

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

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

**Wednesday, April 20, 2022**

**4:30 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Russ Fleming, Vice Chair  
Councilor Catherine Workman  
Hans Porschitz  
Sam Temple  
Sophia Cunha-Vasconcelos

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Senior Planner  
Evan Clements, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Andrew Weglinski, Chair  
Hope Benik  
Gregg Kleiner, Alternate  
David Bergeron, Alternate  
Tia Hockett, Alternate  
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

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

Vice Chair Fleming called the meeting to order at 4:42 PM.

**2) Minutes of March 16, 2022**

Councilor Workman made a motion to accept the minutes of March 16, 2022 as presented. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**3) Advice & Comment:**

**Modifications to Saint Bernard's Rectory, 161-185 Main Street** – Rick Cavallero, Lynne Cavallero, & Dan Bartlett, representing St. Bernard Church, seek input from the HDC regarding paint colors for the St. Bernard's Rectory building (historically known as the Appleton House), located at 161-185 Main Street (TMP# 584-006-000). The property is ranked as a Primary Resource and is located in the Downtown Growth District.

Vice Chair Fleming read the above description and invited representatives from Saint Bernard's to present. He reminded the commission that it is an informal and non-binding discussion and any recommendations coming from the HDC are not enforceable.

Ms. Cavallero stated the building is in need of painting, some repairs to the soffits, and they would like to refurbish the currently decaying parapet. She noted that when they first began the project Pinnacle Windows removed and restored all of the windows. She picked colors to paint the windows without realizing there would need to be input from the HDC. Once she was aware the building was historic she then did her research and showed the commission her inspiration in some pictures, noting that the brick of the building is currently painted red and she feels it should be lighter, like the color shown in the photo. She described it as a greenish/gray color and showed a color swatch of what the windows are painted currently and then what the exact color would be for the windows and doors (ten gallon hat). Ms. Cavallero added that the sash window and columns will be painted the linen white color.

Vice Chair Fleming asked if the inspiration was from a similar architectural period. Ms. Cavallero stated yes and showed another photo to the group.

Mr. Porschitz joined at 4:47 PM.

Vice Chair Fleming asked if they knew why the brick was painted in the first place. The Cavallero's were not sure but stated it has been painted for about 50 years. Vice Chair Fleming stated sandblasting is prohibited but asked if they considered removing the paint. Mr. Cavallero stated the brick underneath is chipping away so it wouldn't look good if the paint was taken off.

Ms. Brunner mentioned that there are some historic photos of the building that she found online through the Keene Public Library and Historical Society of Cheshire County.

Vice Chair Fleming asked if there was a working balcony on the front of the building. Mr. Cavallero stated yes it is a secure balcony and has been checked for structural soundness. There was mention that it is wrought iron.

There was no public comment or further comment from the commission. Vice Chair Fleming gave the Cavallero's the commission's informal blessing.

Ms. Brunner mentioned that there is other proposed work, such as exterior lights and exterior HVAC units that will need to be screened, that may have to come back to the commission; however, it seems like some of it may be minor work that staff can approve. Mr. Cavallero stated they are converting 3-4 of the wood fire places to gas. The front one used to have a chimney, which must have been closed off years ago, where they will likely have to put a vent in; however, they are not yet sure how high the external vent will need to be. He added that it will be inside the parapet area if it can stay that low and won't be visible from the street. If it does need to go above the parapet and become visible from street, they are aware they will need to discuss

with the commission. Ms. Cavallero stated the other item that would potentially need to be discussed is the roof. She explained that the parapet has paint falling off and instead of replacing with boards they thought it might be best to put synthetic tiles/slate, which would be a neater and cleaner look. She mentioned that her original thought was to put wrought iron around it but there's a bump that you'd be able to see. She stated they would like to paint the shingles a charcoal gray to match the synthetic slate roofing. Mr. Cavallero explained that the mansard roof on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor is in excellent condition, so they are looking to paint that to match with the second floor parapet.

Vice Chair Fleming thanked them for putting so much thought into the work and stated he feels it will come out nicely. He asked Ms. Brunner if there is anything from the property inventory form that would be of interest to the commission.

Ms. Brunner read the brief description from the property inventory form. Vice Chair Fleming asked if the building was built as a rectory or a private home. The Cavallero's stated it was built as a private home. He asked, if it was built in 1855, when the church was built. Ms. Brunner stated 1885.

There were no further comments from the HDC.

**4) Staff Updates**

**A) Update to the HDC "Frequently Asked Questions" page**

Ms. Brunner stated the FAQ page has been updated online, which was long overdue, and now reflects the Land Development Code changes. Mr. Clements stated he went through and did some changes and section references, as well as some editorial changes to the discussion and broader concepts of the HDC, and historic preservation in general. One in particular had to do with the question of will the HDC negatively affect economic development in the City. He took some time to explain why it doesn't, cited some sources and referenced the research that demonstrates it stabilizes property values and makes it easier for developers because they know the land value is going to stay and not go down. He also added a new section about green buildings and historic preservation, noting that the greenest building is a building that already exists so we should be saving our historic properties. Ms. Brunner stated if the commission reviews the FAQ page and wants to add anything they can let her know.

