

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

4:30 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall

Members Present:

Cauley Powell, Chair
Acacia Johnston, Vice Chair
Julie Emineth
Rose Carey
Marilyn Huston
Councilor Molly Ellis
Louise Zerba
Kathy Halverson, Alternate
Jill Bouchillon, Alternate
Connie Joyce, Alternate

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planner

Members Not Present:

All Present

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Councilor Ellis called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call was conducted. The HC welcomed guests, Alina Nightingale, Stephen Seraichick, and Anthony Ferrantello.

2) Election of Chair & Vice Chair

Ms. Zerba nominated Councilor Ellis as Chair.

Councilor Ellis nominated Ms. Johnston as Chair. Ms. Huston seconded the nomination.

Ms. Carey nominated Ms. Bouchillon as Chair. Ms. Bouchillon replied that she was an alternate member. Ms. Fortson stated that only regular members can be nominated for Chair or Vice Chair.

Ms. Zerba nominated Ms. Powell as Chair. Ms. Powell replied that she could be Vice Chair and assist Ms. Johnston. Ms. Johnston replied that she would rather be Vice Chair than Chair. She seconded the nomination for Ms. Powell as Chair, which passed by unanimous vote.

Discussion ensued about Ms. Johnston as Vice Chair, and the HC determined that Councilor Ellis' motion to nominate her as chair, which Ms. Huston had seconded, could serve as a motion for her to be Vice Chair. The nomination of Ms. Johnston as Vice Chair passed by unanimous vote.

3) Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – November 12, 2025

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 12, 2025. Ms. Carey seconded the motion.

Chair Powell noted two corrections:

Line 57 – the narrative that she read was one that Ms. Carey had written, with research done by Ms. Emineth.

Line 224 – Councilor Ellis was the one who had run into Ms. Huston, not Ms. Fortson.

The motion to approve the meeting minutes, as amended, passed by unanimous vote.

4) Adoption of 2026 Meeting Schedule

Ms. Zerba made a motion to adopt the 2026 meeting schedule. Ms. Carey seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Ms. Emineth spoke about how the HC used to not meet every month, and asked if they would skip some meetings, maybe in the summer. Ms. Fortson replied that it is up to the group, and typically, the HC has met every other month, but their momentum increased and they started meeting monthly. Chair Powell added that they maintained the monthly schedule because Mr. Clements had said it would be easier to skip scheduled meetings, if the HC chooses to, than to schedule additional ones.

5) Keene Glass Plaque – Update from Stephen Seraichick

Chair Powell asked to hear from Stephen Seraichick.

Mr. Seraichick stated that he did not know if everyone knew where they are at regarding the installation of a historical marker between Water St. and Eastern Ave., on the bike path. He continued that he is a member of the Yankee Bottle Club. Their mission is to appreciate, preserve, and promote the history of glassmaking and glass collecting in New Hampshire. He brought a couple of bottles in tonight to show the HC. Mr. Seraichick gave information about the bottles. He continued that none of the three historical markers between Eastern Ave. and Water St. mention Keene Glass, which shocks him.

He thinks something should be done about that. Alan Rumrill, former Executive Director of the Historical Society, agrees. He has been talking with many local organizations about this. He put together a rendition of what the marker will look like, and Mr. Rumrill came up with the wording for it. Councilor Haas asked him to come up with a proposal, which he did, and he can share that with the HC for their files. He met with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Advisory Committee (BPPAC) this morning, and they wanted to know the bottom line. The bottom line is \$3,700: that is the cost estimate from Peter Poanessa, owner of Keene Sign Worx.

Mr. Seraichick stated that he and the club believe it is the City's responsibility to fund this, but he thinks the Club would be able to do some fundraising as well. He asked the State of New Hampshire, and they said no, the State would not do this. He then went to the Historic District Commission (HDC), which recommended him to the HC, and he went to the BPPAC when someone suggested he talk with them, too.

Chair Powell stated that she assumes Mr. Seraichick is interested in whether the HC is open to partnering on some funding assistance. She asked if that is the direction he is going in. Mr. Seraichick replied that if the HC wants to contribute some money, that would be great. He continued that he has the goal, but not all the pieces to get to the goal. He could fund it himself. But the way the Yankee Bottle Club looks at it is, this is the City of Keene's history, history that belongs to everyone, not just him. He guesses that the other historical markers were funded by the City, but he does not know.

HC members asked Mr. Seraichick what he is looking for from the HC. Mr. Seraichick replied that he is looking for their support. He continued that support for the funding, or support for the City to fund it, which are two different things, and he will leave that up to the HC. HC members asked, for clarity, if he is asking the HC to go to the City and ask the City to fund something they have told Mr. Seraichick the City does not have in its budget to fund. Mr. Seraichick replied that he does not know, because he has not talked to the City Council yet, but he is trying to get to that point.

