

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 9, 2025

4:30 PM

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

Members Present:

Molly Ellis, Chair
Rose Carey, Vice Chair
Julie Emineth
Louise Zerba
Cauley Powell, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Evan Clements, Planner
Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:

Marilyn Huston
Acacia Johnston

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Ellis called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM and roll call ensued.

Members of the public were present: Kathleen (Kathy) Halverson and Stephen Seraichick of the Yankee Bottle Club.

2) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2025

A motion by Vice Chair Carey to adopt the June 11, 2025 minutes was duly seconded by Ms. Zerba and the motion carried unanimously.

3) Update on Keene Glass Works Trail Signage – Stephen Seraichick, Yankee Bottle Club

Chair Ellis welcomed Stephen Seraichick of the Yankee Bottle Club, who recalled visiting the Commission three months prior. He spoke about walking regularly on the Bike Path from Water Street to Eastern Avenue, where there are markers talking about the industries that were on Marlboro Street in the 1800s—except for Keene Glass. Mr. Seraichick noted he had been collecting glass since he was age eight, and Keene Glass is well known throughout the country, even to novice collectors. So, he thought there should be a sign acknowledging that Keene Glass existed, stating that it had been his mission to honor it.

He described the process he had worked through to arrive at the Commission in trying to achieve a sign: (1) Councilor Bobby Williams introduced him to Amy Dixon with the State of NH, but state markers were not appropriate and require hearings, etc., so Ms. Dixon said he should contact the

City. (2) Mr. Seraichick went to the Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC). BPPAC member, Councilor Ed Haas, told Mr. Seraichick to come up with verbiage for the sign. He noted that he was unsure how much power Councilor Haas had to make the installation of a sign happen. So, Mr. Seraichick said he solicited the help of his friend Alan Rumrill, former Executive Director of the Historical Society of Cheshire County, regarding the proposed sign language, which Mr. Seraichick read to the commission:

“One of Keene’s first large scale industries was glass manufacturing. A window glass factory opened on Washington Street in 1814. It was followed a year later by a flint glass factory located near here, where Marlboro Street crosses Beaver Brook. This factory produced tumblers, decanters, and similar types of tableware. The Marlboro Street factory converted to the manufacturing of bottles in 1870. Over the next 25 years, the firm made millions of bottles that were sold throughout the northeast. These bottles were made by hand by expert glassblowers. The Keene factory was known for its production of ink wells, medicine bottles, decanters, and a wide variety of whisky glass. The bottle factory closed in 1842, and the window glass factory closed in the early 1850s. The bottles made in Keene are collected across the country today because of their artistic craftsmanship, history, and rarity.”

Ms. Powell asked what next steps Mr. Seraichick was hoping for. He said he was unsure, supposing Councilor Haas might be the person to represent the Bottle Club in next steps. Ms. Powell was curious about what the Heritage Commission could do to support the Bottle Club, recalling that the Commission had previously provided some light, positive feedback. Mr. Seraichick wondered about the eventual green light for the sign; could the Commission do that? Evan Clements, City Planner, explained that the City Council would approve putting the sign in the public right-of-way. So eventually, a proposal for the sign design (e.g., text, appearance, location for the monument marker) would need to appear before the City Council. Mr. Clements added that a letter of support from the Heritage Commission about the history of this location would help.

Ms. Powell asked if there were already consistent design standards in the City for these plaques/signs. Ms. Zerba thought so, but was unsure how these would fall into that category. Mr. Seraichick thought Mr. Chuck Redfern could recall when the existing Bike Path signs were placed, likely in the early 1980s, and stated the goal was not necessarily to duplicate them. Mr. Clements noted they would need a sign maker. Ms. Emineth mentioned using the same person the Rotary used, and Ms. Zerba noted the Director of Parks & Recreation, Carrah Fisk-Hennessey, helped with that project and might have contact information. Mr. Seraichick said Ms. Fisk-Hennessey was at the BPPAC meeting he attended previously.