**B) Future Education & Outreach Efforts**

Ms. Brunner stated now that they have Mr. Clements on board as the new planner, and more staff support, they are ready to start working on some of the projects with regards to education and outreach that the HDC identified a few years ago. One of them was to create a guidelines document for the public to use as a companion to the regulations. The idea came out of concern for what would happen to all of the background information in the HDC's old regulations. She

explained that they had guidelines/background information for each section that were removed in an attempt to streamline the new regulations and make them more user-friendly.

Ms. Brunner stated another idea is to do an annual mailing, or a mailing when there's an ownership change with properties in the historic district. This came out of a discussion around a few instances where folks had gone off and done work on their properties in the historic district and said they didn't realize they had to get approval for it. She explained that it will be a way to prevent the aforementioned from happening and make property owners aware of the correct process and where to find more information.

Ms. Brunner stated they currently have the capacity to do one of the two projects and asked for feedback on which one the commission would prefer.

Ms. Brunner also made note that they need to hire a historic preservationist to do an inventory of the area of the historic district that got expanded in 2011 because the area was never inventoried. She recommended that they try to find a grant to help support that. Vice Chair Fleming asked for clarification. Ms. Brunner explained that the initial district was focused on Main Street and along the railroad corridor, but it did not extend along Gilbo Avenue and up towards Emerald Street. She went on to state that it's a block of land that was added onto the historic district right around the same time that the City created the Gilbo Avenue Design Overlay District. The intent was to have future development in the section immediately adjacent to the downtown be similar to what is seen along Main Street. Thus, the historic district was extended to match the boundaries of the Gilbo Avenue Design Overlay District, which is now referred to as the Downtown Growth District.

Mr. Porschitz stated he is in favor of the mailing project, especially after having been involved with property owners seeking retroactive approval and the difficulties surrounding that process. He felt it's a very important piece, especially for out of town owners who may not be familiar with the historic district.

There was short discussion on Planning Department changes. Ms. Brunner stated, moving forward, Mr. Clements will be taking over as staff liaison for the HDC and she will be here for support if needed. Mr. Clements stated he previously worked for Glen Ellyn Illinois, very similar to the City of Keene, while obtaining his Master's Degree, and did his thesis on historic preservation and climate change. He most recently worked for the Town of Hollis, New Hampshire before coming to work for the City. He ended by stating that he's excited to work with the HDC and help them achieve their goals.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos agreed with Mr. Porschitz about prioritizing the mailing project. Councilor Workman agreed as well. Vice Chair Fleming asked if staff would develop a draft of the mailing letter and then run it by the HDC before sending it out. Ms. Brunner stated they can do that but the first step is identifying funding and then creating the draft.

Vice Chair Fleming suggested it be a positive letter and not one solely focused on telling property owners what to do. Mr. Clements stated when he worked for the town of Hollis they had a system where as soon as a property changed hands in the historic district, a letter was generated and sent to the new property owner. The letter welcomed the new owner to the historic district, explained the benefits of owning a property within the district, and added in that if there's a desire to change anything with the property they have to go through the HDC.

Mr. Porschitz asked if there is a sense of how many yearly transactions take place within the historic district, to help them with a request for funding. Ms. Brunner stated the budget will depend on how they decide to do it. For example, if they want to do an initial mailer to everyone in the historic district, that would cost more than sending out a new letter only when a property changes hands. She did not have cost estimates at the time.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the HDC needs to participate in the budget process in terms of finding funding. Ms. Brunner stated she's hoping they can use funding from the Heritage Commission but they'd have to ask them for permission. Moving forward, they can build the funding into the HDC's budget but they missed the timeline to make that request this year.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked about property inventory and if the HDC needs to do anything to support obtaining a grant. Ms. Brunner stated the City of Keene participates in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. She noted that they are not large grants but do prioritize inventories. If they submit a grant next year it would be competitive and would depend on how many properties would need to be inventoried and what research is already out there. The grant provides 100% match. Ms. Brunner explained that the HDC would need to authorize staff to apply for the grant, so they will come back to that discussion in November or December for the grant round in January.

Vice Chair Fleming asked about the breakdown of the historic district properties with regards to residential versus nonresidential. Ms. Brunner stated there are not a lot of residential properties and briefly reviewed the map for everyone. Vice Chair Fleming asked if there was any potential for expanding the district in future years. Ms. Brunner stated the HDC could recommend for that to take place and bring in more residential properties to the historic district. She stated there was an effort to do so in the past but there was push back from the property owners, so staff ended up focusing on education and outreach instead.

5) **New Business**

There was no new business.

6) **Upcoming Dates of Interest**

**A) Next HDC Meeting: May 18, 2022 – 4:30pm, Parks and Recreation Building,  
Room 22, 312 Washington Street**

- B) HDC Site Visit: May 18, 2022 – 3:30pm (To be confirmed)**
- 7) **Adjourn**

There being no further business, Vice Chair Fleming adjourned the meeting at 5:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Evan J. Clements, Planner