He continued that he wanted to have everything in place first, such as what the sign will look like, what it will say, and a proposal. HC members suggested exploring a potential partnership, with some financial buy-in, with the other entities that might be interested. Mr. Seraichick explained the Yankee Bottle Club's financial situation. Discussion continued. Chair Powell stated that Mr. Seraichick and his colleagues have done an incredible amount of work on this, and it is clear from the conversations the HC has had that this project is worth pursuing. She continued that the HC will have to discuss the possibility of contributing funds, and ideally, they might have buy-in from other relevant organizations. The HC will discuss it and get back in touch with Mr. Seraichick.

Mr. Seraichick shared more information about the bottles he brought and Keene Glass. Ms. Fortson stated that her recommendation is for Mr. Seraichick to get a quote from Mr. Poanessa as to what he expects the entire cost of the sign would be, and send that information to her to share with the HC. She continued that that would be helpful for the HC as they approach voting on the decision to donate to this project. Alexis Green, attending this meeting remotely to discuss another agenda item, said in the chat box that an organization called the Pomeroy Foundation has a grant program, and they have funded markers before. She (Ms. Fortson) will send Mr. Seraichick that information.

6) Keene State College Architecture Students Highlighting Historic Properties in Keene – Overview & Update from the Historic District Commission

Chair Powell asked to hear from Anthony Ferrantello of the HDC.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that the HDC and the HC share the goal of making the historic fabric that we have in our backyard known to the greater community in Keene. He continued that the HDC

has had many discussions about how to do this. An idea they came up with was to do an interdisciplinary study that combines art, music, architecture, and narrative, on film. He learned that the HC has been working on a video project as well, so it is interesting that the two groups are doing similar work. The HDC's idea was to involve the KSC Architecture students. The chair of the Architecture Department ran with it and created a four-credit course for junior students to inventory several Court St. buildings. The students did that, and checked with the Cheshire County Historical Society's tax maps, and spoke with the buildings' owners and visited the buildings themselves. Through this, the students found discrepancies between the resources and the residence realities. That is the real-world fascination that happens when you are doing historic preservation. It is not necessarily so that what is in the record is the same as real life. He was impressed by how the students took interest and ran with it. They presented their work in December, to the homeowners, their professors, and the HDC. He was impressed by the caliber of the work.

Mr. Ferrantello continued that the senior class will continue and imbue more information onto what the juniors did, to create a comprehensive product. By this fall, he will identify more historic buildings for the students to inventory. The City will have an opportunity to have an audio/visual mechanism by which to communicate to the people about Keene's historic fabric. It will also be on social media. He envisions wonderful narration and background music, too.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that the HDC can discuss whether it wants to establish historic corridors that have contributing features to historic buildings, because there is a definite border inside the Historic District. He continued that then, just like spot zoning, they might consider spot annotation of various buildings that have significant features to celebrate even though they are outside of the Historic District.

Mr. Ferrantello expressed appreciation for this partnership between the City and KSC, for the students' work, and for the homeowners who opened their doors to them. He was very happy with the outcome and the collaboration between everyone.

Ms. Zerba asked what the parameters/boundary lines are for the buildings being evaluated. Mr. Ferrantello replied that right now there are not any. He continued that the question is which buildings are not within the Historic District but have some character-defining architectural features, and whether they could be incorporated, and contribute to the historic fabric that we have. They will need parameters eventually, but right now they are "reaching for the sky." He likes that the HDC and the HC have the same goal of exposing what Keene has to those who do not know about it. He thinks they should compare notes in working with KSC as well.

Chair Powell replied that she agrees. She asked if there is a long-term plan for the architecture students to continue this work. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes, it will be a continuous course, and the chair of the Architecture Department said he wants to develop it more comprehensively. He personally likes that the students can see the differences between what is in the record and what is in real life, and can see where these expressions originate from. He continued that there could be research projects for PhD students as well.

Ms. Carey stated that she understands that the buildings so far are homes. She asked if Mr. Ferrantello has any interest in doing any of the buildings around Central Square. Mr. Ferrantello

replied yes, he identified the Cheshire County Court House, and Eli Rivera, County Sheriff, gave the group permission to go ahead with it. He has information for the students about it whenever the students are ready to do that assessment. Ms. Carey replied that the HC is filming Central Square and they are particularly interested in the church at the head of the Square. Discussion ensued.

