

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

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

**Wednesday, November 19, 2025**

**4:30 PM**

**Council Chambers,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

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

**Staff Present:**

Evan Clements, Planner / Zoning  
Administrator

**Members Not Present:**

Councilor Catherine Workman  
David Bergeron, Alternate  
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

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

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 4:37 PM. Roll call was conducted.

**2) Meeting Minutes: July 16, 2025**

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 16, 2025. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 4-0. Mr. Fleming abstained due to having been absent.

**3) Discussion: Outreach & Student Engagement Project – Update**

Mr. Ferrantello stated that there is a letter from Noah Eyes, with information about the Court St. properties that students visited and how the work is going. He continued that the students will finish the week of December 8, and they will let the HDC know the date of a get-together they are invited to. He would like to see how the students did the site visits and what technology they used to document the floor plans and sections. He is already impressed by their work. He called to ask if the students need more buildings, and he said no, they have enough.

Ms. Zerba asked how they chose the three buildings. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he went door to door on a Saturday to tell people about the project and ask if they would like their building documented free of charge, including blueprints. He continued that he was amazed by the

wonderful reception he received, and all the positive responses. People liked hearing about the Historic District Commission and that Keene State College students would be doing the work.

Ms. Zerba asked what the students were asked to do when they visited these homes. Mr. Ferrantello replied that they photo documented the interiors and exteriors, taking inventory of the as-is conditions, and then went back to their lab to put together the elevations and sections and details. He continued that the resulting blueprints will be given to the HDC and the building owners. He thinks this is a wonderful community contribution the students are doing, and they get course credit for it. He hopes some students get involved with historic preservation because of it.

Mr. Fleming asked if these are all students in the Architecture program. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes. He continued that Dr. Fernando Del Amo Gonzalo is the Chair, and Noah Ives is the instructor.

Ms. Zerba asked if they had the histories of the homes. Mr. Ferrantello replied that that is the second phase. He continued that first they document everything, interface with the Cheshire Historical Society, and conjure up whatever motifs they can identify in the building, who built it and when, and what kind of reference the features have to history, such as the cupolas, chimneys, and balconies.

Mr. Fleming asked if the students will go to the Historical Society to find out more about the buildings, because there is a lot of information there. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes, and he is interested to hear what they find.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that that perhaps the property owners would want to volunteer to have their properties become spot-zoned as part of the Historic District. Mr. Clements replied that in the Illinois community he worked in, along with the State and National registries of historic places, the villages could do what Mr. Ferrantello is describing – instead of having an established district, it was case by case. He continued that property owners could apply for and receive the local designation, which came with some protections for the property, and they had the opportunity to buy a plaque and participate in an annual competition for “best historic house.” He thinks they cannot do that in Keene, because establishing a historic district is allowed in State statute with some parameters. The City Council, by ordinance, creates a boundary for the Historic District.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that the HDC does not get enough applications. He continued that he wonders if another piece of this project would be to educate the citizens of Keene about the historic buildings, to advertise that Keene has historic fabric. Applicants are few and far between. These buildings might not be in the Historic District boundary, but they have historic architectural significance and are important. Mr. Fleming gave a suggestion for another building to consider, and discussion continued. Mr. Ferrantello stated that he wonders if it would be possible for the property owners of these houses that are outside of the Historic District

boundaries to ask for their houses to be considered as, say, buildings with architectural features that may be of interest. Maybe they could have an open house.

Mr. Clements replied that they could explore some kind of sponsorship thing, where if a property owner wants to try and get their property on the State or National registry, the HDC could be a resource to help support those efforts. He continued that the UU church on Washington St. just got put on the registry, and in their efforts with that, they sent letters to the HDC and the Heritage Commission (HC). Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the HDC always has the option of writing a letter of support.

