDC requires additions to be located at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of the building whenever possible. The project appears to meet the standard, as the proposed addition is on the rear and side of the existing house.

Section 21.8.1(F) of the LDC requires additions to take into account the historic relationships of existing buildings and site features on the site. According to the applicant, the proposed addition is historically consistent with the house and site features and will not expand the building footprint. The project appears to meet the standard.

Section 21.8.1(G) of the LDC requires materials used for siding on additions to be compatible with existing materials on the building and common in the Historic District, such as brick, stone, terra cotta, wood, metal and cement clapboard. According to the applicant, the proposed addition will have cedar wood siding to match the existing house. The project appears to meet the standard.

Section 21.8.1(I) of the LDC requires additions to reflect the context of surrounding historic buildings or structures and not detract from the overall character of the Historic District. According to the applicant, the proposed addition seeks to be compatible with the design of the historic houses near the existing house. The Commission must determine if the project meets the standard.

Mr. Clements recommended no conditions for the project.

There being no public comment, Chair Pro Tem Workman closed the public hearing and opened deliberations.

Ms. Benik asked for more information about why the rooflines cannot be parallel. Ms. Zoll explained that a steep pitch would decrease the usable space, and adding a dormer would be difficult, according to the designer.

Mr. Ferrantello asked whether the applicant considered putting in a flat portion in order to change the pitch of the rest of the roof without losing usable space. Ms. Zoll responded that they considered doing so but felt it would affect the integrity of the house. She also said that they discussed several dormer designs, but they all looked too modern for the house. The best solution was to just try to blend the addition in as much as possible.

Chair Pro Tem Workman expressed her opinion that the project meets standards (A), (B), and (I) of Section 21.8.1 of the LDC. Mr. Ferrantello agreed. Ms. Benik said the applicant deeply considered the best path to maintain the historic house. Mr. Kleiner agreed.

Mr. Kleiner made a motion to approve the waiver request from Section 21.6.3.C.1 of the Land Development Code to allow for the alteration of an existing flat roof to be pitched where the requirement that historic rooflines shall not be altered is normally required. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Ferrantello made a motion to approve COA-2023-03 to allow for the construction of a ~220 sf addition and alteration of an existing flat roof to a pitched roof on the property located at 18 Summer Street, as presented in the plan set titled “Master Bedroom Remodel & New Master Bathroom Addition” prepared by Larkin Designs & Consulting LLC, dated 5/31/23, at a scale of 1/4” = 1’ and in the application and supporting materials dated 6/16/23 and 6/30/23 with no conditions. Mr. Kleiner seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Pro Tem Workman stated that this approval completes the application.

Mr. Zoll thanked Mr. Clements for his assistance with the application process. Ms. Zoll said it is a privilege to care for the historic house, and she is very excited.

**4) Staff Updates**

Vice Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos returned to chairing the meeting. She asked Mr. Clements for a staff update.

Mr. Clements reported that the \$250 expenditure to mail information about the Historic District and the Commission to Historic District addresses was approved, and the funds are available. He reported he is working with the new Communications Director to re-design the information to match the City’s new branding efforts. He will draft a cover letter for the mailing, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair or the full Commission, per its preference. Commission members agreed Mr. Clements need only consult with the Chair and Vice Chair.

He further reported that he expects to hear very soon from the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources about whether the City received the Certified Local Government (CLG) grant it applied for. He will email the Commission members with the result and next steps.

**5) New Business**

Councilor Workman noted that the Commission received a presentation about the Downtown Infrastructure Project several months ago. She asked whether, once the City Council votes on a preliminary design, the Commission would have any input on the final design. Mr. Clements responded that the Public Works Department expressed interest in getting feedback from the Commission, as well as the Heritage Commission, on some of the finer details. He is not sure when that might happen, but he will advocate for it with the Public Works Department.

6) **Upcoming Dates of Interest**

- A) **Next HDC Meeting: August 16, 2023 – 4:30 PM (to be determined)**
- B) **HDC Site Visit: August 16, 2023 – 3:30 PM (to be confirmed)**

Mr. Clements reported that there are no applications for the next meeting yet. Although the deadline is Friday, he indicated the Commission could consider applications filed somewhat late. He said he would keep Commission members posted.

7) **Adjourn**

There being no further business, Vice Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 5:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Wendy Chen, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Evan J. Clements, AICP - Planner