Chair Powell stated that it sounds like the HDC and HC have some common interests. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes, and he discovered that at one time, the HDC and HC were one group and then split. They should compare notes and share resources. Chair Powell replied that it sounds like they are due for their annual joint meeting, and they can discuss some collaborative projects in the future. She continued that it might make sense for the HC to get in on this KSC coursework, as preservation is at the heart of the work happening in both committees. Chair Powell and the HC thanked Mr. Ferrantello for coming today.

7) Section 106 Review – Elliot Center at 305 Main St.

Chair Powell thanked Ms. Alexis Green from EBI Consulting for attending the meeting remotely. Ms. Fortson stated that the proposed plans are in the agenda packet, and they show modifications proposed to some existing telecommunications equipment at the Elliot Center on KSC property. Because the property is located outside of the Historic District, the HC gets looped in as part of the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources' Section 106 review process. The goal of this discussion is to provide Ms. Green with feedback on what is proposed. For example, whether the HC wants to see equipment lines painted a certain color to blend with the building, or for rooftop equipment to be painted blue or grey to blend with the sky better, or something like that. She asked if Ms. Green wanted to share anything about the project.

Ms. Green stated that the project is nothing fancy; they are replacing existing equipment with new equipment. She continued that it will be in the same location. The average person is unlikely to notice any change at all. She is the consultant, specializing in Section 106, here to get the HC's opinion. She did not do the design. She will take the HC's comments back to her client, and/or answer questions from the HC.

Ms. Zerba stated that she was unable to read all of the materials they received, due to poor printing. She asked Ms. Green to show a picture of what it looks like currently, and what it will look like when the modifications are there. Ms. Fortson stated that she can show the plan set on the screen. Ms. Zerba stated that she would like to see what it will look like from Main St. Ms. Green replied that she can show a photo of what is currently there. She continued that for Section 106, they typically are only concerned with properties that are listed on the National Register or National Landmark lists and are considered eligible by the State Historic Preservation Office.

They typically do not include locally designated historic districts. However, she thinks these are the same district boundaries as Keene's local districts. They take photos all the way around the building and then within the district in various locations. The photos on the screen show the building facing north and facing northeast. You cannot really see the equipment when you are really close. They are set pretty far back. She indicated a photo in which you can see the tip of one of the pieces of equipment on the building's roof. She showed photos of the same thing from different angles. She continued that the existing frame will continue to be utilized.

Chair Powell stated that in the past, for projects similar to this one, the HC has requested masking or painting of the proposed equipment. She asked if anyone has any opinions on that front. HC members replied that they cannot see that there would be much change, and they do not see a need for painting or masking. Ms. Green replied that the pieces of equipment come the color they are now, that very light grey that is almost white. She continued that typically, carriers will paint the equipment if that is requested of them. She thinks of the color they come with as “cloudy day color,” and here in the northeast, cloudy days are common. Typically, when a commission recommends painting equipment brick or blue, she does not recommend that. She typically recommends this white or grey color to match New England’s weather. She has been doing this work for 17 years, and she expects that when this equipment is replaced, they will not even notice a change. HC members agreed.

Chair Powell stated that it sounds like the HC members are unanimous that they are comfortable with the project the way it is. Others agreed. Ms. Fortson stated that she will send Ms. Green an email saying that the HC had no real feedback. Ms. Green thanked the HC.

8) NH Preservation Alliance Membership Renewal & Donation Request

Ms. Fortson stated that the HC has two options for being members of the NH Preservation Alliance. She continued that a basic municipal membership is \$50 a year, or a full membership is \$60 per year. She explained the differences between the membership tiers.

Chair Powell asked for members’ opinions on membership, and on which membership tier to choose. She continued that historically, the HC has had a membership every year. Ms. Carey spoke in favor of the higher membership tier. Others agreed.

Ms. Emineth made a motion for the HC to approve an annual membership for the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, at \$60 per year. Councilor Ellis seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

9) Downtown Video Project Updates

Chair Powell asked to hear from Ms. Carey. Ms. Carey stated that she and Alina Nightingale have been working together, and Ms. Nightingale has done an interview with Ms. Zerba. She continued that there is a list of others to interview. Ms. Nightingale filmed some footage in the church, too. She (Ms. Carey) can request to get the footage to Chair Powell, if anyone is interested in seeing the footage before the next meeting. HC members thanked Ms. Carey and Ms. Nightingale. Ms. Carey spoke about some of the other people she and Ms. Nightingale hope to interview, doing one or two a month. Other HC members gave suggestions of people to consider.

Chair Powell asked Ms. Nightingale what her timeframe is with this project, and whether she is covered on her credits. Ms. Nightingale replied yes, and actually, thanks to this opportunity with the HC, she is in line to move on to the next grade in school in about two weeks. She is most of the way there. HC members thanked Ms. Nightingale for her work.