Ms. Zerba asked if the Bottle Club had an estimated cost and desired location. Mr. Seraichick suggested the location parallel to where the factory was on the actual Bike Path, not on Water or Marlboro Streets. Ms. Emineth noted fewer people would be likely to see the sign if it were placed on Marlboro Street, for example.

Discussion ensued clarifying to whom the letter should be addressed. Mr. Clements said the Heritage Commission should write a letter of support to the Bottle Club, which would submit that

letter to the City Council with its agenda item. The Commission agreed that this would complement the existing signs on the Bike Path well.

A motion by Ms. Powell for the Heritage Commission to write a letter in support of Yankee Bottle Club's initiative and to collect Keene Glass' history in the City of Keene was duly seconded by Ms. Zerba. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion ensued about who would write the letter—the Chair or the whole group. Megan Fortson, City Planner, noted that typically a letter like this would come from the Chair. Then, the group could discuss it at the meeting next month before officially submitting it. Chair Ellis noted that City Council would be on vacation in August, so it could delay things slightly. Mr. Seraichick said the Club was not in a rush.

Before departing, Mr. Seraichick showed the Commission a circa 1830 Keene Glass Company decanter. He explained that another historic glass company Sandwich Glass, made a lot of decanters and it was sometimes difficult to distinguish them from the Keene Glass decanters; he pointed out the unique Keene Glass pattern. Sandwich Glass was known for whale oil lamps. Someone asked the value of the Keene Glass decanter. Mr. Seraichick said they were surprisingly cheap around \$120, and he was unsure why; he did not think they were very sought after by collectors despite being attractive. The Commission was grateful for the presentation. Mr. Seraichick departed the meeting.

4) Budget Updates

Ms. Fortson reported \$13,497.81 in the Commission's rolling annual Budget. She thought the Commission received \$250 annually from the City Council, like the other City Boards & Committees; however, there was a question of whether it might have actually been \$500, so Ms. Fortson said she would confirm. Mr. Clements explained that unlike other City Boards & Committees, the HC has a Trust Fund, so anything unspent of its annual allotment does not return to the City's General Fund at the end of the fiscal year, it goes into the Trust Fund and builds. Ms. Powell explained that the Commission often used the Trust Fund for grant matches, for example, in addition to hourly contributions, and Vice Chair Carey added that it was commonly used for events too. Ms. Powell noted that the Commission would typically also renew its annual memberships with the Cheshire County Historical Society and the NH Preservation Alliance, which she cited were approximately \$50 each.

5) US Sesqui-Centennial 2026 Planning & Preparation

Chair Ellis reported good news that the City formed a committee for the Sesqui-Centennial 2026 planning and invited her to attend the meetings. She had been sending historical information that was well received, which was good news for the Commission, as she said it would be better handled by a City Committee. The week of July 14, there would be a City Protocol meeting to discuss logistics with the Police and Fire Departments, etc., which Mr. Clements said was normal for all City events. Chair Ellis said the group had identified potential fiscal sponsors and some City Councilors had ideas. She said the Keene Downtown Group was also involved. So, there were many stakeholders participating.

Ms. Powell asked what the City wanted from the HC for the event. Chair Ellis thought the Commission would only be needed to volunteer or offer historical ideas. Chair Ellis also suggested to the Commission the idea of a City time capsule to commemorate the moment. At the last City Sesqui-Centennial meeting, Chair Ellis provided handouts from the 1903, 150th Anniversary of the Keene City Government. She said that in 1953, there was a time capsule, which gave her the fun idea for the Commission's more specific historical contribution vs. simply submitting historical facts. The idea of repeating the time capsule felt more substantial to Chair Ellis. Mr. Clements added that bringing that concrete idea/contribution to this working group was the right way to do it. Chair Ellis said the City continued inviting her to the meetings, so she would keep attending.

Ms. Emineth noted this is her specialty. She stated she likes the Washington Cemetery and parts of other cemeteries because of the really old graves. She suggested having cemetery walks during the event with specific notes on graves representing important people during that time. Chair Ellis loved that idea.

