



Heritage Commission

Wednesday, February 12, 2025, 4:30 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall
3 Washington St, Keene, NH 03431

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order** – Roll Call
- II. **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**
December 11, 2024 – Regular Meeting
- III. **Elections** – Chair/Vice-Chair
- IV. **Discussion** – Projects and Goalsetting for 2025
- V. **Staff Updates**
- VI. **New Business**
- VII. **Next Meeting – Joint Heritage & Historic District Commission –**
March 19, 2025
- VIII. **Adjourn**

1 **City of Keene**
2 **New Hampshire**

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5 **HERITAGE COMMISSION**
6 **MEETING MINUTES**
7

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10 **Wednesday, December 11, 2024**

11 **4:30 PM**

12 **2nd Floor Conference Room,**
13 **City Hall**

14 **Members Present:**

15 Cauley Powell, Chair
16 Molly Ellis, Vice Chair
17 Marilyn Huston
18 Louise Zerba

19 **Staff Present:**

20 Evan Clements, Planner

21 **Members Not Present:**

22 Rose Carey
23 Julie Emineth

24
25
26 **1) Call to Order – Roll Call**

27 Chair Powell called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call was conducted.

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30 **2) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – November 13, 2024**

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 13, 2024. Ms. Ellis seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Downtown Infrastructure Project Aesthetic Features Discussion

Mr. Clements stated that 60% of the final design is going to the Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure (MSFI) Committee on December 18, so if the Heritage Commission is going to send a letter with their input on the aesthetic features, it would need to get to the City Clerk's Office by this coming Monday. The motion would be to authorize the Chair to draft and send a letter to City Council, which would go to the MSFI Committee for that meeting. The letter's focus, and today's discussion, should be the specific design elements. For example, the bricks in Railroad Square – it was good to find out they are not just random bricks the City bought by the pallet load. The Heritage Commission could make recommendations on, for example, the arch sign for Railroad Square, and things like that.

31 Chair Powell asked for confirmation that the group wants to send feedback to the MSFI
32 Committee. She continued that she is comfortable with writing a letter on the HC's behalf, and
33 would have the HC approve the draft. Ms. Ellis, Ms. Zerba, and Ms. Huston nodded/said yes.
34

35 Chair Powell stated that the first step is for the HC to decide which elements they want to speak
36 to. She continued that as she recalls, they had spoken about the lampposts, the archways, the
37 paving designs, bollards, planters, pavers, seating on sectioned off areas of the rail trail, public
38 art and murals, and the granite fountain re-design.
39

40 Discussion ensued, beginning with the Central Square design, as HC members expressed
41 appreciation for how the design pays attention to maintaining the historical character of
42 downtown. HC members shared ideas for the flagpole, such as flowers around it, and a wreath
43 hung on the pole for certain days. They recommend adding benches to Central Square.
44 Regarding how to weigh in on design, Mr. Clements suggested the HC use general language
45 such as a "we recommend a classic historical feeling versus a more modern one." Chair Powell,
46 Ms. Huston, and Ms. Zerba agreed. Chair Powell stated that they could say, "A classic,
47 historical feeling for the design elements," and name them, such as lampposts, benches, fire
48 hydrants, trash receptacles, and so on and so forth.
49

50 Regarding the short pillars that the chain link attaches to, around the perimeter, Ms. Ellis
51 suggested "old, raggedy looking granite blocks" instead of the sharp, new ones. Discussion
52 ensued about the granite blocks. HC members agreed that maintaining uniformity is preferable,
53 such as using weathered granite blocks for any new pillars that are needed, so they blend in with
54 the others. Chair Powell asked if the HC is interested in encouraging the use of local materials
55 whenever possible, like granite. Ms. Ellis and Ms. Huston replied yes. Ms. Huston spoke of
56 how old granite can be cleaned very nicely.
57

58 Mr. Clements asked what the group thinks about Railroad Square elements, such as the walkway.
59 He continued that one of the designers' ideas was a railroad track pattern for the walkway, or
60 embedding actual railroad tracks. Discussion ensued. HC members agreed that the two rails
61 embedded would be preferable than actual tracks with cross ties, and would be easier to maintain
62 than paint that would wear.
63

64 Regarding the archway into Railroad Square, Ms. Huston stated that she would like it to look like
65 the one at Ashuelot River Park. Others agreed, and spoke of how the Railroad Square one would
66 be good with colors and materials appropriate to Railroad Square, with a design like the Ashuelot
67 River Park one. Mr. Clements asked if they are interested in a weathered look, more than shiny.
68 HC members replied yes.
69

70 Ms. Huston stated that she would like to see benches/seating under the small canopy they
71 propose putting bikes under. Discussion ensued, and the HC members agreed that they
72 encourage seating options across the downtown spaces, whenever appropriate, particularly where
73 people will be able to appreciate the new spaces. Regarding the materials used for seating, they

74 encourage a more traditional look, and they encourage aesthetic cohesiveness throughout the
75 corridor.

76
77 Chair Powell stated that she does not know which of the paving styles shown as examples would
78 be the most traditional or classic. Discussion ensued. Discussion continued about a general
79 desire for more/better lighting on Main St. and around Central Square to help drivers at night and
80 in the rain, such as crosswalks that light up while in use. Chair Powell suggested their letter, to
81 stay relevant to the HC's focus, say something about how the HC encourages safety components
82 that would encourage people to spend time downtown and increase pedestrian traffic, and they
83 do not believe the safety components would detract from the historical character of the area.
84 Regarding accent lighting, like the overhead string lights, the HC prefers warm/yellow light,
85 nothing harsh.