Chair Powell stated that it sounds like the HC is making good progress on this aspect of the project – the interviews, the memories and experience in the buildings. She continued that the part they had stalled a bit on was the write-ups of the different buildings. Part of that was trying to figure out who was doing what. She asked Ms. Fortson to pull up the spreadsheet, so they can do some assignments. This is a new platform, so she encourages anyone who has not already done so to join the Microsoft Teams group that Ms. Fortson set up for them. Ms. Fortson replied that actually, the City Attorney's Office had concerns about the HC using a platform that is not publicly accessible. She continued that the plan moving forward is to do something similar to what the Energy and Climate Committee does – they have a Google Drive that is run through the Community Development Department. They put the Google Drive link at the bottom of their meeting agendas, so that it is viewable to the public. Chair Powell asked if Ms. Fortson will be able to create such an account for the HC. Ms. Fortson replied yes.

Ms. Fortson stated that for now, she can at least pull up the block research assignments. Discussion ensued about clarifying the assignments so that there are not duplicate narratives being written, and using only one name for each property to avoid confusion. Chair Powell stated that the SharePoint spreadsheet they have for assignments now can be converted to go on the Google Drive. She continued that she attempted to do addresses, but it was hard with some of the big block buildings, so anyone assigned a building will need to confirm the actual street address range that it covers. She suggested they go through the assignments list right now, to clarify who already has which assignments, and give assignments as needed. Discussion ensued.

Ms. Bouchillon left at 5:26 PM.

Discussion continued about the block assignments, and about how the street addresses get confusing, because it depends on what source you are using and which year the blocks were split up, because they split up differently. Chair Powell noted that the street addresses she put in might not be accurate – she was doing it purely off the present day. Discussion continued, and members new to the HC asked if they are doing the research through the Historical Society. Chair Powell replied they are doing it through a combination of the Historical Society's resources, some books, and information from individual property owners. Ms. Emineth added that it is not a massive research project, and they are really looking at just the buildings themselves, not who owned it or anything like that. HC members also clarified, in response to a question, that this is a “rolling project” with no real deadlines. It should not be stressful; everyone can do what they can, and not feel pressured. Chair Powell stated that if anyone wants more information about what the work entails, they can talk about it outside of the meeting, since this meeting is already over time.

10) Hard Drive for Italian Neighborhood Project

Chair Powell stated that she needs to get the hard drive from Ms. Fortson. Ms. Fortson replied that she has it for her today. Chair Powell stated that they will transfer the Italian Neighborhood media and then get it to the Historical Society.

11) US Sesqui-Centennial 2026 Planning & Preparation Updates

Councilor Ellis stated that the event has been named Monadnock 250. She continued that Mark Rebillard of the downtown group had the same idea, independently, as the idea Ms. Carey had

brought to the HC that they have been working on, of creating a couple of paragraphs about various buildings downtown. Mr. Rebillard's thought was to put A-frame signs outside for the Monadnock 250 event, to showcase Keene's history. As Chair Powell said, this is a rolling project, but she thinks by the 4th of July, they will at least have many of the Central Square buildings written up. If the HC also has videos edited, they could put QR codes on the signs so people could watch them. The Monadnock 250 planning group would love to have the HC's write-ups of the buildings, which could be featured, prominently saying that the HC has contributed the research. Jenna Carroll of the Historical Society has said that they do not have someone to do the research, but if anyone wants to go to the Historical Society to do research, staff would be happy to assist.

Councilor Ellis stated that the Monadnock 250 committee is coming along, and if anyone wants to be involved, they are welcome. HC members asked for a rough idea of the schedule of the event they are planning. Councilor Ellis replied that there will be 4 on the 4th road race, a parade, and a small downtown festival with food and vendors on the 4th of July. She gave more information about the parade route and potential construction. The parade welcomes participation and floats, if anyone's group is interested.

Chair Powell stated that this is great motivation for the HC to get working on the video project, to make sure they are ready in time to support the Monadnock 250th Group's event. Others agreed and spoke positively about it. Councilor Ellis stated that once the next meeting date has been set for the Monadnock 250 planning committee, she will get that information to Ms. Fortson, to share with the HC. HC members are welcome to join.

12) Staff Updates
A) Jane's Walk (<https://janewalk.org/>)

Ms. Fortson stated that this can be tabled to next month's meeting in the interest of time.

13) New Business

Chair Powell stated that she connected with people about the Recovering Black History project, and the idea of plaques and signage, but they can talk about this at the next HC meeting.

14) Next Meeting – February 11, 2025
15) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 5:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan A. Fortson, AICP - Planner