

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

4:30 PM

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

Members Present:

Cauley Powell, Chair
Molly Ellis, Vice Chair
Marilyn Huston
Rose Carey
Councilor Gladys Johnsen (Arrived at 4:37 PM)
Louise Zerba, Alternate

Staff Present:

Evan Clements, Planner
William Schoefmann, GIS Technician

Members Not Present:

Brian Lee
Susan DeGidio

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Powell called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. She welcomed a guest who is interested in joining the Commission, Julie Emineth.

2) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – June 14, 2023

A motion by Ms. Carey to approve the June 14, 2023 minutes with no amendments was duly seconded by Ms. Huston. The motion carried unanimously.

3) 2021 CLG – Italian Heritage Neighborhood Project

Mr. Schoefmann said the videos that everyone saw in the Historical Society presentation were published to the [City's YouTube page](#). Those videos can be linked to the StoryMap, which is still in production. NH Department of Historical Resources (NHDHR) want proof of payment and request for reimbursement by September 1. Mr. Schoefmann received an invoice from the consultant. Now, he said it was time to try and piece some of these elements together. He recalled that the StoryMap elements were organized in different categories. Chair Powell briefly explained the project—which was funded by a grant 3 years ago—to Ms. Emineth while Mr. Schoefmann displayed the StoryMap. Consultants created a helpful website and the Commission crowdsourced history about the specific neighborhood (Highland Street and Winchester Street). The Commission collected oral histories and videos. The Commission shared some of this work with the neighborhood in December 2022. This final StoryMap

website element was still being worked on by the consultants to share the crowdsourced history with the neighborhood.

Mr. Schoefmann continued showing the Commission around the website. He recalled the different categories or “buckets”: recreation/nature, families/culture, education/arts, and agriculture/industry/food. Those categories will help to organize the information, videos, and photos. The site was being tested to ensure it would integrate everything properly. Making the videos accessible was the biggest missing piece at this point.

Ms. Carey recalled that she was supposed to help with titling the photos and gathering other information. She welcomed guidance on what exactly she was supposed to be doing. Mr. Schoefmann offered to contact Ms. Carey after the meeting on this topic.

Councilor Johnson arrived.

Mr. Schoefmann recalled historic map scans that were in the crowdsourcing map. Those were loaded into a base map that could be integrated into the app. He would send links to the Commission as things come together so they can see it before it goes public. He showed examples.

Chair Powell thought the Commission needed to have a conversation about financing the media storage. Mr. Schoefmann agreed, noting that the raw video files require a considerable amount of space to store them (likely 2 terabytes). He did not think this was insurmountable to ask the City to store them on a network server, but he thought it would probably have to be done using a mass storage hard drive device that ranges in price from \$50–\$125. Chair Powell wondered if something larger than 2 terabytes would be prudent. The Chair thought the Commission could also use its budget to buy the storage device; this could be easier than asking the City. Mr. Schoefmann thought that would make it easier to transfer information to the Historical Society. Chair Powell recalled that she still needed to reach out to Jenna Carroll at the Historical Society to see how they prefer to receive those files.

A motion by Ms. Huston to approve up to \$200 for a solid-state hard drive for the hosting of the Italian neighborhood project media was duly seconded by Vice Chair Ellis. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Powell asked Mr. Schoefmann to display video files in the Google Drive. Mr. Lee worked on cutting some more video files. She thought there were more than 20 video clips.

Ms. Huston asked if the Chair received good feedback after the Historical Society presentation. Mr. Clements said that people had been coming in and trying to contribute. For example, a gentleman called to share a physical artifact he wanted to donate to be displayed and City Staff referred him to the Historical Society because the City did not have the capacity for that.

Chair Powell referred to the video files that Mr. Schoefmann displayed. The Chair said there was quite a bit of content. She had tried to assign titles to the various clips. She tried to choose videos that would fill holes in the StoryMap. For example, she thought that “chickens and pigs” should be categorized under “Food” versus “Other Conversations.” Chair Powell felt positive about the project overall. Mr.

Schoefmann thought that Ray Corson, GIS consultant, was wondering about whether there is enough written narrative. Mr. Schoefmann did not think a lot of narrative was needed because this is more so about visual storytelling.

In addition to the posters Ms. Carey made, she wanted to do another piece about the schoolhouse that was cut in half to make 2 houses. She thought she could contribute a written narrative on this topic. If further narratives are needed, the Commission could work on that.

The Commission noted that the StoryMap would continue being editable after closing the project with NHDHR. Mr. Schoefmann thought he needed to make the point to NHDHR in a meeting that this project would be ready and closer to final after September 1 because he could not dedicate 100% of his time to it. Meetings with the consultant mean the StoryMap should not go live until mid-September. Chair Powell asked Mr. Schoefmann to let NHDHR know about the timing of HC meetings. The Commission agreed that it is good to have all eyes on the project for feedback and proofreading. Mr. Schoefmann thought they really wanted to focus on the reimbursement request they filed. He needed to confirm with the project contact: Brandee. The Feds want to ensure the funds were expended appropriately.

As the project winds down, Chair Powell was curious about how the Commission felt about publicizing the website and StoryMap when they are ready. She wondered whether there should be another event or if the Commission should ask the Italian Society if they want to amplify the project to their own network. Ms. Carey was in favor of another event at the Historical Society; she felt that the first one was highly successful and brought the community members together more than just sharing a link to the website would. Ms. Huston wondered if there was a way to engage the Keene Sentinel to cover the story and share it with the community. Chair Powell thought that was a good idea because the Sentinel story could link to the project website. Ms. Huston said the Sentinel has special write-ups on Saturdays and this could be a focus piece. Chair Powell agreed that having an event could engender more interest. After the first event, the Chair thought the Italian Society was open to hosting another event, and she wondered if that avenue could be more exclusive. Commissioners agreed that presenting this to the Italian Society would be a nice gesture. Mr. Schoefmann thought the only hinderance might be the multimedia portion and he wondered if Keene State College (KSC) would be a better location for this next event, but the Chair noted that the fall term would have just started. There was more time to talk about these details at the September meeting. Mr. Clements thought there was a better turnout at Hannah Grimes, where the Housing Needs Assessment was held, versus Heberton Hall at the Library. Mr. Clements and Mr. Schoefmann would look into a possible location.

Chair Powell thought the Commission needed to consider the tone of this next presentation. Should it be interactive, with Commissioners stationed with laptops to engage small groups? Mr. Schoefmann suggested having this next presentation in December, 1 year after the first presentation. Vice Chair Ellis thought it would be nice to make it a festive event in the sense of celebrating the old Italian neighborhood and Italian heritage. She wondered if it should be a smaller, interactive event with snacks. There could be a small presentation followed by something interactive to share the crowdsourcing. Ms. Emineth wondered if neighbors who were interviewed for the StoryMap could be invited to the event for

a sort of roundtable activity of them sharing their memories. Ms. Huston recalled that there was a full house for the last presentation and everyone who attended was excited; she thought people would be more willing to share stories in that environment. Mr. Clements mentioned having different stations (corresponding to the categories/buckets chosen) that play 5-minute clips of the interviews. Commissioners agreed that they were already overwhelmed with content, and they did not think more was needed. The Chair also thought it would be good to ask families to bring physical artifacts that represent their culture for people to view. Mr. Schoefmann agreed, stating that this next event could be for families to showcase their history.

If this is the route the Commission wants to take for the next presentation, Chair Powell thought it was important to engage the Historical Society early to see how they might want to capture some of this work for their own projects in the future. Ms. Emineth agreed with a focus on food waste, and she thought that Italian food could be brought to the event. Ms. Carey said that from past experiences, she knew that trying to have food at an event like this could be cumbersome. Chair Powell thought the Commission would need to lean on its partners, like asking the Historical Society to pull some weight and the Italian Society could provide additional things. A brief discussion ensued about how some of the Italian families might be excited to showcase food.

Chair Powell tabled further discussion of this event until the next meeting. Commissioners would be available to assist Mr. Schoefmann as he finishes the website.

In terms of promoting the project, Mr. Clements suggested creating a 30-second or 1-minute “teaser” trailer about the project to share on social media. Chair Powell noted that John DiBernardo has a great voice for that sort of promotion. Chair Powell also thought that Mr. Lee might be able to create such a video. With how excited the Communications & Marketing team was about the Black History project, Mr. Clements thought the Commission could lean on them to promote the launch of this project. Chair Powell recalled that Mr. Lee shared the first presentation on his personal social media and people in the community wanted to learn more. The Chair said it would be great if the City advertised this on their social media accounts. Mr. Clements would talk to the Communications & Marketing Director, Rebecca Landry.

4) 2022 CLG – Recovering Black History in Keene Project

Mr. Clements did not have any updates. He talked with the Communications & Marketing team and the City Manager’s office, and both were excited to help. The Communications team was looking for interesting photos and quotes to share on social media. If the Commission provides the content, City Staff would get the word out. Mr. Clements had a brief conversation with Ms. Carroll (Education Director at the Historical Society and the lead on the project), who made an important point about not using single photos of Black people in outreach materials that could tokenize the whole project; photos of groups of people would be better. Quotes are welcome as well. A certain level of sensitivity is needed when promoting this.

Ms. Huston asked about the Commission’s objective in this project; were they just assisting the Historical Society? Chair Powell said the Commission was coming into this project that the Historical Society had underway for some time for Cheshire County (it was unknown whether the project was for Hillsborough County as well, which should be clarified). The Commission would be filling a niche in the Historical Society’s project by doing a sort of case study on Keene specifically. The Historical Society can apply the principles the Commission learns about Keene to other communities. Kabria Baumgartner, Ph.D., the Commission’s consultant is trying to weave stories together from the different primary and secondary resources that her team, the Commission, and the Historical Society have unearthed. Kabria told Mr. Clements to look for warning-out notices and old church records that are not online and harder for her to access.

As a next step, Chair Powell suggested scheduling a time with Ms. Carroll for training on what language and historical records to look for, so the Commission does not replicate work done already. This was originally a volunteer project and there was a training procedure for everyone. The Historical Society was using Google Suite to house the information gathered. All agreed that this training was a good idea because it would allow tasks to be delegated to Commissioners. Everyone was open to scheduling an additional meeting for this training; people can meet with Ms. Carroll individually as needed too. Mr. Clements would contact Ms. Carroll about scheduling this. The Commission would discuss more at their September meeting. Ms. Zerba suggested having a regular Commission meeting start early for the training; others agreed this was a good idea. Mr. Clements would ask the City Attorney whether there could be quorum issues for the training. Kabria’s students starting their fall term would be assisting on the project.

Mr. Clements would add a “Staff Updates” section on future agendas so he could share things. For example, he shared that Ms. DeGidio could not be at this meeting but provided an update on the Demolition Review Subcommittee. Ms. DeGidio did sign-off on the demolition of the building at 339 Pearl Street. The home was built in 1840 and unfortunately was largely destroyed by a fire in May 2022. If anyone is interested in working on the Demolition Review Subcommittee, they should let the Chair know. Ms. Carey suggested getting a photo of the home in its current state before it is demolished. Ms. Carey was unsure whether she got a photo of the home for the Italian Heritage Project.

5) Downtown Infrastructure Project Update

Chair Powell recalled that the Commission submitted a letter to the City Council on this project. Councilor Johnsen provided an update. In July, the City Council voted 14–1 in favor of a specific concept design for the downtown including 2 lanes of traffic in each direction on Main Street, bike lanes at sidewalk level (which many constituents asked the Councilor to support), and no expansion of Central Square to the north. Councilor Johnsen thought the Commission’s letter was important. Mr. Clements would ask the City Clerk to send the recommended design to the Commission and copy the Mayor on the communication. While some trees would be removed because of the bike lane, Councilor Johnsen was confident the trees to be removed for the work would be replaced, just not necessarily in the same location; 15 trees were removed due to disease. If there are opportunities in the future for the HC to comment on this project, Councilor Johnsen would alert the Commission. The Councilor agreed that it is

good to remind the Council of input from the many City committees. Councilor Johnsen recalled how much community input there was on this project. The primary goal is to replace the outdated utilities below Main Street. She did not think the downtown should be kept the same as it was in the 1800s. She said the City needed to think about the young people who would be the future of Keene, as many had commented on the project, but some older Councilors did not agree. Chair Powell would remove this from the agenda moving forward until Councilor Johnsen alerts her of an issue to comment on.

6) **New Business**

Chair Powell wanted to know what everyone thought about the new roundabout work at Winchester/Pearl/Island Streets. She wondered if the Commission should do something with the City and the Italian community to commemorate the historical neighborhood. She thought that considering this during construction might be a better opportunity to do something. Ms. Carey recalled that the Kiwanis garden was removed, and she was unsure whether something could be done in the middle of the new roundabout or whether it would be accessible to pedestrians. Ms. Carey was unsure what would happen between the roadway and the river, which she thought was public land. Ms. Huston recalled that there used to be a plaque on the Island Street bridge honoring 2 young men during WWII combat. Ms. Huston thought it was important to replace that plaque for the neighborhood and said she would talk with John DiBernardo about it.

Chair Powell suggested doing something to honor the Italian community's history. She recalled visiting Newton, NH, recently, where the center traffic line in the Italian neighborhood is painted red, green, and white to honor the Italian flag. She was unsure whether that was the right thing for Keene, but she wondered if there was the possibility to do something like that around the edge of the roundabout or on the new bridge. Chair Powell would like the Commission to think about this over the coming months.

Ms. Carey wanted to understand what land was public and private in that area to determine where the Commission could implement something; Mr. Clements agreed to look into it. Chair Powell said the park could be an opportunity. She added that historically, Butler Court closer to KSC was more of the heart of the Italian neighborhood and the next generation moved toward Island/Pearl Streets. Mr. Schoefmann and Mr. Clements agreed that it would be nice to do something in the middle of the roundabout. Mr. Schoefmann was unsure where the City initiative stood that allowed community groups to do things in the centers of roundabouts. The head of the Highway Department and the Parks and Recreation Director were unsure about this option. There was mention of the new roundabout at Key Road, but Mr. Schoefmann was unsure where that stood. Chair Powell noted the possibility of the HC creating something that the Italian Society could upkeep long-term. Mr. Schoefmann suggested talking with the Italian Society about that and then taking their support to the City Staff in charge, which could help.

Discussion ensued about other options for the Winchester/Island/Pearl Streets roundabout. Ms. Carey liked the idea of colored road lines. Mr. Schoefmann was unsure where the Highway Department stood on that because the project was funded federally. Commissioners wondered whether the colored stripes would be more possible along the outer edge of the roundabout and not within the traffic. Ms. Carey

noted that even something like a flower garden would need a plaque explaining it; there was a question of who would be reading a plaque in the center of a roundabout. Chair Powell thought a plaque might make more sense in a pedestrian area like the park or bridge. Chair Powell asked everyone to bring ideas to the next meeting. She thought it would be great to announce something like this at the next event with the Italian neighborhood. Mr. Clements would explore the idea of colored road stripes with the Public Works Director.

The Commission discussed membership expiration dates. There was a guest at the June meeting interested in being a member, but Mr. Schoefmann did not have their contact information and Mr. Clements had not heard from that guest since the last meeting. Mr. Schoefmann suggested determining whether Ms. DeGidio and Ms. Carey want to continue beyond their second terms and if so, they could be changed to “alternate” members. Then, Ms. Zerba (if she wants) and Ms. Emineth could become a full-time members. Everyone was comfortable with these changes. Mr. Clements would email these details to the Mayor to initiate the changes. Mr. Clements would also check with the City Clerk about whether alternates are exempt from the two-term appointment. Vice Chair Ellis would also reach out to Teresa—a recent college graduate and John DiBernardo’s niece—who was interested in joining as well. Councilor Johnsen noted that she was not running for City Council again and thus, there would be a new City Councilor serving on the Commission in 2024.

7) **Next Meeting – September 13, 2023**

Mr. Clements would ask Ms. Carroll about a training before this meeting. Ms. Emineth would not be at the September meeting, but was willing to set up private training with Ms. Carroll.

8) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 5:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katelyna Kibler, Minute Taker
August 15, 2023

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