

City of Keene
New Hampshire

JOINT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

4:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

HDC Members Present:

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair
Louise Zerba
David Bergeron, Alternate
Russ Fleming, Alternate

Staff Present:

Evan Clements, Planner
Megan Fortson, Planner

HDC Members Not Present:

Hope Benik, Vice Chair
Councilor Catherine Workman
Peter Poanessa, Alternate
Anthony Ferrantello

HC Members Present:

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

HC Members Not Present:

All Present

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM. Roll call was conducted. David Bergeron & Russ Flemming were designated as voting members of the HDC.

2) Local Ranking of Unranked Properties in the Downtown Historic District

A) The Two Commissions Will Assign Local Rankings for Properties that Have Reached Their Period of Significance but are Currently Unranked

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked how Mr. Clements wanted the HDC and HC to go about this process of ranking the unranked properties in the Downtown Historic District. Mr. Clements replied that members have resource ranking forms, one for each property they are intending to

rank today. He continued that they also have the inventory forms that were prepared by the consultant. They can follow the memo that was in the packet. There are seven properties. The memo includes the resource rankings and the methodology behind how the rankings are determined. The resource ranking forms will help guide them. The value of a resource is based on the physical form – the architectural features that make it an example of the time in which it was constructed – as well as the cultural and historical significance of the business or industry that the resource represents. Both of those things together are used to determine the amount of value the property adds to the district.

Mr. Clements continued that for example, speaking generally, there might be a building that is less architecturally significant but is the last standing example of an industry that no longer exists. It would still be historically significant and is valuable to the identity of the Historic District and the City as a whole, which may lead to a Primary or a Contributing designation, as opposed to a Non-compatible or an Incompatible designation. Something “Non-compatible” or “Non-contributing” would be something that stands out, like a gas station, which there are many of in town. Something that looks like a gas station, and does not look like a 1950s, Route 66, iconic (location).

Ms. Zerba stated that she has a question. She continued that the HDC and HC have a list of things that are different than what the consultant provided for them. She wonders how to blend the two, knowing that (the consultant) is an expert in the field. Mr. Clements replied that the form he handed out was used when the district was created, and will not be a one to one match. He continued that the HC and HDC might decide that a specific category on the form is not relevant or that they do not have the information they need. If they go through it and feel like they do not have enough information to make a decision, they can choose not to. The form is a guide; they are not beholden to it.

1. 122 West Street – People’s United Bank – Built 1978*

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that 122 West St. was built in 1978, so it has about three more years before it is part of the HDC’s remit. She continued that the form says there are no known major alterations to the exterior of the People’s United Bank other than the replacement of the sign with the current M&T Bank sign. The notes state, *“It retains character-defining features such as long, low building profile, angular exterior with projected massing, flat brick walls, horizontal brick orientation, and slightly indented ribbons of large, flat windows.”*

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos continued that she (the consultant) recommended it be ranked as a contributing resource. There are more details that can be reviewed as part of this discussion. She asked for HC and HDC members’ thoughts.

Ms. Zerba stated that when she thinks of the historic district, she does not think of a building that looks like this one, but it is close to 50 years old. She continued that at the time it was

constructed, banks were sort of long and without much ornamentation. She would go along with the recommendation of ranking it as a Contributing resource, according to the times.

Mr. Fleming stated that it says its common name is “People’s United Bank,” but it has been around for a few years now and he wonders if they should change that. Ms. Zerba replied yes, it has had a few names. Mr. Fleming continued that he thinks it is an interesting piece of property, because it was aspirational, the fact that it was going to be the headquarters for Keene Savings Bank. When it was built, they were on the up and coming. Of course, there has been much consolidation in the banking industry since then, but it says so much about the times. Beyond that is the shape of the building and the massive amount of parking from when people used to drive to the bank all the time. He thinks it has a lot of interest. His question is whether they protect it much by calling it a Contributing resource, and whether that is the best they can do.

Mr. Clements replied that there are four ranking categories. He continued that there are only two categories of regulation. There are the stricter protections granted to Primary and Contributing resources, and less strict protection granted to Non-contributing and Incompatible resources. Currently, all the unranked properties are granted the strictest protection. As they go through this and decide if resources are Contributing or Primary, they will not be making the protections stricter than they currently are required to be. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that to be clear, there is no way to make the protections stricter than they already are. Mr. Clements replied that that is correct, unless they were to change the regulations.