Vice Chair Carey thought the City's Sesqui-Centennial 2026 event would be an opportunity for the HC to have a small table with information about the City of Keene. She noted the Commission would hopefully have finished several projects by then: the filming project, the School Street historic walk, the barn tour/carriage house walk, and the Italian Neighborhood presentation; all of which would be representative of the Commission's work and the City's heritage. Chair Ellis agreed that it would be great to showcase. She also hoped the Commission could still work in conjunction with the Historical Society, especially if they had identified specific important individuals; for example, Ms. Huston had spoken about highlighting soldiers, which Ms. Powell said could contribute to samples of certain roles and class positions.

Ms. Emineth explained the idea of Valley Quests for representing different dynamics and historical facts. This is what she did for her master's degree. She said the Quests are like treasure hunts that lead to historical information and ultimately to a physical box with a paper to sign and a stamp/sticker/trinket to take as a prize; they are like a geocaches, with an endpoint that tells a story. They can be done anywhere, and the boxes are monitored by an entity. Ms. Emineth explained how she had worked with Historical Societies creating Quests, or *Questing*. She said they are very popular with children. City staff noted there were already Quests throughout the City managed by Antioch University New England and the Horatio Colony Museum/Nature Preserve, and recommended contacting Paul Bocko. The Commission agreed that it could be an opportunity for collaboration and to draw children to a table at the event.

Vice Chair Carey said she had been researching to finish the Italian Neighborhood Project. She explained that some people in that group who founded certain mills were buried in the Washington Cemetery. She thought the Commissioners could pick out names and research them for the Downtown Film Project.

Ms. Powell asked if the HC should encourage the City formalizing Chair Ellis as an official member of the City's Sesqui-Centennial Committee instead of guest since she was contributing. Chair Ellis was unsure whether the Committee was even formalized yet and noted that there had only been two meetings. Ms. Powell wanted to ensure Chair Ellis was not expending too much

effort as she was contributing a lot of thought and energy. Chair Ellis said at the next meeting on July 15th, she would ask about the structure and leadership of the entity moving forward. She also hoped to know if the City's plan was for a July 4th event, noting the Historical Society had ideas for many things leading up to that.

Chair Ellis called the City's event a large, one-day extravaganza, stating that they had some big ideas. Ms. Zerba thought the Historical Society would be interested in Ms. Emineth's Questing idea, if organized in advance. Ms. Powell agreed, suggesting the kids could bring their Quest prizes to City Hall to receive a flag they bring to the Sesqui-Centennial, representing one of the historical people. Ms. Emineth agreed, and discussion ensued about the concept of how the tokens could work to encourage people to represent their historical knowledge at the event by a color/sticker/pin/speech. The simple Quest could be available in advance on the website or the day of the event.

Chair Ellis would keep the Commission informed on the City's Sesqui-Centennial plans.

6) Downtown Video Project - Next Steps

Vice Chair Carey and Ms. Zerba met to review a pamphlet from the Cheshire County Historical Society that provided a bit of history on all the blocks along Main Street. Vice Chair Carey said the pamphlet was strictly history and did not necessarily identify all businesses and activities. Whereas she said the Commission was trying to get a snapshot of Keene, which would require more. She was grateful to the Historical Society for this starter. She had scanned it into her computer and was modifying it. Vice Chair Carey suggested focusing on the history of The Common and the fountain and then spreading out to the businesses and historic buildings around it and down Main Street. She thought that would be a sufficient project.

She said the pamphlet identified 16 more buildings above Railroad Square/Gilbo Avenue that were not historic, but would be contributing to the snapshot and would need write-ups, and six more historic photographs. So, in total Vice Chair Carey said it was a project outlook of approximately 30 buildings to photograph, develop content for, and film. She had started one, but FACT TV had yet to provide the snippet. She noted that she was working on a voice over. That meant the Commission would need to develop narratives for all 30 buildings. Ms. Emineth asked if there was enough material on each building and Vice Chair Carey thought so, with Ms. Zerba noting they would be short. Vice Chair Carey passed the pamphlet around to demonstrate that the concept was block-by-block, not business-by-business.