Mr. Clements stated that on December 10, KSC will have a project review event, as they always do at the end of their semester. He continued that the students display their projects and people are invited to come and ask questions. He will reach out to Dr. Del Ama Gonzalo and see if these architecture projects will be there and if the HDC is invited to attend. Mr. Ferrantello replied that it is a wonderful event. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Benik stated that this project was born out of the HDC's conversation about what they could do to get more exposure for the HDC, such as how to come up with content that could be shared on social media. She continued that this project is amazing. She wonders if there is an opportunity for an article in the Keene Sentinel about this collaboration. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he thinks that is a great idea. Discussion continued. Ms. Benik stated that she would be happy to reach out to the Sentinel, tell them about the HDC's collaboration with KSC, and see if the Sentinel can come to the December 10 event. Mr. Clements replied that that would be great. Mr. Ferrantello stated that they should check with Dr. Del Ama Gonzalo to see if the property owners are coming on December 8 or 10. Mr. Clements replied that he will ask, if these architecture projects will be part of the event on December 10, if they could invite the property owners.

Ms. Zerba stated that she thinks they should inform the HC about the students' work with these three properties. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he can do that. He continued that he thinks the HC is already aware, but he will check with Dr. Del Ama Gonzalo. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she thinks that the HC is not aware, since Ms. Zerba is a member of both the HC and the HDC. Ms. Zerba agreed. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he will reach out. Mr. Clements asked Ms. Zerba what the best way to do that would be. He asked if someone from the HDC should come to an HC meeting. Ms. Zerba replied yes, that would be great. Discussion continued about the logistics. Mr. Clements stated that he will email the HC's chair, and CC: Mr. Ferrantello, so they can get that conversation started.

#### 4) **2026 Meeting Schedule Adoption**

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the 2026 meeting schedule. Mr. Ferrantello seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

5) **Staff Updates**

Mr. Clements stated that regarding what has been going on downtown, it has been fairly quiet. He continued that they have had a couple of administrative HDC applications, related to issues such as screening for heat pumps and tuck point masonry repair, but nothing really substantial, project-wise. There has been new ownership of a couple of buildings in the district. He has briefly talked with the new owners, and they are aware of the district and its rules. Staff has been working with them to do what needs to be done. He shared an example, and continued that that property owner might need to come to the HDC regarding window replacements, probably sometime next year. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked questions about that building, which Mr. Clements answered. Discussion continued.

Mr. Clements stated that it has been beneficial to the district. Many people are coming in from other communities, and have had some frustrating experiences with historic commissions, and have been pleasantly surprised with Keene's set of regulations and the flexibility Keene allows. It is encouraging people to make investments into these resources, while still keeping the heart and soul of these buildings alive.

Mr. Fleming asked if anything was needed with regard to the construction of the beer hall in the old Methodist Church. Mr. Clements replied with information about the work the property owner has been doing, which has not involved serious changes to the building that would require review. Discussion continued. Mr. Clements gave information about what the new owner of the old Timoleans building is doing. After more discussion, Mr. Clements summarized that stuff is happening in the district, and it is mostly internal, and they are seeing a lot of turnarounds. He continued that people are looking at a lot of the underutilized office spaces on main streets and looking at turning them into apartments, which is exciting.

6) **New Business**

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

7) **Upcoming Dates of Interest**

**A) Next HDC Meeting: December 17, 2025 - 4:30 PM**

**B) HDC Site Visit: December 17, 2025 - 3:30 PM (to be confirmed)**

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the next meeting will be December 17, assuming they have any applications. Mr. Clements replied that the goal for this meeting was to do the end of the year wrap-up so that they would not need to have a meeting in December if there were no applications. He continued that the building on Roxbury St. needing new windows was the project he was anticipating, but that has been delayed a bit, probably to next year. That is all he is aware of now, but something might come out of the woodwork.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if the HDC needs to vote on officers. Mr. Clements replied that that will happen in January. He continued that they might want to start thinking about another joint meeting with the HC for the beginning of the year.

Ms. Benik asked if they should be putting out feelers for new members. Mr. Clements replied that it could not hurt. He continued that the Mayor is aware of the membership vacancies, but he has many different boards and commissions to fill with people. It can be challenging to find volunteers. If HDC members know anyone who might be interested in joining, they can let those people know they can email him or talk to the City Clerk's Office. Mr. Fleming replied that maybe one of the homeowners whom the students worked with would be interested in joining. Mr. Ferrantello replied that that is a great idea.

**8) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 5:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Evan J. Clements, AICP  
Planner / Zoning Administrator