86
87 Ms. Ellis brought up Gilbo Ave. HC members spoke about really looking forward to the
88 revitalization of Gilbo Ave. and its potential. Chair Powell spoke positively about additional
89 public art if it is historically minded. Discussion continued about how positive the Wall Dogs
90 murals are. Ms. Ellis suggested the HC say something to encourage cohesiveness between
91 however many archways there end up being. Others agreed. Ms. Zerba stated that she does not
92 like the modern-looking walkway (shown in a photo as an example).

93
94 Chair Powell asked the group to talk about plants. Ms. Ellis suggested as many lilacs as
95 possible. Ms. Zerba stated that she thinks the City does well with its plants. Mr. Clements
96 agreed and suggested something like "continue the tradition of a robust landscaping."
97 Discussion continued. Chair Powell expressed interest in having food/edible plants in the
98 downtown planters, which would go to the community, such as the Community Kitchen. She
99 asked what others think. Others agreed that it is a good idea, if there are places where it could
100 work, like Gilbo Ave. Some foods, like leafy greens, look beautiful. Chair Powell spoke of
101 supporting community members who are food insecure. Ms. Ellis stated that the HC could
102 encourage integrating edible plants into the scope of plantings; it does not have to be all or
103 nothing. Mr. Clements stated that plantings can be edible and ornamental.

104
105 Chair Powell asked about curbs. Discussion ensued, and HC members expressed preference for
106 granite curb, not natural stone. Ms. Zerba stated that she likes the idea of stone blocks for people
107 to sit on. Chair Powell replied that those seem more modern. She continued that if overall, they
108 are trying to maintain the historical, traditional New England aesthetic, maybe one of the zones
109 could be a bit more modern, specifically Gilbo Ave. Discussion ensued about how that might be
110 nice but the biggest goal is cohesion.

111
112 Ms. Zerba made a motion for the Heritage Commission to authorize Chair Cauley Powell to
113 write and send a letter to the City Council, detailing the Heritage Commission's discussion
114 tonight. Ms. Ellis seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

115

116 Chair Powell asked if there is anything else that the group should discuss, that has not been
117 brought up yet. Ms. Huston stated that it is wonderful to see so many trees, but she wants to
118 make sure the ones near intersections do not interfere with pedestrian visibility and safety. Chair
119 Powell replied that she will write something about sightlines for safety, and prioritizing
120 pedestrian/public use of the space.

121
122 Chair Powell asked Mr. Clements about the fountain re-design and the art and decorative
123 elements, which she heard would be a separate undertaking. She asked if the HC should try and
124 differentiate anything. Mr. Clements replied that might be a good sign-off for the letter, saying
125 something about how the HC recognizes that the design elements will be ongoing beyond just
126 the reconstruction, and how they look forward to continued collaboration with City Council to
127 make good decisions in the community. Ms. Zerba replied yes, they hope the City Council
128 continues to consider the HC in their decision-making processes. Discussion continued about
129 wording for the letter.

130
131 Mr. Clements stated that it sounds to him that the HC is giving good guidance, and he thinks they
132 also sound more or less aligned with Stantec's design team and Public Works. Chair Powell
133 asked if anyone had anything else to add. If not, she will work on drafting the letter.

134

135 **4) Staff Updates**

136

137 Mr. Clements stated that the master plan update continues. He continued that they have just
138 launched the six strategic pillars: livable housing, thriving economy, connected mobility, vibrant
139 neighborhoods, adaptable workforce, and flourishing environment. Those all surround "regional
140 magnetism," which is the city of Keene being the loadstone for the economic and cultural pulse
141 of Cheshire County. He encourages them to go to keenemasterplan.com and get caught up on
142 everything on there. There are discussion boards for each pillar. He asked the HC to spread the
143 word about these message boards to as many people as they can. He, Mari Brunner, and Megan
144 Fortson are offering "office hours" in the Library, so people can come talk with them about the
145 master plan.

146

147 Chair Powell asked how the message boards will be used, and what the next step is for using the
148 information staff gets from the message boards. Mr. Clements replied that he thinks it will all be
149 put together as part of the larger public engagement. The consultants will read through
150 everything. The message boards will be up for at least a month, maybe longer. There is no
151 specific closing date.

152

153 Mr. Clements stated that a letter came from the Department of Natural Cultural Resources,
154 saying the Unitarian Universalist church on Washington St. was entered into the National
155 Registry of Historic Places. He continued that the HC had written a letter of support when the
156 UU church was nominated. Chair Powell stated that maybe they can do something to celebrate,
157 and remind people about the historical places in Keene and their stories.

158

159 **5) New Business**

160

161 Mr. Clements stated that the HC does not have any CLG grant projects going on. He continued
162 that they have been weighing in on the downtown project. At some point, they will have to
163 brainstorm what is next.

164

165 Ms. Zerba asked if the Italian Neighborhood Project is going to be on their website at some
166 point. Chair Powell replied that that website is not quite done. She continued that she herself
167 has failed to deliver a written component for that, which she is working on, with Will
168 Schoefmann. This project has been long, but very rewarding and well executed.

169

170 **6) Next Meeting – January 8, 2025**

171

172 Chair Powell stated that the next meeting will be a joint meeting with the Historic District
173 Commission (HDC). Mr. Clements replied yes, they need to pin down (the date) for that. Chair
174 Powell stated that the HC will help with the HDC’s project. Mr. Clements replied yes, they will
175 help with assigning local rankings to the properties, now that the inventories are done.

176

177 Chair Powell stated that the next meeting is January 8, 2025, unless they hear otherwise.

178

179 **7) Adjournment**

180

181 There being no further business, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 5:30 PM.

182

183 Respectfully submitted by,
184 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

185

186 Reviewed and edited by,
187 Evan J. Clements, AICP
188 Planner