Ms. Powell said she had a hard time imagining this as a long form video. She thought about 30-second social media posts for each building with a historical photo and modern photo (for example, the Colonial Theater). She thought making that content would strongly support the Commission's objectives. Ms. Powell also thought it would be good to add personal stories to these for FACT TV and Vice Chair Carey agreed. Vice Chair Carey added that she did not want to do a ton of work trying to find old photos because she thought the Commission already had enough history in the pamphlet to work with; she wanted to try to keep this effort more in 2025 and what had transpired in the past 10–20 years. The Commission agreed.

Chair Ellis suggested interviewing community members on each block for short narratives about the buildings. She recalled that when Asah Cramer, the City's AV Production Specialist, visited the Commission, she reported that type of content gaining more attention on social media is related to people. So, Chair Ellis said people might be more interested in an interview of someone talking about a building rather than just seeing a photo of the building. She said it could be interesting to see what they happened to film on a particular day in Keene on a particular street on social media in the future. Ms. Emineth even thought the community today would appreciate that effort. For example, she mentioned the interesting structures of the businesses on Roxbury street, many of which in the past shared a basement; she wondered what structural things new companies were dealing with. Ms. Emineth wondered how many of those buildings had things left over in those basements and attics that were lost/found/forgotten from history, like a time capsule relating to some of those former businesses; she shared a similar anecdote from her childhood.

Ms. Powell agreed with the connection to the Sesqui-Centennial and liked the idea of commemorating a moment in history by soliciting community members' personal experiences with a place in town. She thought that it might be slightly different than focusing on the architecture or brick and mortar. Vice Chair Carey was open, but hoped to come to an agreement on structure so the Commission could move forward. Ms. Emineth posed the idea—if implementing the time capsule for the Sesqui-Centennial too—of asking every person: If you were going to put something from your business or your experience in Keene into a time capsule, what would that be and why? Whether a thing or a memory? She suggested some variation of that question as long as everyone was asked the same question. Ms. Emineth thought that it could be more impactful than simply asking someone open-endedly about their business. She said that data could go into the actual time capsule with items from the businesses.

Ms. Zerba asked to focus on a video with wording for one building on one block, for example, to determine how to go from there. Ms. Emineth thought the Commission needed a theme/question to know where it was heading, which was why she was discussing the time capsule. Ms. Zerba did not think the Commission was leading the Sesqui-Centennial. Ms. Powell thought the idea of a time capsule for the Sesqui-Centennial was *vox pop*—a short, historical, man-on-the-street interview. She said the Commission could begin collecting man-on-the-street interviews over the course of the next year up until the 4th of July to build this record of life in the community. She said that it would be different than this project.

Discussion ensued to clarify the details and next steps of the Downtown Video Project. For now, Vice Chair Carey confirmed she had no intention to print new pamphlets. The Commission discussed the best way to acquire the voiceovers. Ms. Emineth thought inviting community members/business owners in for scheduled interviews felt more uncomfortable than meeting people candidly on the blocks. Vice Chair Carey wanted to keep the scope of the project manageable, noting it would have to be replicated 30 times, in addition to the research. So, she felt it was already a large project and that adding people to it would be too much. Chair Ellis agreed that adding interviews was too much when considering 30 buildings, even though she thought people would be more interesting than content strictly about architecture. Ms. Emineth countered that she enjoys the strict architecture content. Since the intent was to pinpoint a moment in time, Chair Ellis wondered about scaling down to focusing on a few interesting buildings on each block vs. every building. Vice Chair Carey said she was trying to fulfill the Mayor's request.

