

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

4:30 PM

**IMS Training Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Cauley Powell, Chair
Susan DeGidio, Vice Chair
Councilor Gladys Johnsen
Rose Carey
Brian Lee
Molly Ellis

Staff Present:

Jesse Rounds, Community Development
Director

Members Not Present:

Marilyn Huston
Louise Zerba, Alternate

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Powell called the meeting to order at 4:37 PM and roll call ensued.

2) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – June 8 and September 14, 2022

A motion by Chair Powell to adopt the June 8, 2022 minutes was duly seconded by Ms. Carey and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion by Mr. Lee to adopt the September 12, 2022 minutes was duly seconded by Councilor Johnsen and the motion carried unanimously.

3) Demolition Review Permits

Ms. DeGidio provided an update on the three locations she signed-off on since April. She noted that on April 28, the first 686 Court Street location came up again this year after being reviewed last year; this is the 1930s house that sits close to Court Street and the vet clinic. She said this was not a spectacular site and she signed-off on it.

On April 29, she reviewed 122 and 124 Water Street, which was a garage, shed, and office all circa 1920 that was being taken over by the Hundred Nights Shelter, which she supported. So, she signed-off.

On July 24, at 427 N. Washington Street was just a 1910 garage. She looked at photos and drove past. She said it was not that impressive and looked better in the photos, so she signed-off. Thus, she signed-off on all three because they were in poor condition.

She explained that these potential demolitions must be reviewed by the HC if over 500 square feet or over 50 years old. Ms. DeGidio gave an overview for Ms. Ellis of what they were looking to not demolish. If it is a very early pre-1900s structure, they want to preserve it, especially if it has outstanding features. They had lost a few great structures from the late 1700s and 1800s, and a lot of the time it is because people are not willing to invest the necessary expense for repair. A lot depends on the structure's age and location, and whether it contains anything historically significant. A big thing for Ms. DeGidio was the historic fire downtown; she spoke with Mike Pappas, who was going to save all the bricks not destroyed in the fire and use them to rebuild, which pleased her. The Commission tries to save anything they can from demolition.

Councilor Johnsen asked how long the demolition review had occurred. Ms. DeGidio said at least as long as she had been on the Commission. She said the property owners do not have to listen to the Commission, but the Commission provides its opinion. The best they can do is delay the demolition 30 days to find ways with the homeowner to prevent the demolition. Chair Powell said it was a successful effort. Ms. DeGidio cited the example of the corn crib from 1797 that was transferred to Stonewall Farms, which cost the homeowners approximately \$20,000.

4) 2022 CLG Grant Update

Mr. Rounds said that Mr. Schoefmann had reach out to Division of Historic Resources (DHR) to let them know that the Commission would be bringing the grant to the City Council, with a subsequent signature from the City Manager, which follows the normal City process. Chair Powell said that the consultant from Northeastern University sent a note confirming that the adjusted timeline is better for her and the students, who are interested and eager to explore black history in Keene.

5) 2021 CLG Neighborhood Heritage Project Update

At a future meeting and on the Community Development Department Facebook, Mr. Schoefmann would share the heritage website and application form. He would also schedule a follow-up to meet with Jim Sterling to collect his stories.

6) Heritage Website Update

Mr. Lee had no update.

7) Next Meeting – November 9, 2022

Chair Powell shared an update that the presentation at the Historical Society would be Wednesday, December 14 and discussion ensued about the time. The Commission decided on 7:00 PM. The Chair noted that she had been playing phone tag with Bob Mallet—she recalled from the last meeting that he was going to help the Commission facilitate a conversation with the Italian Society Board. They are still discussing dates in October or early November. She thinks that meeting would be the real advertised event and Mr. Schoefmann would be working on a public outreach push through other City avenues. She thought the Italian Society might be where the Commission connects a lot more with people directly who have more stake in the project. She hoped for this sooner than later and would share the meeting times via Mr. Rounds.

Chair Powell recalled that they talked about outreach previously with the Historical Society to commence historical background research. She might reach out to Ms. Huston about this effort seeking digitized photos with captions to incorporate into the app.

Chair Powell said the other Commission focus is outreach to the very community-focused Catholic church in Keene to see if they might have their own records to inform this project. She had no direct connections to the church and asked for someone to liaise. Mr. Lee offered to liaise.

Chair Powell continued discussing promotion of the Italian neighborhood project and the app. She would like this on the agenda beginning in November, by which time they will have received the stories in the app and can start discussing the story maps. Chair Powell said that Mr. Schoefmann would handle the social media aspects, but the Commission also talked about an article. They would try to engage a local non-profit first and if no one agreed, the Commission could pay for an article. They also discussed advertising with the Historical Society's historical preservation newsletter—with focus across the State—because that is the presentation location. Chair Powell asked for other ideas to promote the event and not the application tool, and if anyone was interested in drafting materials. Mr. Lee suggested an article with a few paragraphs explaining the project and Chair Powell added that they could interview a community member who tells a story. This would be a text article, not a video. However, if Mr. Lee could offer a video, it would fit well with the project. Mr. Lee thought a video would be easier to share but that an article might be easier in this instance.

Chair Powell thought a graphic might be nice to have for the event and Mr. Lee agreed to work on something that explains the main purpose to promote the app and the event, where the Commission would share everything learned. Ms. Carey thought a graphic poster at City Hall, in Main Street windows, at the Library, and more would be effective. Ms. Carey also suggested using the graphic as an advertisement that plays before movies at the Colonial, which had been successful in the past, with a captive audience. Mr. Lee would develop the aesthetic for the graphic based on the Italian flag colors, details about the Italian heritage project, an inset with photos of the neighborhood, and information about the meeting date, time, and a short description. He would complete this task before the next meeting. Ms. Carey suggested a historic photo. Discussion ensued about ideas for the graphic. The graphic would be shared and there could be a sentinel article on the piece. They could pay for an ad. Ms. Carey said the Monadnock Shopper News distribution is impressive, but they would not do a graphic or list events; discussion ensued about the Shopper's reach and positive history for Heritage efforts.

Advertising could ensue at minimal price. Chair Powell said the Italian Society is active in that they exist, but it was unclear how they participate in the wider community. Discussion ensued about whether they wanted to spend money on this effort. Ms. Powell noted for Ms. Ellis that there is a Commission budget that could be used but it was easier to make a flat number that they would spend. She said there was every reason to think spending that money would be equally effective.

Ms. Carey suggested radio as another free promotional tool, especially for older listeners. This could include someone older giving their story. The Commission agreed this would be a good avenue. Chair Powell said that might be a good avenue for someone participating in the project to relay their story and other listeners might want to submit a better story. John DiBernardo used to have his own radio show and would be a natural if he was inclined.

Chair Powell said she felt well about these deliverables. She was still nervous about getting people to participate, though all signs pointed to it being effective. She was meeting with Mr. Dentino this weekend who seemed to be the grandfather of the neighborhood and that should be a productive recorded conversation.

Ms. Carey asked what happened to the party. Chair Powell said that after speaking with Bob Mallet, the feeling was that a party would not be as necessary and that presenting to the Italian Society about the effort would be more effective. She was not completely clear on how to reach the Italian Society's membership at large, but she thought they had a mailing list.

Ms. Carey asked about presentation materials for the Historical Society event. Chair Powell said she needed to confirm the date with Mr. Schoefmann. Part of the idea is to use the story map as the structure of the presentation. They can decide if one or many of them will speak to put a friendly face to the Commission. Ms. Carey said that the graphic could be a poster displayed in the Historical Society lobby.

Ms. Carey discussed taking on the effort to find old photos at the historical society and match them with current photos she could try to take, regardless of the season. Mr. Rounds was unsure whether she could still borrow a camera from the Community Development Department but would ask. Once Ms. Carey has the photos, she will forward them to Mr. Lee. The historical society does digitize their photos so that should be helpful. Chair Powell hoped that soon there would be a digital location for sharing those things between the Commission and Mr. Rounds said the Community Development Department has a large color scanner for use.

For Ms. Ellis' benefit, Chair Cauley read from the Committee webpage to describe the project: www.comdvlpt.wixsite.com/keeneheritage. Mr. Rounds would forward the website description to all members. They hope many people will share their stories on the website. Part of the project grant received was to develop an application as a crowdsourcing history tool, and the Commission is trying to prove it can do that successfully by connecting to the community so they can share their stories. Often the information is easy to gather and reflects basic experiences. Mr. Lee said the story map or uploading a story takes one to the application where you can tour the story map. The story map begins with a story and tries to capture the key community members to use it as a foundational living memory of the neighborhood. Mr. Lee

will be recording interviews with community members and despite that being a time investment, they hoped most participants would have family photos to upload with the story.

Ms. Ellis asked about the presentation. Chair Powell said that on the surface level the presentation is to fulfill the grant by sharing the story to demonstrate how the story map and crowd sourcing worked. Chair Powell demonstrated how the app would take one through the story map. At the presentation, the Commission will walk people through the story map and talk about the process, why this process was chosen, whether they feel they met the objective of the project, and whether the next step could be taken to another neighborhood or Keene in general.

The Historical Society is in the final days of an exhibit on immigration in NH and part of their interest is how this project speaks to that. Ms. Carey said all information for the presentation and story map was available in photo subtitles at the Historical Society—from who lived there, the dates, etc. This information gives a sense of the community at the time and adds to the story. Chair Powell understood that the neighborhood land was granted in 1910s and homes were built on key streets; that is a lifetime someone could have lived there and that is something to capture in this project. It will be nice to trace family history as public knowledge. Ms. Carey will do the work at the Historical Society and track to see if any of the families still live at these residences to share as process notes on gathering the histories of the houses. Ms. Carey would gather data for the family histories presentation.

Chair Powell was inspired, excited, and saw no red flags. As a new resident of Keene, Mr. Rounds thought this was a cool idea and he liked the idea of a graphic to get the word out.

8) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 5:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker
October 18, 2022

Reviewed and edited by,
Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician