



## **Heritage Commission**

**Wednesday, November 13, 2024, 4:30 PM**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, City Hall  
3 Washington St, Keene, NH 03431

### **AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order – Roll Call**
- II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**  
September 11, 2024 – Regular Meeting
- III. Downtown Infrastructure Project Aesthetic Features Presentation**
  - a. Discussion with Public Works & Consultants on aesthetic features to represent the heritage of the community
- IV. Adoption of the 2025 Schedule**
- V. Staff Updates**
  - a. Joint Heritage & Historic District Commission Meeting – January 2025
- VI. New Business**
- VII. Next Meeting – January 8, 2025**
- VIII. Adjourn**

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

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

**Wednesday, September 11, 2024**

**4:30 PM**

**Council Chamber,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Cauley Powell, Chair  
Molly Ellis, Vice Chair  
Marilyn Huston  
Julie Emineth  
Rose Carey, Alternate  
Louise Zerba, Alternate

**Staff Present:**

Evan Clements, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

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10 **1) Call to Order – Roll Call**

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12 Chair Powell called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM. Roll call was conducted.  
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14 **2) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – June 12, 2024**

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16 Ms. Ellis noted a typo on page 2, line 73; Julie Emineth’s last name is spelled wrong.  
17

18 Ms. Huston made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 12, 2024, as amended. Ms.  
19 Ellis seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.  
20

21 **3) 2022 CLG – Recovering Black History Project in Keene**

22 **A) Final Presentation**

23  
24 Chair Powell welcomed Kabria Baumgartner, here to give her presentation.  
25

26 Ms. Baumgartner stated that she has had the great pleasure, for the past year and a half, to lead  
27 this research project exploring 19<sup>th</sup> century Black history in Keene. She continued that she has  
28 presented parts of this research before, along with her students, but today she will share some of  
29 the major findings and key themes they have come across. She will also offer recommendations  
30 for pushing this work forward. The final report will have a few more recommendations.

31

32 Ms. Baumgartner continued that her research project focuses on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it is part of  
33 a larger effort: Recovering Black History in the Monadnock Region, led by Jenna Carroll at the  
34 Cheshire County Historical Society and Michelle Stahl at the Monadnock Center for History and  
35 Culture. This multi-year project has a mighty team of volunteer researchers, “citizen archivists”  
36 who search through thousands of archival materials. She herself, as a historian, was brought in  
37 to review, expand, and contextualize the work those citizen archivists have done. The work was  
38 part of a grant supported by the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, the Certified  
39 Local Government Grant Program, and the Heritage Commission. It is a great partnership. She  
40 also thanks her Northeastern students, Grace Rooney, Janika Dillon, Emily Boyer, Laurel  
41 Schlegel, and Ellie Witham. Their goals were to review the research collected by Ms. Carroll  
42 and her team, identify new research paths, and interpret and contextualize these sources.

43

44 Ms. Baumgartner continued that even when looking through thousands of archival materials,  
45 such as Census records and military records, you will only get a glimpse of people’s lives,  
46 especially people who come from disadvantaged and minoritized backgrounds. The records are  
47 imperfect. For example, some are informed by the subjective and possibly stereotypical views of  
48 minimally trained Census workers. Documents are sometimes fragmented, inaccurate, or in  
49 conflict with other documents. The inability to get a complete view of people, events, and places  
50 when researching Black history is frustrating, and stories may be incomplete. Acknowledging  
51 that archives are a place of power and privilege as well as exclusion, they are capitalizing on  
52 tried and true archival research methods to shed some light on Black history in Keene.

53

54 Ms. Baumgartner stated that historian Ira Berlin argues that until the final break with slavery on  
55 January 1, 1863, the north was part of a slave-holding republic. This is important context to keep  
56 in mind while thinking about the legacy of slavery in the US, New England, and NH. Although  
57 its population of enslaved people was relatively small compared to MA, RI, and other New  
58 England colonies, NH was very much part of this legacy of slavery. The estimates she and her  
59 students found are imperfect and likely undercounts, but there were 656 enslaved people in NH  
60 in 1775, and 158 in 1790 (the first US Census). That is about 1% of the total population. In  
61 Cheshire County, about 18 enslaved people were counted. One might thus think slavery was not  
62 a big deal in NH. But it was. Despite the low numbers of enslaved people, slavery as a system  
63 was brutal, inhumane, and oppressive, meant to extract Black people’s life and labor. It had a  
64 terrible, harmful impact on Black cultural development in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

65

66 Ms. Baumgartner continued that slavery’s harmful impact on Black cultural development is  
67 particularly evident in the story of Roxanna Plantain. A New Hampshire Sentinel article from  
68 1876 says Ms. Plantain’s burial plot says, “*She was colored, and once a slave.*” Another article  
69 says she died at age 46 at the residence of Henry Door. He was a wealthy, white merchant.  
70 There are many questions, such as who enslaved her (they cannot be certain it was Mr. Door),  
71 and over what period of time, and whether it was in NH. At this time, ambiguity surrounded the  
72 legality of slavery in NH. Most historians argue that there was a gradual demise to the system of  
73 slavery, which is why she says there is a legacy of it, and why it shapes the experiences of

74 African Americans. One scholar concludes slavery was legal in NH until 1865, so there is a  
75 strong possibility that Ms. Plaintain and/or others were enslaved in NH well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
76 even if Census records do not capture that.

77

78 Ms. Baumgartner stated that she questions the usefulness of the categories “slavery” and  
79 “freedom.” Many historians argue it is a misleading binary. Jared Hardesty refers to slavery as  
80 “a continuum of unfreedom.” Slavery was one of many forms of coerced, unfree labor. She  
81 thinks the “continuum of unfreedom” concept offers a fruitful approach to exploring the  
82 experiences of African Americans, because sometimes their status could not be categorized as  
83 “free” or “enslaved.” Probing whether and how long slavery continued in NH is beyond this  
84 research’s scope, but even if they cannot be certain that some African Americans were enslaved  
85 in NH in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they can be certain they were unfree.

86

87 Ms. Baumgartner continued that this is clear in the story of Phoebe Simmons. Ms. Carroll and  
88 her team uncovered Ms. Simmons’s story and she (Ms. Baumgartner) and her team found more  
89 about her. Born in Rockingham, VT around 1800, Ms. Simmons was separated from her parents  
90 due to some tragedy and placed with Simon and Margaret Baxter of Surrey, NH. Ms. Simmons  
91 and her sister worked for decades as domestic servants. Ms. Simmons’s unfreedom is clear  
92 when, in 1823, Ms. Baxter gave Ms. Simmons to Ms. Baxter’s granddaughter, Elvira Shawn  
93 Robinson. This is in Census records, which then identify Ms. Simmons as a “*free woman of*  
94 *color*” in 1840. In the 1850s, Ms. Simmons relocated to Keene with the Robinson family,  
95 continuing work as a domestic servant in their house. It is not clear whether she earned a wage.  
96 Jonathan Robinson, Elvira Robinson’s husband, died in 1870 and willed annual money “*to my*  
97 *servant Phoebe Simmons.*” She has seen 18<sup>th</sup> century records in which white enslavers  
98 sometimes willed money to their servants, so it is interesting to see Mr. Robinson willing money  
99 to Ms. Simmons in 1870. Ms. Simmons died in 1886 and is buried in the Robinson lot at the  
100 Woodland Cemetery.

101

102 Ms. Baumgartner continued that what happened to Ms. Simmons also happened to other children  
103 in Cheshire County who were either impoverished, orphaned, or perhaps forcibly taken from  
104 their parents. It is hard to find records about these children from their own perspective.

105 Runaway notices published in local newspapers are interesting. She and her team found six  
106 notices, in Cheshire County newspapers, of children of color fleeing their captors/people who  
107 claimed ownership of the children. Four ads were in Keene. A notice from 1798 was for Dick  
108 Simon, an indigenous boy who was indentured in the home of a physician and innkeeper. One  
109 from 1810 was for an unnamed mulatto girl, age 13, in the household of a physician. One from  
110 1819 was for a black boy apprentice, William Cransel Casey; and one from 1819 was for an  
111 indentured black boy, Henry Hemenway, in the home of a sea captain from MA who settled in  
112 Keene. These children’s names and condition are known to us only through their brave act of  
113 running away. The captors published the runaway ads due to wanting the child returned or not  
114 wanting to incur debts on the child’s behalf. She has many unanswered questions about these  
115 ads, such as how many children were indentured in Keene and the County, how many were  
116 children of color, the stories of children who ran away but were quickly caught, and the stories of

117 children unable to run away. Clearly, the experiences of African Americans of all ages in 19<sup>th</sup>  
118 century NH cannot be truly captured as “enslaved” or “free.” She would describe it as being in  
119 between enslaved and free.

120

121 Ms. Baumgartner stated that she and her research team noticed that African American families in  
122 NH often crossed geographical borders and boundaries, for a range of reasons not always clear in  
123 the archival documentation. They were surprised to not find any manuscript records for Black  
124 Keene residents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are far more in other parts of New England. Thus,  
125 they had to follow their movements, and look at the NH, MA, and VT borders. They saw that  
126 most Black people in Keene were not long-term residents. She thinks this constant moving was  
127 partially due to the legacy of slavery and unfreedom. African American families and kin  
128 networks were constantly separated and broken by slavery and unfreedom. By the 1800s, even  
129 the “free” Black families sometimes did not fare any better, due to facing obstacles, insecurities,  
130 and hardships, and not having the benefit of a social welfare system.

131

132 Ms. Baumgartner continued that an example is the Hemenway family. Mr. and Mrs. Hemenway  
133 were married in Peterborough in 1806. Mr. Hemenway was likely enslaved 30 miles from  
134 Keene in MA, then won his freedom and somehow purchased property in MA. The Hemenways  
135 had six children, and she believes four were born in Keene. One was Henry Hemenway, one of  
136 the runaway children she referenced earlier in the presentation. The question is how and why  
137 Henry was separated from his parents and taken away. They (Ms. Baumgartner and her team)  
138 found a journal of a homemaker in Keene, which included writings about the Hemenways and  
139 their comings and goings across the border. But something unknown happened to the  
140 Hemenways, possibly a financial catastrophe of some kind. Mr. Hemenway died in a workhouse  
141 for the poor in 1827 at age 68, and it is possible that Mrs. Hemenway and her children then  
142 became indentured and maybe that is how Henry Hemenway became indentured in Keene.  
143 Thus, by 1830, they see this once-free Black family scattered across two states, and some are  
144 unfree or otherwise in precarious positions, as seen in the ads for runaway children.

145

146 Ms. Baumgartner continued that they do not know the fate of the children in the runaway ads,  
147 but they know that Henry Hemenway was able to find freedom. He returned to Littleton, his  
148 mother’s hometown, and worked as a farmer. In 1849, he married Eliza Gigger in Gardner, MA.  
149 Ms. Gigger claimed indigenous ancestry, as did Henry. Their son, James, was born in 1851. She  
150 found no record of Henry ever returning to Keene, which seems to be a pattern for African  
151 Americans, where they are in Keene for a short time and leave, never to return.

152

153 Ms. Baumgartner stated that Sophira Mero’s story is similar. She continued that she is probably  
154 connected to the Mero family of Woodstock, VT. Little is known about her, but it is interesting  
155 to follow her movement based on letters in the post office. They see her in Hanover, NH,  
156 Windsor and Woodstock, VT, then Keene in 1850 when there was a letter for her at the post  
157 office. She was residing in the home of a ship captain, who died in 1850, and then Ms. Mero  
158 moved to Boston. She died the next year. They wish they knew more of Ms. Mero’s story,

159 beyond the post office records, but she is another example of a child of color likely bound out to  
160 service and unable to grow up with her family. That separation ends up being lifelong.

161  
162 Ms. Baumgartner stated that the US Census in 1830 lists eight African American heads of  
163 households in Cheshire County, which is interesting. None are in Keene. Something about  
164 Keene is not hospitable to a Black head of household. All African Americans in Keene in 1830  
165 are not leading their own household, which means they are probably in some position of  
166 unfreedom. However, there are examples of African Americans who move to Keene for  
167 opportunity or business, like John Louie. He and his wife lived in Keene in the first decade of  
168 the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The newspaper identifies him as a hairdresser, one of the few professions then  
169 open to Black men, and somewhat lucrative. In 1800, Mr. Louie posted an ad reminding his  
170 clients to pay him for services rendered, and in 1804, he advertised in the newspaper for an  
171 “*active black boy*” to serve as an apprentice. Mr. Louie and his wife took in poor and indigent  
172 people; there is evidence of the Town of Keene paying Mr. Louie in 1806 for boarding Roby  
173 Gardner. Her team was glad to find that piece of information, because they wanted to see if there  
174 were connections among African Americans in Keene. They did not find many, but this was  
175 one, as they had seen Roby Gardner’s name elsewhere and then this link to Mr. Louie. Thus,  
176 there may have been a small, close-knit community.

177  
178 Ms. Baumgartner continued that after Mr. Louie’s wife died in 1808, he moved to Amherst, NH,  
179 then Montpelier, VT, and they do not know what happened to him after that. There are no  
180 further records of him in Keene. Two Black barbers followed in Mr. Louie’s footsteps 40 years  
181 later and settled in Keene. One is Francis Green, his wife, and their adopted 2-year-old daughter;  
182 and the other is Philip Edge, who moved with his wife from VA to Keene. African Americans  
183 like Mr. Green and Mr. Edge have an entrepreneurial spirit, launching hairdressing businesses,  
184 seeking economic independence. However, going with the pattern, neither of them stay in Keene  
185 long. By 1855, Mr. Edge had moved to MA. The Francis family left Keene, too, but they do not  
186 know why or where they went. It could have been business failure, racial prejudice, both, or  
187 some other factor. In the Civil War era, there are not many African Americans in Keene. The  
188 1860 US Census only counts three: Phoebe Simmons, Harriet Hemenway, and Fannie Armstead.  
189 The trend is similar in the 1870 and 1880 Censuses.

190  
191 Ms. Baumgartner stated that tracing the experiences of African Americans is elusive, given the  
192 lack of archival records, but they do have these small slivers and stories, although incomplete.  
193 They lead to more questions than answers, but provoking questions that lead researchers toward  
194 interesting historical patterns and findings is important. It is important to think about the legacy  
195 of slavery in NH, and unfreedom as a major problem, and how African Americans are moving  
196 across borders and why. It is important to think about African Americans’ struggles to thrive in  
197 ‘small town NH.’ If asked what the profile was of Black Keene residents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she  
198 would say that life was difficult, unpredictable, isolating, and challenging. The only Black  
199 residents who stayed in Keene long term were Phoebe Simmons and Harriet Hemenway, seen in  
200 the Census from about 1850 to 1880. They were domestic servants, unmarried, and without  
201 children, serving white households their entire lives. Although she and her researchers did not

202 find other Black residents or families who stayed in Keene for a long period of time, it does not  
203 mean African Americans did not shape the town/city. They absolutely did.

204

205 Ms. Baumgartner stated that finally, she will talk briefly about recommendations she has, based  
206 on her findings. One is historical exhibits on Keene's Black History, which she is sure Ms.  
207 Carroll is working on. Her (Ms. Baumgartner's) student, Laurel Schlegel, created a website  
208 called Escaped Ads New Hampshire. She looked at the first 15 years of the New Hampshire  
209 Sentinel, and it is stark thinking about how many people were indentured/unfree and how many  
210 ads were placed in the paper. That could be an interesting exhibit, leading to discussions of  
211 unfreedom, poverty, and orphaned children in the 19<sup>th</sup> century before a child welfare system  
212 existed.

213

214 Ms. Baumgartner continued that she strongly recommends interpretive signs. The physical  
215 location of a marker or interpretative panel depends on many factors, such as accessibility and  
216 pricing. Such an initiative acknowledges place-based history and highlights lesser-known stories  
217 and people. Keene has sites that would be good spots for such signs or markers. Partnering with  
218 the Black Heritage Trail of NH would be helpful, as they already have a successful program like  
219 this, with fantastic unveilings. Much research goes into crafting the wordings of the signs.

220

221 She continued that the final recommendation is a lecture series, which can convey nuance and  
222 historical context in ways that interpretive markers and historical exhibits cannot. This would be  
223 an important space for the hardworking volunteers who have done so much research, to foster or  
224 continue that kind of community engagement. A lecture series could be in partnership with the  
225 Keene Public Library or a similar organization and could spotlight the citizen archivists' work.

226

227 Ms. Baumgartner stated that it has been great pursuing this work and this research, and there is  
228 more to be done. This is an ongoing story.

229

230 Chair Powell thanked Ms. Baumgartner for her wonderful presentation. She continued that she  
231 was surprised to hear that Keene was not a hub, because she thought it would have been. She  
232 asked if Ms. Baumgartner has any idea why that might have been the case. She would imagine  
233 that a hub would be where you would find people, and the rural farming communities  
234 surrounding Keene would be less likely, but it sounds like the reverse was true.

235

236 Ms. Baumgartner replied that she was surprised, too. She continued that she fully expected to  
237 see a couple African American heads of households in the 1830 Census, and there were none.  
238 Keene had a relatively small population from the 1790s into the first few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup>  
239 century, and many of the African Americans in the farming towns had ties to those areas via  
240 enslavement. She found that if those African Americans in NH farming towns moved, they went  
241 not to Keene, but to a larger community in the urban north.

242

243 Ms. Ellis stated that she had a question about the reward money regarding the runaway ads. She  
244 continued that she sees that the offered rewards were one cent or five cents, which is so tiny.  
245 She asked if those were just token rewards, or if they were really meant to lure people.

246  
247 Ms. Baumgartner replied that she thinks it had more to do with the captors/guardians trying to  
248 establish that they were not going to incur debts on behalf of those runaway children. She  
249 continued that there are examples, too, of runaway adults, such as wives. She thinks the ads'  
250 intentions were sometimes more about ensuring no debts were being incurred, and less about  
251 trying to get help finding the person, because yes, the rewards were not high. It is interesting  
252 that this was not uncommon in Keene or NH. It was particularly prevalent in Portsmouth and  
253 Manchester, too. Ads for (runaway) indentured children were widespread.

254  
255 Ms. Huston stated that she has been researching Mary Dolby. She continued that she found that  
256 she was interned with the Amos Fortune family, information she found in a book about slavery  
257 in NH, written about five years ago. It has other names, too; it was an exciting find. She asked  
258 what part the Amos Fortune family played with the other Black families. She wonders if they  
259 helped those who were enslaved or indentured then freed, because they (the Amos Fortune  
260 family) seemed to be better off.

261  
262 Ms. Baumgartner replied that that is an exciting find, because she found Mary Dolby in the 1850  
263 Census living in the household of George Balch. She continued that Ms. Dolby was 18 then, and  
264 thus fits the profile of an indentured young woman. She asked who Ms. Huston means by  
265 "Amos Fortune," because there are a couple in New England, but the one she knows of was not  
266 necessarily connected to Keene. Ms. Huston replied he was in Peterborough. Ms. Baumgartner  
267 replied that there are these small enclaves of African American families, who do have some  
268 connection, but the archives do not allow her a full understanding of that connection. Seeing  
269 Roby Gardner and John Louie in the same household led her to believe there was a connection  
270 there, which is so hard to find when looking at some of these Black families in Keene,  
271 Peterborough, other parts of NH, and VT. There is a much larger Black population in MA, but in  
272 NH and VT, she does not have those manuscript sources that would tell her how the families  
273 were connected.

274  
275 Ms. Huston asked if Ms. Baumgartner's research students went to the Jaffrey Library, because it  
276 has a whole floor dedicated to Amos Fortune. Ms. Baumgartner replied no, their remit was just  
277 Keene. Ms. Huston replied that she was wondering if there was more information at the Jaffrey  
278 Library that could be obtained. Ms. Baumgartner replied that she thinks there is a lecture series  
279 in Jaffrey that has the Amos Fortune name. She continued that those archivists have done great  
280 work to uncover his story.

281  
282 Chair Powell asked what Ms. Baumgartner was referring to when she mentioned the letters being  
283 listed in the newspaper. She asked if that was uncollected mail people were trying to recover, or  
284 something else. Ms. Baumgartner replied yes, it could be uncollected mail; it was usually an  
285 announcement saying, 'There are letters for you in the post office that you ought to pick up.'



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Chair Powell stated that she had not realized that NH had not created any sort of legal designation until the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which would have overridden it. She asked if there is nothing in the NH State Constitution that would include that language. MA did this very early in their State Constitution.

Ms. Baumgartner replied that she thinks it is worth examining more of that legal history. She continued that she thinks scholars are divided on the issue. There is often a myth that MA abolished slavery in 1783, and it did not. The State encouraged people to stop enslaving other people, so it was more of a cultural kind of push. Some people cite the Quock Walker case. Quock Walker was freed, but not all enslaved people were. Historian Gloria Whiting has examples of enslaved people in MA well into the 1790s, even though the MA Census says there are zero enslaved people then. This is why Census records are not reliable. They need to look at the categorization and how they are thinking of “slavery” and “freedom.” Some NH scholars say it was very ambiguous. She saw a Census record showing zero enslaved people in NH for a certain decade, and 30 years later, the Census showed three enslaved people. There is an undercount, and she thinks people are being miscategorized. Slavery was still shaping NH well into the 1840s and 1850s. A law passed in about 1857 declared citizenship for people of color, and some historians argue that that is when slavery ended in NH, but another historian says no, it did not really end until the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1865.

Ms. Ellis asked if Ms. Baumgartner has ideas about what other reasons might be that Keene and the Cheshire County area in general were so off-putting to Black families, and why they kept coming and leaving. She wonders if it was the culture, or if they were just looking for more business opportunities, or something else.

Ms. Baumgartner replied that larger urban areas such as Portsmouth, Boston, Providence, and Worcester had religious, social, and educational institutions, and Portsmouth had a school for African American children. She continued that those made a huge difference and made it possible for an African American community to emerge and thrive. She does not have any examples of that in Keene. She cannot find a single literary society for Black children or adults, or a religious or educational institution. It does not mean those things do not exist, but she cannot find them. She is reminded of the story of Harriet Wilson, who was indentured in Milford and suffered abuse in that household. Ms. Wilson talks about how isolating it was. When she had the opportunity to move, she did, and moved to Boston. The institutions that glued Black communities together are just not seen in Keene.

Chair Powell stated that the HC is so appreciative of the work Ms. Baumgartner and her students have put into this project, and the contribution they are making to the community by doing this work. She continued that she cannot wait to see the final report, and she hopes they will then have time and opportunities to consider the recommendations Ms. Baumgartner proposes for the next steps. She hopes this can be considered just an early stage in this kind of research.

329 Ms. Baumgartner replied yes, that is her hope. She continued that she is happy to help and  
330 support in any way, especially with the marker program, which has a nice structure established  
331 by the Black Heritage Trail. That is one of the more immediate things they absolutely could do.  
332

333 **B) Project Hours**  
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335 Mr. Clements stated that some people had emailed him regarding the number of house they  
336 worked on the project as part of the grant agreement included a contribution of volunteer and  
337 staff hours worked in lieu of a monetary commitment. He asked Chair Powell how many hours  
338 she worked. Chair Powell replied she worked 20 hours total on the project.  
339

340 Ms. Huston stated that she found out that when Black slaves passed away, they were buried in  
341 the back of the cemetery with a number, and she sees in (Ms. Baumgartner's presentation) a copy  
342 of the book "*Properties Ledger and Account Book, Town Expenses, City of Keene.*" She  
343 continued that she found out yesterday that that book is downstairs in the Clerk's office. She was  
344 wondering if anyone came across that book when they were doing research. Chair Powell  
345 replied that she thinks Ms. Baumgartner might have looked at it here.  
346

347 Chair Powell stated that she thinks at the HC's next meeting, they will sort of dot the Is and cross  
348 the Ts. She asked, regarding the website links, if the newspaper website Ms. Baumgartner  
349 mentioned is linked within the project specific website. It sounds very interesting. Mr. Clements  
350 replied that he thinks Ms. Baumgartner sent it to him separately, with a note saying it was not  
351 quite ready, but it sounds like it is now, so he will send it around. The overall project website  
352 that her students put together will be part of the package that they sent to DHR for the grant.  
353 Chair Powell stated that it is great to be able to go through that website, the Google Drive, and  
354 all the photos and archival elements they found. She continued that it is interesting that the  
355 results show Keene was not a place of continual residency during that time period.  
356

357 Ms. Huston stated that several of the females, on her list of people to research, were very  
358 prominent during the plague. She continued that they took care of the community, going house  
359 to house to take care of people. They were highly regarded for their care. She wonders if they  
360 were taught to take care of people, or if they were used, put in a situation that could backfire on  
361 them. There was not enough information.  
362

363 Chair Powell stated that she was curious about, and should have asked about Keene's location at  
364 this corner between VT, NH, and MA, the different policies within those states and communities,  
365 and whether there was something that suggested that traveling to a different state, where in other  
366 circumstances you might just be going to a different town. Keene is so close to all these borders,  
367 that maybe there is an advantage. Or maybe people just did not want to live here.  
368

369 Ms. Emineth replied that at the time, Keene was not as big as what they are thinking of, and as  
370 Ms. Baumgartner said, there were no support systems. Others agreed.  
371

372 Chair Powell stated that they will talk about the project at their next meeting.

373

374 **4) Staff Updates**

375 **A) Downtown Project Design Elements Discussion**

376

377 Mr. Clements stated that quite a while ago when the Downtown Project was getting a lot of  
378 attention and getting people riled up, the HC wrote a letter of general support for the project,  
379 reminding to the City Council to think of not just the present but also the future and the heritage  
380 of the community. He continued that the Public Works Director at the time said that once they  
381 get into the design details for the streetscape, they would be interested in getting input from the  
382 HC. He (Mr. Clements) has started that conversation with Brett Rusnock from Public Works,  
383 who is the Project Manager for this. Mr. Rusnock is working with Stantec, the consultant, to put  
384 together a design presentation. They would present it to the HC at one of the HC's meetings, to  
385 go over the design ideas and get the HC's feedback. The HC members should start thinking, in  
386 the back of their minds, about "what makes Keene, Keene," in terms of a streetscape design. He  
387 will keep them updated on when that presentation might be; it is nebulous now.

388

389 In response to a question, Mr. Clements clarified that they are not talking about street orientation  
390 or any of those "big" elements, which have already been decided. He continued that the HC  
391 would be giving feedback just on design details, such as benches, light poles, ideas of entryway  
392 arches, and so on and so forth.

393

394 Ms. Huston stated that she does not understand why the City pays so much money for  
395 consultants, instead of relying on the wonderful staff the City already has. Mr. Clements replied  
396 that it is mostly about capacity. He explained the abilities and limitations of various City  
397 departments and job positions, in relation to the wide variety of elements of the Downtown  
398 Project and in relation to the other job duties staff members perform beyond working on the  
399 Downtown Project. He gave examples of how City staff have expertise in certain project  
400 elements but not others, so hiring consultants makes sense and is cost effective. Ms. Huston  
401 thanked him for the explanation. Brief discussion continued about City staff positions and the  
402 work they do, and Keene in general as a good place to live.

403

404 Ms. Ellis stated that to her, Keene has been a wonderful place to live and has many wonderful  
405 community institutions and she never wants to leave, but it is good to look at it through the lens  
406 of whether Keene has community institutions/support for other people, people who differ from  
407 her and her family in various ways. She wants Keene to be a good place to live for any/all  
408 people. Ms. Huston replied that she recently met someone who just moved to Keene from  
409 Seattle, after having carefully researched Keene and deciding it was the place for him. She  
410 continued that there are people like him who are doing their research.

411

412 Chair Powell stated that Ms. Ellis makes a good point, and they should keep those thoughts in  
413 mind.

414

**B) Master Plan Future Summit – Saturday, October 5, 2024**

Mr. Clements stated that the Master Plan Future Summit on October 5 is the next step in Phase I of the Master Plan update. He continued that all of Phase I is public input, public engagement, and the questions, “What is Keene?” “What is working?” “Where do we sit in the region and where do we want to go?” “What are our goals and aspirations for the community?” The conversation started way out there and they are now slowly solidifying those ideas into five strategic pillars for strategic positioning and growth to maintain the healthy community that already exists. Many times, master plans are created as a result of people not being entirely happy with where the community is at, but what is exciting is that Keene is already doing very well. That is what the consultants who have been doing a lot of research on Keene have found. The consultants have done many master plan projects for communities that, for example, do not have jobs, are not strategically located, or are struggling to carve a niche for themselves. When the consultants then look at Keene and say, “Wow, you’re in really good shape,” that feels good to hear.

Mr. Clements continued that however, Keene has a declining and aging population, and one of the measures of health in a community is a stable, slowly growing population. A question is how to attract young people to Keene and get them to stay. Another question is how Keene prepares for an uncertain future. The next step is the Summit, at which they will talk about those five pillars, which relate to economic health, climate adaptation, cultural impacts, and so on and so forth. They want public feedback on what they have so far, and then they will move into Phase II. Phase II is the document design and the nitty gritty details, such as the goals and strategies to actually achieve where we want to be in 20 years. To see what has been done so far, people can go to [keenemasterplan.com](http://keenemasterplan.com). It shows the questions and results of the community survey that has already been done, demographic data, the “community life score” from the AARP, and more.

Mr. Clements stated that one of Keene’s biggest challenges is that it is a community of about 23,000 people, which swells to about 50,000 people every working day. Public Works, for example, budgets for 50,000 users on a 23,000-person taxpayer budget. Discussion continued. Mr. Clements continued that one question is how to get some of those people who come into Keene for work every day to actually live in Keene. HC members replied that the lack of housing makes it hard. Mr. Clements replied absolutely, and that is a huge component of the master plan update.

**5) New Business**

Chair Powell asked if there was any new business. (No)

**6) Next Meeting – November 13, 2024**

457 Chair Powell stated that the next meeting is in November, because the HC is returning to  
458 meeting every other month. She continued that if something comes up before then and Mr.  
459 Clements wants them to consider an October meeting, they could do that.

460

461 7) **Adjourn**

462

463 There being no further business, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 6:03 PM.

464

465 Respectfully submitted by,  
466 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

467

468 Reviewed and edited by,  
469 Evan J. Clements, AICP  
470 Planner



## **HERITAGE COMMISSION**

### **2025 Meeting Dates**

All meetings are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month,  
at 4:30PM

Wednesday, January 8

Wednesday, February 12

Wednesday, March 12

Wednesday, April 9

Wednesday, May 14

Wednesday, June 11

Wednesday, July 9

Wednesday, August 13

Wednesday, September 10

Wednesday, October 8

Wednesday, November 12

Wednesday, December 10

Meetings dates & times are subject to change