Ms. Powell said she heard two project phases under discussion:

1. Long-Term (*evergreen*): The Commission could have a constant, ongoing project of background work about people in the community that would reflect the community's sense of self and how its identity shifts.
2. Short-Term (*modern*): Downtown Film Project—film one day in the early morning when there are fewer people on the blocks and record the voice overs. Each clip would be one minute to result in a 30-minute program of the entire Main Street, which Ms. Powell called lovely for FACT TV.
 - a. These clips (2; *modern*) could pair later with the long-term community narratives (1; *evergreen*) to tell the whole snapshot story, but the videos would still operate independently.

Vice Chair Carey shared her experiences of the challenges with filming so far, noting it could be difficult getting all the different aspects (i.e., videos, photos, & audio) to FACT TV. Ms. Powell volunteered to help with filming as it is her profession. Ms. Powell was worried about the copyright on the Historical Society's pamphlet. Vice Chair Carey said she was not using it verbatim, it was only a starting point to develop the narratives and to know what was collected already on a given block. She noted that it was more challenging and time consuming because FACT TV required filming with an iPhone. She already filmed the Central Square Common and Chair Ellis filmed in the United Church of Christ. She noted that FACT TV was putting the clips together and would provide a link by the next Commission meeting.

The Commission agreed to separate the modern and historic phases of the project to make it easier. They thought there might be enough historical content available and this project could provide more modern content at this time.

Discussion ensued about the necessary tasks and who was willing:

- Voice Overs: Unassigned
- Filming: Ms. Powell (volunteer)
 - Editing: Potentially hire someone because FACT TV could only do so much for free. However, someone would need to direct an editor, so there would need to be a clear vision for the content. Former Commissioner, Brian Lee, might be willing.
- Organization & Identifying Blocks: Vice Chair Carey
- Research: Ms. Emineth, Ms. Zerba, & Vice Chair Carey

After discussing the above tasks, the Commission agreed that the project scope was still wide with a narrow vision. Even though the scope was still so wide, Commissioners agreed to start working in order to start narrowing it and understanding the goals. Vice Chair Carey felt it was necessary to have a plan, as her filming on an iPhone would have a different appearance than Ms. Powell's filming.

The Commission agreed to focus on building the narratives before filming. Discussion ensued on the duration of the snippets, and Ms. Powell said less than one minute per clip for a total of 15–30 minutes for the total piece. Ms. Powell explained how she would film the clips—from the wide

shot to the medium and to the tight shot, capturing beautiful aspects of the blocks and unique architectural features.

Staff said Vice Chair Carey should email individual Commissioners with their research assignment details, as well as Ms. Fortson and Mr. Clements, not the whole Commission. Research assignments were as follows:

- Ms. Zerba: #31 – The Colony & Bank Blocks, 1–8 Central Square (Central Square Terrace)
- Ms. Emineth: #26 – The Bullard & Shedd Block
- Vice Chair Carey: #28 & #29 – The United Church of Christ Block
- Ms. Powell: #25 – Keene Savings Bank Block
- Chair Ellis: #24 – Pat Russell Block

Vice Chair Carey asked Mr. Clements for a top-down map of Central Square that she could write the names of the block on. She provided a sample map from the Historical Society's pamphlet stating it would be better to have a diagram so they could fill in the date the buildings were built and the names of the blocks. Mr. Clements said he would try to come up with something. Vice Chair Carey hoped it would go down to Railroad Square but not as far as Keene State College.

7) Annual Report to Planning, Licenses & Development Committee – July 9th at 6:00 PM, City Hall 2nd Floor Council Chambers

The City Clerk's office asked Chair Ellis to wait to present the Annual Report until after the Council's summer break due to the Planning, Licenses & Development Committee's long agenda tonight. Chair Ellis thanked Mr. Clements for sending her the preparation materials.

8) Staff Updates

Ms. Fortson reported that Ms. Huston would no longer be serving on the Commission due to other commitments.

9) New Business

None was reported.

10) Next Meeting – August 13, 2025

11) Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Ellis adjourned the meeting at 5:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katryna Kibler, Minute Taker
July 15, 2025

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner