

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

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

**Wednesday, May 21, 2025**

**4:30 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Chair  
Hope Benik, Vice Chair  
Anthony Ferrantello  
Louise Zerba

**Staff Present:**

Evan Clements, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Councilor Catherine Workman  
Russ Fleming, Alternate  
David Bergeron, Alternate  
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

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

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 4:35 PM. Roll call was conducted.

**2) Minutes: April 16, 2025 Regular Meeting**

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of April 16, 2025. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**3) Discussion – Project and Goalsetting**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the project and goalsetting conversation is regarding the outreach. She asked Mr. Clements to refresh their memories.

Mr. Clements stated that they had talked about another project for the HRC to do for the year. He continued that Mr. Ferrantello had a great idea to engage with Keene State College (KSC). Before the current Land Development Code (LDC) was adopted, the old regulations had a lot of interesting and useful background rationale for why the regulations are the way they are. In the spirit of brevity, much of that was stripped out of the LDC. The HDC had talked about outreach and how to use that information that is no longer in the LDC but still could be used. Today, they could hear more about Mr. Ferrantello's idea, come up with more ideas, and plan what the project looks like, how to do it, and what success looks like. The HDC could meet more

frequently to continue the conversations, and meeting more frequently is a good habit to get into for when they do have applications.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked to hear an update from Mr. Ferrantello. Mr. Ferrantello stated that he emailed the chair of KSC's Architecture Department, who is in Spain. He asked the chair if he would be interested in a proposal, which is to get some students involved in identifying and creating some colorful, engaging posters or flyers to generate interest among Keene residents, so Keene residents engage and participate in what the HDC does. It is about identifying and celebrating the historic fabric in Keene. It could be a course, an extracurricular activity, a paper or thesis, or something else. He is waiting to hear back from the chair.

Mr. Ferrantello continued that it would be good for the HDC to peruse that existing background information that Mr. Clements just spoke about, to see if that would be helpful to the Architecture chair and his students in creating a flyer or document, PDF, film, or some form of media to show how Keene has all this (history) people can be proud of. It could be used as fodder not to tear anything down. He hopes the Architecture chair seriously considers this.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that while they wait to hear from the chair, it strikes her that there are a few different steps to this process. She continued that one is reviewing the old code and deciding what information the HDC wants to share with the public. The other is deciding which avenues or which media they would use to put it in the public eye. Then, actually creating the content for whatever media that is. It is a multi-step process. Social media is the low-hanging fruit, although it would have to be bite-sized content. The City has a podcast, which is great, and reels on Instagram.

Ms. Benik asked if the City would be open to posting something for the HDC, if the HDC got the content together. Mr. Clements replied yes, Rebecca Landry, Asah Cramer, and the Communications Team are always looking for new content. The more the HDC does before handing it off to the Communications Team, the easier it is for them. There is some branding control involved with generated materials, but if, say, KSC generated something, the City could run it through the City branding and use it. It is just a matter of figuring out the details on that. So yes, there are resources available to the HDC. The Heritage Commission (HC), too, is doing a project, videography, to capture what Keene is like now for future generations, and potentially a retrospective, too. The HC has had many questions in regards to their project, and the answers will potentially be relevant to the HDC's project as well. They could potentially be working symbiotically.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that he likes what Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos said about the multifaceted approach and the different steps. He likes what staff did for the Master Plan Update, with public meetings at the library, with posters and presentations. He continued that maybe students could give a similar presentation. Mr. Clements replied that everything is on the table.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the first step is reviewing the old code. She asked if it is available online. Mr. Clements replied not anymore, but he sent it to the HDC members a couple of months ago and will send it again, as a Word document.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the HDC's homework, then, is to look at the relevant parts of the old code – the background reasonings and rationales. She suggests they highlight them, consider which ones are more important, and maybe rank them in order, in terms of what they want to share with the public first. They will meet next month and have this on the agenda. Mr. Clements replied that it sounds great, and they will have an application at next month's meeting, too. He continued that he will not be here, as he will be traveling. Another staff member will be here in his place, and he will be involved as much to the lead up of the meeting as possible.

Mr. Clements stated that another general topic to consider when talking about promoting the Historic District is the benefits of the Historic District and the National Historic Trust, which has a lab that does a lot of study on historic preservation. There is a lot of good information there about the benefits of historic districts, not just culturally speaking, but also for the property owners themselves. Sometimes property owners are frustrated having to deal with the extra level of review with the HDC, and it is worth highlighting the benefits that the preservation and Historic District provide.

Mr. Ferrantello replied that that is a great idea. He spoke about how he can envision a visually appealing, artistic poster to attract people's attention. Mr. Clements replied that maybe Art students at KSC could be involved as well. Discussion continued with more ideas for multidisciplinary collaborations.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that there are lots of exciting ideas and possibilities. She continued that they have their homework and will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

**4) Staff Updates**

**A) Report to City Council**

Mr. Clements stated that this is getting closer – the City Council wanted reports from the boards, commissions, and committees in July. He continued that he will send Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos some statistics on what the HDC has done in the past year and briefly talk about the HDC's goals for the future outside of just being a regulatory body. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if it falls to her to generate that report. Mr. Clements replied that it is up to the HDC, but generally, it is envisioned that the chair of each board, commission, and committee would be the one to write a letter to the Council or attend a meeting and give a verbal presentation. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she does not want to give something to the Council without the HDC seeing it first, so this month, she will write something for the HDC to review at the June meeting. She will get it to Mr. Clements or whoever will be running the June HDC meeting, to include in the agenda packet.

**B) Master Plan**

Mr. Clements stated that June 3 is the reveal of the Master Plan draft plan, at the Future Summit. He continued that it is going to be a great, interactive event, 5:00 to 7:00 PM at Heberton Hall. Childcare will be available, provided by the Cheshire Children's Museum, so people can spread the word to those who have small children and typically are not able to attend events like this. People can email the Community Development Department to let them know they are bringing children. There will be catered food at the event, too.

Mr. Clements continued that after the June reveal, the steering committee will keep going, and probably do some more tweaks on the plan. The City Council will have a public hearing before they vote to adopt the Master Plan. The Planning Board, too, recommends adoption. Thus, this is not the end of the process, but it is sort of the big wrap up with the consultants, and the reveal. Once adopted, the Master Plan will be the live document, with goals with six strategic pillars related to the community, like thriving economy, vibrant neighborhoods, the environment, and transportation. Each pillar has several goals and action items for achieving them. Part of the Future Summit will be getting the public's input on, say, their top priority for each pillar.

**5) New Business**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there was any new business. (No.)

**6) Upcoming Dates of Interest:**

**A) Next HDC Meeting: June 18, 2025 – 4:30 PM**

**B) HDC Site Visit: June 18, 2025 – 3:30 PM (to be confirmed)**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the HDC will have a site visit next month. Mr. Clements replied if the HDC wants to. He continued that the applicant is 33 Center St. again, looking to install solar on the rooftop. Brief discussion ensued.

**7) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 4:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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