Mr. Fleming asked if it is correct that for the next three years, this property (owner) could do whatever (she or he) wanted. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they would still have to follow Planning (regulations), but with respect to the historic character, Mr. Fleming is right that the HDC has no authority over this property until three years from now. She continued that to answer his question, the property would receive the same protections if it is ranked Contributing or Primary, and the most stringent protections they could offer.

Mr. Bergeron stated that as the report states, this property has been basically untouched in the 47 years it has been there. He continued that in comparison to the other buildings they are looking at, he sees that this one is essentially the way it was originally built. His question is why it would not thus be considered a Primary resource, given the fact that it has remained unchanged for almost 50 years in the exterior of the building.

Mr. Clements stated that he will read, for the record, the difference between Primary and Contributing resources:

“Primary resource shall mean any building, structure, or site which contributes to the overall historic and architectural significance of the historic district and was present during the period of historic significance and possesses historic and architectural integrity with little or no diminishment in value reflecting the character of that time or is capable of yielding important information about the historically significant period. Qualities of the building, structure, or site

which contribute to the overall historic and architectural significance of the historic district include but are not limited to setback, massing, height, materials, architectural features, and/or fenestration.

Contributing resource shall mean any building, structure, or site which contributes to the overall historic and architectural significance of the historic district and was present during the period of historic significance, but which possesses some diminishment of significance due to alterations, disturbances, or other changes to the building, structure, or site. Said diminishment of significance to the district is not so substantial as to prevent the building, structure, or site from possessing historic and architectural integrity reflecting the character of that time or being capable of yielding important information about the historically significant period."

Mr. Clements continued that to answer Mr. Bergeron's question, if the resource is truly untouched and is an example of the period of its intended use and architectural style of the time, it would be potentially Primary. Whereas Contributing resources have some degradation, but not much.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the consultant's report says, "*Despite some loss of integrity of setting due to modern construction in the area immediately surrounding the building, the People's National Bank retains integrity of location, design, and materials.*" She continued that it sounds like maybe the Contributing resource was due to the setting as opposed to the building itself.

Mr. Clements replied that the consultant did not specify the four ranking criteria; she ranked by either Contributing or Non-contributing. He continued that it is thus up to the HDC and HC to apply the City's more nuanced definitions to the local ranking. The consultant was using the criteria for the National Trust and the Park Service.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if anyone wanted to make a motion regarding 122 West St., for the property to go in as a Primary resource.

Ms. Zerba stated that when she spoke earlier about this being a Contributing resource, she had not considered Mr. Bergeron's comments. She continued that it has not been touched on the outside since it was constructed.

Ms. Zerba made a motion to rank 122 West St. as a Primary resource. Ms. Carey seconded the motion.

Mr. Fleming stated that they have to discuss the period of significance a little bit. He continued that both this property and the next one on the list were built in the early 1970s. The significance of that period is that it is when everyone started having cars. Things started spreading out to the suburbs more and these buildings reflect the growing use of the car to get to the building, if nothing else. He agrees with the Primary designation.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Fleming stated that he has one more comment about the site. He continued that inside the building, the lobby contains a section of a huge tree that was removed from the property years ago when the road was widened again.

2. 166 West Street – Friendly’s Building – Built 1976*

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the former Friendly’s Building at 166 West St. is in current use by an eye doctor. She continued that it was heavily renovated in 2021 with roof, siding, and windows replaced and cupola removed. The consultant’s notes say, *“The general form and massing of the building, however, have remained largely intact and carry over from the original use as a branded Friendly’s restaurant of the mid 1970s.”* There is a lengthy note on integrity and significance. The recommendation is a Non-contributing ranking due to the loss of integrity.

Mr. Fleming stated that he does not agree with that. He continued that it is not up to the standard of the bank building next door, but it is essentially a damaged integrity. The consultant’s review says that it still has the massing and such that could cause a passer-by to notice that it used to be a Friendly’s. It has a lot of the same features (he spoke of earlier), welcoming the automobile and so forth.

Mr. Fleming made a motion to make 166 West St. a Contributing resource. He continued that he would hate to see something drastic done to the site to further take it away from what it was.

Ms. Ellis stated that she disagrees. She continued that she thinks it is definitely Non-contributing. Friendly’s restaurants are a dime a dozen. It just looks like an eye doctor that used to be a Friendly’s. In her opinion, it is nothing special, architecturally, now and when it was a Friendly’s. She would say it is Non-contributing or even Incompatible.

Ms. Zerba stated that when it was constructed, at the time, this building was built to reflect the building that was going to occupy it. She continued that all the Friendly’s throughout the United States were constructed to be similar in appearance. The City appropriately allowed it to be built the way it was built because it was built specifically for a Friendly’s.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Friendly’s was quite the cultural phenomenon at the time.

Ms. Powell stated that if more of the integrity of the original Friendly’s building, including the cupola or sign structure had been retained, perhaps it would be easier to imagine it as a Contributing resource. She continued that the renovation to the eye doctor really did strip a lot of the character that had given it the Friendly’s building appearance. She is not sure she would recognize the building today as a former restaurant. Having lived here when it was still

Friendly's, it is easy to forget that the appearance has been changed so much. She is unsure if it would fit in the Contributing category.

Mr. Bergeron stated that the change in windows is striking. He continued that Friendly's had much larger windows on the side space, the entrance, and they had architectural features in the windows. All of that has been removed. Now it just has the standard commercial windows as opposed to what made the building look like a Friendly's.

Mr. Fleming replied that if you look at the photos side by side, looking at the massing in the basic structure of the building, even though the cupola has been removed, he thinks you could recognize that it is the same building. They will be talking about that with some of the other buildings, too. For example, the roundhouse of the old train station is recognizable as a roundhouse, even though it is now [something else].

Ms. Emineth stated that she agrees that you can tell (it is the same building) if you are looking at the photos side by side, but that is because you are looking at them side by side. She continued that she thinks if you were to drive into Keene today and did not know that the building used to be a Friendly's, it would not be obvious that it used to be a Friendly's, the way an old Pizza Hut building is obvious. She thinks this (former Friendly's building) has lost a lot of charm. She agrees that it is a Non-contributing resource.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Mr. Fleming made a motion for this to be considered a Contributing resource, and she did not hear a second. Mr. Fleming replied that there was no second. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she would entertain a different motion.

Ms. Ellis made a motion to consider 166 West St. a Non-contributing resource. Ms. Zerba seconded the motion.

Mr. Fleming stated that he wants to clarify that when this was converted from the Friendly's, the HDC had something to say about it. He continued that maybe Mr. Clements could talk to them about what the HDC would have to say about it as a Non-contributing resource going forward. Mr. Clements replied that the definition for Non-contributing resource acknowledges that this could be a property that had character-defining features that have since been lost, and nothing stops a property from being reevaluated. He continued that if someone wants to restore architectural features that had been removed, there is always potential for a property to become Contributing or Primary. The difference between Contributing or Primary is related to the amount of degradation of the property itself.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked Mr. Clements to remind the HDC and HC, loosely, of what the differences between "Contributing" and Non-contributing" are. Mr. Clements replied that a part of it is just the level of review, where even minor alterations would require a trip to the HDC for a Contributing or Primary resource, and a Non-contributing resource would likely just be reviewed by staff administratively. He continued that there are pages and pages of very well-

articulated standards for Primary and Contributing resources, whereas the set of guidelines for Non-contributing and Incompatible resources is much thinner.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that to clarify, it is not that they (property owners of Non-contributing and Incompatible resources) can do anything they want to their property; there is still a level of oversight. Mr. Clements replied that is correct.

Ms. Zerba stated that she wants to mention again that the cupola was one of the Friendly's features, so (its removal) would be another reason for perhaps calling this a Non-contributing resource. She continued that that was one of (Friendly's) architectural features that was included when it was constructed, which was removed, as well as the windows.

Ms. Powell asked if the outdoor walk-up window was part of the original design as well. Ms. Zerba replied where the ice cream was sold, yes. Ms. Powell replied that that has been removed or closed in well, based on the photo.

The motion passed with a vote of 8-1. Mr. Fleming was opposed.

3. 194 West Street – TD Bank – Built 1972

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that this "TD Bank" building was built in 1972, which means it is in its period of significance. She continued that the alterations include green trim at the roof area, added in 2020. The notes say, *"Like the nearby People's United Bank, the building has a long, low form with exterior detail emphasizing horizontal lines. The centralized entrance is accessed through a recessed entry porch with large plate glass windows, creating a light and open atrium at the building interior."* There are comments about the integrity and significance, which she will not read now, but invites people to review. The (consultant) recommends this be a Contributing resource. As a reminder, the consultant used the two rankings "Contributing" and "Non-contributing," so if the HDC and HC want to take the recommendation, they still need to decide between "Primary" and "Contributing."

Ms. Ellis stated that she has a question which she does not think the consultant really got at. She continued that she wonders, when they are deciding how to rank something, whether it matters whether something is simply untouched, or untouched but also has particular architectural significance, charm, or value.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that her understanding is that the significance is not related to charm. She continued that it is about whether the resource is a good representation of the era in which it was built and those remaining consistent. As she understands it, there could be renovations, but the characteristics would not be changed in the renovations. For example, she personally is not a fan of 1970s architecture, but it is historic to the era, and buildings that are good representations of what they were from that era are worthy of that classification.

Mr. Clements stated that Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos's explanation is about 90% complete. He continued that they also have to evaluate the resource's value to the district as a whole. (For example), something might be a shining example of the district at the time in which it was built, but actively conflict with the overall historic character of the surrounding area. (These properties being discussed today) are all within the extension that was done in 2012, so they are not necessarily comparing the property to Main St. That would not be fair or appropriate, because it is in a different context. But within the overall footprint of the extension, they know the history of this part of town and its relationship to the railroad, so it is a little bit more like that. This is not easy. The HC and HDC are doing a good job with these nuanced decisions.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she will try and give an example. She continued that if one of these 1970s banks, say, was hanging out in the middle of the lovely, late 18th century downtown, they could say that would potentially reduce the value because it detracts from the feeling of that era in the downtown. Mr. Clements replied yes, it might be an example in its own right within the context of the surroundings. It detracts from the historical vibe of a late 18th century historic neighborhood, because it sticks out like a sore thumb.

Mr. Fleming replied that this is why he thought they should discuss the period of significance for the buildings. He continued that they are not talking about the 1800s; they are talking about the 1970s. Mr. Clements replied especially considering that this part of West St. and Gilbo St. are still fairly open, so they do not have that strong juxtaposition between, say, 1890s versus today or the 1970s. They do not have a lot of that context, because not many of those old railroad structures are left.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if that answered Ms. Ellis's question. Ms. Ellis replied sort of, but she still does not find unattractive 1970s banks significant in any way, so she finds this difficult.

Ms. Powell stated that the consultant flags this property as being "in the international style." She continued that her (Ms. Powell's) sense is that the international style usually involves a bit more glass and is a bit more modern in feel. She does not know if it is the fact that this particular building is square without a lot of defining elements. It has the bump-out for the open air walk in. Beyond that, she is surprised to see it characterized as "being in the international style."

Ms. Ellis replied that to that point, she thinks this bank is just old. She continued that it does not seem to be of any architectural interest. It does not seem like a great example of an architectural style. It is just a bank that has been sitting there for about 50 years.

Ms. Carey stated that when West St. was developed and these buildings were put in, they were all very modern for the time. She continued that they are all grouped into an architectural style that represents the era they were built in. It is unfortunate that Friendly's has been diminished. Otherwise, that would also be Contributing. Hopefully, it could be restored. But they are picking apart an architectural style, not whether (this property) is Contributing. This is an era

that West St. was developed. They lost a lot of historic buildings to put these buildings in, and this was a commerce center that shifted the focus of commerce of Main St., and they are significant to the development of Keene, to the way we did business, and to the way that the automobile facilitated that business. Still today, people park in these parking lots and walk downtown, because there is parking there.

Ms. Carey made a motion to consider 194 West St. as a Primary resource. Mr. Fleming seconded the motion.

Mr. Fleming stated that he does not see much difference between this and the M&T building, except that M&T is a nicer building. He continued that the movie the Brutalist is playing at Keene State the first weekend in April. Brutalist architecture was not pretty, necessarily, but it is a famous style of architecture that will have its place in history. Ms. Ellis replied that she likes brutalist architecture.

Ms. Powell stated that she was not alive in the 1970s but will say that this does not strike her as a 1970s building. She continued that to her, it looks like a big box store in design, which could just be her own naivete and disconnection from the time period. She thinks the earlier bank that is now the M&T Bank had more of what she would think of as the features from the time period. The HC and HDC do not have any photos that show the exact opposite side of the page 1 image. They just have the view looking south and east and then the view looking north and east. Perhaps there is something she is not seeing. She has not been inside this building.

Mr. Bergeron stated that he seems to recall that the building did not start as a bank; it started as a grocery store and was then renovated into the bank. He continued that that might be why it is not completely the same or as coordinated as the other bank on West St., but it has been around longer. Ms. Powell thanked Mr. Bergeron and stated that she had not realized that.

The motion to classify 194 West St. as a Primary resource passed by a vote of 7-2. Ms. Ellis and Ms. Powell were opposed.

4. 149 Emerald Street – Cheshire Railroad Repair Shops – Built 1866

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that regarding alterations, *“In 1984, the modern shopping mall was built to encompass several surviving 1866 Cheshire Railroad Shop buildings. The original doors and windows were removed from the historic structures, and their eaves were extended to create protected walkways along the north side of the building. A large addition was constructed, adding a single-story addition to the south side of the structure and extending it to the west.”* She continued that the notes include, *“In 1984, the surviving Cheshire Railroad Locomotive Repair Shop, Black Smith & Mechanical Shop, Wood Work, and Car Repairs Shops were incorporated into the east end of a large connected mini mall.”* Again, there are notes on integrity and significance which she will not read aloud, in the interest of time. The (consultant’s) recommendation was Contributing resource.

Ms. Powell stated that she has a question regarding the notes in the significance and integrity section discussing the renovations. She asked if they are meant to only be referencing the elements that fit within what would make it a historic district property now and not the 1984 elements at all, or if they take the 1984 elements into consideration at this stage. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she thinks they have to take the 1984 elements into consideration and how they might have degraded the historic value of the property.

Mr. Clements stated that it is also worth taking into account the consideration that those additions did in an attempt to preserve the historic integrity as well, but they are sort of evaluating the building as it is now. He continued that it is also worth noting that today the City's own historic district regulations, as well as the guidelines under the National Historic Trust, say that additions to historic resources should be complementary, not mimicry.

Ms. Powell stated that it was the note saying that the 1984 changes could be reevaluated in 2034 that threw her. Mr. Clements replied that that is just what the consultant said. The City needs to take the whole property as one building because it is one building now. Ms. Carey stated that they are including the roundhouse aspect of this as well.

Ms. Zerba stated that if this were more intact, it would be considered Primary. She continued that she wonders if it should be considered Primary even with the degradation that has occurred, in part because it was such a center for commerce and for the railroad in Keene at the time, and it is a beautiful example of railroad architecture that probably would not have survived had it not been repurposed in some way. She agrees that alterations remain that are compatible with the historic nature of the building. It was not degraded in such a way that it is commercially more useful. It is historically more useful than it is perhaps commercially, in her view.

Ms. Carey made a motion to consider 149 Emerald St. as a Primary resource. Ms. Zerba seconded the motion.

Ms. Ellis stated that she loves this building, and she is happy they have what they have of it because of how it has been repurposed, and she is not opposed to making it a Primary resource. She continued that she thinks they need to talk about it more first, to make sure it absolutely fits, because of what has been done to it. She is not sure. Ms. Carey asked what Ms. Ellis's reservations are. Ms. Ellis replied that the building on either side of the roundhouse area is really modern, such as the windows and eaves. She continued that she is not certain about the technicalities of the regulations and defers to others.

Mr. Clements stated that a Contributing designation acknowledges that a resource has been altered from its original architectural form. He continued that in the same way that a Non-contributing resource can be elevated to a Contributing resource, a Contributing resource can be re-evaluated and made Primary. Practically speaking, it is granted the same level of protection with either a Primary or Contributing ranking. The Primary designation really acknowledges a

form in its current form is a shining example of the City of Keene's historic district. That designation should be reserved for buildings and sites that truly are that. He is grateful to not personally be making this decision to parse out that distinction, because he could easily go either way.

Mr. Fleming stated that based on that, and the fact that the property has not maintained its original integrity as much as they would like to have, he agrees with Ms. Ellis that as long as they can protect what is still there, he thinks it is a Contributing resource.

Ms. Powell stated that she thinks the 1984/2034 indicator might be a good moment to switch to a Primary resource at that time. She continued that perhaps they could rank it as Contributing at this stage, before that secondary element that is seemingly what they are all flagging as being potentially at odds with the Primary designation, based on the overview Mr. Clements gave.

Ms. Zerba stated that the reason she supports it as a Primary resource is because she thinks a great deal of effort went into making sure the renovations retained as much as possible of the original rail yard. She continued that for example, when it was redone, the building could have gone straight through without making sure the roundhouse was retained. Maybe what was done is not the ideal, but it was moving with the times, and it is a good example of the best that they could do with what existed and with what they wanted to have it become.

The motion failed with a vote of 2-9. Ms. Zerba and Ms. Carey voted in favor.

Ms. Powell made a motion to consider 149 Emerald St. as a Contributing resource. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

5. 104 Emerald Street – Dunn & Salisbury Lumber Building – Built Ca. 1900

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that this property's current use is a retail store. She continued that it was built circa 1900. Regarding alterations, *"The fenestration of the former lumber storage building at 104 Emerald St. has been heavily altered with all second-floor windows removed, primary entrance removed, and additional first floor window openings added. A ramped entrance porch was added in the 20th century to the new entry door. All windows have been replaced, and the original wooden clapboard siding covered with vinyl."* She continued that the notes say, *"The historic Dunn & Salisbury lumber storage and office building was constructed around the turn of the 20th century and was home to Keene Industrial Paper Company in the early 21st century."* She will not read the notes on integrity and significance aloud but encourages others to review them. The recommendation was for this to be considered a Contributing resource. Again, she reminds everyone that this classification is one out of two, Contributing or Non-contributing, so even if the HC and HDC follow that recommendation, they have to further classify it.

Mr. Clements stated that he wants to mention that this property is an example of what he was talking about earlier, where in some cases the form may have been significantly altered but it is a “last of its kind” sort of representation of the turn of the century railroad adjacent industries that are now few and far between in the city.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she has a clarifying question. She continued that Mr. Clements spoke about how a property should be pristine to qualify as Primary. She asked if that stands alone, or if that is impacted by the historical significance of the property as “last of its kind,” or if that is for the HC and HDC to decide. Mr. Clements replied that he thinks it is for them to decide. He continued that he thinks for something to really be Primary it has to kind of be both, or strongly one and even more strongly the other. There is more wiggle room with Contributing, where they can acknowledge that the resource has degraded but is of such cultural significance that it is worth protecting.

Ms. Zerba made a motion to designate 104 Emerald St. as Contributing. She continued that even though they have made many changes, such as the vinyl siding there now instead of the wood, the removal of the windows, and so on and so forth, when you look at it you know that this was the Dunn & Salisbury building at one time.

Mr. Fleming seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6. 80-100 Emerald Street – Rawson Turning Factory – Built 1912

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the current use for this building from 1912 is mixed commercial and multiple dwelling. She continued that with respect to alterations, the notes include that *“When it was constructed in 1912, the building at what is now 80-100 Emerald St. consisted of just the 15x4 bay brick main block, and by 1924, a large single-story brick addition had been constructed off the back of the building. As the use of the building changed, so did some of the exterior features. Original windows and doors have been lost and there have been changes to the rear addition, particularly at the site of the present laundromat. Solar panels have recently been added to the roof but are not visible from the ground level. Over time, sections of this early 20th century addition were removed, creating the building footprint that we see today.”*

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos continued that there are several images, including ones of the laundromat. Again, she invites everyone to review the notes on integrity and significance. The consultant recommendation that this be considered a Contributing resource.

Ms. Zerba made a motion to consider this a Contributing resource. Ms. Powell seconded the motion.

Ms. Powell stated that to her this feels a lot like the roundhouse property because of the addition on the back and the more modern element, the front building, does not quite seem to fit as Primary. The full property feels more like a Contributing resource.

The motion passed unanimously.

7. 43 Wilson Street – Gates House- Built 1890

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that this property, built in 1890, is in current use as multiple dwelling. She continued that regarding alterations, *“Single-family dwelling subdivided to create duplex, porch railings and windows replaced in the late 20th century.”* This is a very common phenomenon for the Keene area. The notes state, *“The former Gates House retains character-defining historic features such as general form and massing, historic slate roof, historic wooden clapboard siding, fenestration locations, historic brick chimney, turned porch columns, and plug-split granite posts at the corners of the lot. All of these features are fairly typical of the middle class suburban home of the late 19th century.”* Again, she invites people to review the notes on significance and integrity. The consultant recommends this be a Contributing resource.

Ms. Zerba stated that she will support the recommendation for it to be a Contributing resource. She continued that it does not look very good now, but with a little work it could be restored beautifully to reflect a home that housed the people who worked in the manufacturing plants around the corner.

Ms. Zerba made a motion to consider 43 Wilson St. a Contributing resource. Ms. Powell seconded the motion.

Mr. Fleming asked if the reason this was not in a previous categorization is because it is part of the area that was added to the historic district. Mr. Clements replied yes, that is correct.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Clements stated that he would like to acknowledge that in exercises like this, it can be difficult in the beginning to get your mind around the exercise, and then by the end of it, you have a greater understanding of the exercise and what you are talking about. He continued that he wants to check and ask if everyone is comfortable with all the decisions they made today, or if anyone wants to go back and re-evaluate any previous decision now that they have a fuller understanding of the process.

Ms. Carey stated that regarding the Wilson St. property, she wanted to note that through her research, she has found that this house has a lot of history. She continued that particular people have lived here that were historically significant, and it is a cultural landmark for the time and throughout the history of Keene. If this house were in better condition, perhaps it would be Primary. She would want that to be the case.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked, regarding Mr. Clements's point, if everyone was comfortable with the decisions they made today. Hearing no objection, she moved to the next agenda item.

3) Annual Report to City Council

A) A Brief Discussion on the City Council's Request That Boards and Commissions Provide Annual Reports of Their Activities

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if everyone has a copy of the January 16 meeting notes. Mr. Clements replied that everyone should have received a copy of this memorandum, which was a City Council agenda item. He continued that Councilor Ed Haas requested that each City board, commission, or committee provide some sort of annual report for the City Council. It is voluntary process; the decision is up to each board whether they want to present to the full City Council or a Council subcommittee, in person or in writing. They do not need to decide tonight, as this is a joint committee of two groups and each group needs to decide individually. He just wanted to put it on their radar.

Brief discussion ensued. Mr. Fleming questioned why the memo says the Council wants the reports all on July 1 but also wants them staggered throughout the year. Mr. Clements clarified that Councilor Haas was envisioning staggered presentations, so it was not just one Council meeting swamped with all the presentations at once.

Per Ms. Powell's request, Ms. Zerba spoke a bit about what the system was like when committee/board chairs gave annual updates to the Council several years ago. Discussion continued about how this used to be a common practice that went by the wayside during COVID times and is now being revived. Mr. Clements stated that this will be an agenda item at the next HC meeting and the next HDC meeting for the groups to talk about.

4) Staff Updates

A) Master Plan Update

Mr. Clements stated that the City is undergoing a Comprehensive Master Plan update, and the process continues. He continued that they are now in the final stretch. Another survey is coming out soon and he encourages everyone to participate, probably in mid-April. He encourages everyone to keep an eye on keenemasterplan.com and the City's website and social media. This (survey) will be looking at the goals and strategies coming out of the Master Plan Steering Committee and the task force groups they have been working with. They hope to see a draft of the actual document in early June. Also in early June, there will be another future summit, another opportunity for engagement. That will be an unveiling of the draft document.

Ms. Fortson added that the Future Summit is June 3, 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Heberton Hall. She continued that the future land use map is coming up as well, and the discussion boards are still active on www.keenemasterplan.com. She encourages people to participate in those discussion

boards and the survey, and to spread the word about the survey. Mr. Clements added that even people who are not Keene residents but use the city are invited to give feedback. The discussion boards will be up probably through April. He gave more information about the future land use map as required by statute, and what they are looking for feedback on.

5) New Business

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if anyone had any new business. (No).

6) Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 5:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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