

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

4:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Evan Clements, Planner / Zoning
Administrator

Members Not Present:

David Bergeron, Alternate
Russell Fleming, Alternate
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Minutes: February 18, 2026 Regular Meeting

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 18, 2026. Councilor Haas seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3) Outreach Project Update

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that they had discussed the outreach project last month. She continued that they had discussed doing some brainstorming and bringing ideas to this meeting. They do not have an application to hear today, but they are meeting because she thought it was important to keep the momentum going with this outreach project. She asked what ideas people have.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that he emailed Mr. Clements about making contact with Noah Ives (architecture instructor) at Keene State College (KSC), who was on paternity leave and said he would be back in April. He continued that Dr. Fernando Del Amo Gonzalo (department chair) was on sabbatical. He (Mr. Ferrantello) just emailed Mr. Ives to propose getting together to regroup and see where they are at with the project. He is waiting to hear back, hopefully soon. What they have to discuss is having the literature available for the library, having the students recap what they did and what their experiences were, and having Mr. Clements and him sit down

and go over the next steps and next layer of information the students will work with. He is waiting to hear back. A sit-down meeting would be the best way to go about this.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the HDC had also talked about creating some videos of about 15 seconds each. Ms. Benik replied yes, the agenda packet has an email she sent to Mr. Clements, to share with the HDC, with her ideas/outlines for some quick videos. She continued that first is a “Did you know...?” video, and she put together a rough idea for the HDC to consider. The voiceover starts way at the beginning, with “Did you know that Keene has a Historic District Commission?” briefly explains how the HDC can help homeowners in the district make exterior changes, and includes a montage of photos. Another video she came up with is a brief explanation of “Why It Matters.” A third one is “What Needs Approval,” to clarify for people what kind of exterior work they need approval for. All of the videos would link back to the HDC.

Mr. Ferrantello stated that he likes these video ideas. Discussion ensued about how the HDC could make brief slide presentations themselves, along with City approval and branding. Ms. Benik stated that she just threw these Canva videos together to give the HDC a rough idea, but she would be happy to take it further and make them a little more polished. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos and Councilor Haas replied that they really like what Ms. Benik has created and that would be great. Mr. Ferrantello stated that he would like Ms. Benik to be present at a meeting with Mr. Ives and Dr. Del Amo Gonzalo and present these videos. Councilor Haas asked if producing videos/slide presentations would work in parallel with the architecture students’ work. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he thinks it would generate ideas and they can decide which one or both, and he thinks both would be good. He continued that he likes what Ms. Benik created, how they are quick and get people’s attention. He likes the video sending the message that the HDC is here to help people, not threaten or obstruct them. He thinks videos would work better than slides.

Ms. Zerba asked if the HDC could get a review of what the students did. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes, that is one of the items that is forthcoming. He continued that Mr. Ives said he would ask the students to relive that experience, and put it on paper. Ms. Zerba replied that it would be good to get it on video. Others agreed. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that it could be images for future videos for it to be released to the City. Mr. Ferrantello replied that first the students will put it on paper. He does not know if interviewing students on video is something the college wants to do or can do. Ms. Zerba asked if Mr. Ferrantello has photos of the homes the students researched. Mr. Ferrantello replied that the students have photos. He continued that they superimposed the photos onto an AI program that made them look historic, with a brown patina, to make it look like an old print. He thinks it would be great to have them on video if they are willing. Discussion continued. Mr. Ferrantello expressed uncertainty about the potential legalities and permissions needed. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they have the City Attorney to help with that aspect when they get to that point. Ms. Benik stated that in the meantime, she will take some video of Keene in the beautiful spring weather.

Councilor Haas asked if the HDC has a list of the addresses the students worked with. Mr. Ferrantello replied that he has it somewhere, but not with him today, so he will have to find it. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked him to send it to Mr. Clements so Mr. Clements can distribute it to the HDC.

Discussion ensued and the HDC determined that Ms. Benik, Mr. Ferrantello, and Councilor Haas will participate in the meeting with Noah Ives, along with Mr. Clements.

Councilor Haas asked if any of the buildings are historical enough that the HDC should be promoting them as part of the upcoming 250th celebration. Mr. Ferrantello spoke about some of the interesting features he has seen represented by the students' work. Councilor Haas stated that if any of the buildings are 18th century, they absolutely should be part of the 250th somehow. He is a member of the planning committee for that, led by Councilor Molly Ellis. They welcome participation. Even if none of these buildings are 18th century, they could still be included. Mr. Ferrantello spoke about people the HDC could invite to their meetings, including some of the owners of these houses the students inventoried. Councilor Haas replied that they should clear it with Mr. Ives first and get some momentum.

Mr. Clements stated that the November 19, 2025 agenda packet has an update on this project that includes the addresses of the three properties that the students worked on and some of their rendering sketches. He continued that 91, 101, and 122 Court St. are the homes that were studied with this project.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that Councilor Haas sent Mr. Clements/the HDC an email with some ideas on how to get the students' work in front of the public. She continued that it is great to have those ideas formalized in a list. Councilor Haas stated that the more he gets involved with the 250th anniversary planning, the more he thinks the HDC should have a presence there.

Ms. Zerba asked if it is correct that everything depends on the two professors. Mr. Ferrantello replied yes, and the HDC has to work with their schedules. He continued that he thinks the professors have been very accommodating and helpful, and he anticipates continued cooperation and cohesiveness to benefit KSC, Keene, and the homeowners.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that a path forward is starting to emerge. She continued that one action item is, of course, Mr. Ferrantello taking the lead on the meeting with the professors and starting to work on getting the material in such a way that it can be disseminated through the library and other places. Councilor Haas can bring the three addresses to the 250th celebration committee for the HDC, if that is okay with him. Councilor Haas agreed. Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that the form the 250th celebration takes is yet to be determined. Councilor Haas replied that there will be a parade, some speeches, some vendors, and more that is yet to be determined. He spoke a little more about it, and answered HDC members' questions about the day's known schedule and logistics.

Ms. Zerba asked if Mr. Clements contacted the Library to ask if they could display something from the HDC, when the HDC eventually has something to display. Discussion ensued about how it is a "chicken versus egg" thing—the HDC might need to have the materials before asking the Library, but the Library is great and no one anticipates there being an issue.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that to recap, Mr. Ferrantello will be coordinating with KSC, Councilor Haas is taking the lead on interfacing with the 250th group, and Ms. Benik is taking the

lead on the videos and social media stuff. She continued that Mr. Ferrantello, Ms. Benik, and Councilor Haas will meet with the folks from KSC. Other HDC members can participate as long as they do not form a quorum.

4) Staff Updates – NH Planning & Zoning Spring Conference – Saturday, May 9, 2026

Mr. Clements stated that the NH Bureau of Business and Economic Affairs is the State planning organization and they do a conference every year. He continued that it will be May 9, and it is free, online. If you cannot make it on May 9, everything will be recorded and available online afterwards. It is an informative conference, and this year there is a planning board track, zoning board track, and a “special topics” track, which includes a session on historic preservation planning tools. The agenda packet includes the website where you can sign up.

5) Joint HDC & Heritage Commission Meeting – Wednesday, May 13th at 4:30 PM

Mr. Clements stated that the joint meeting with the Heritage Commission is scheduled for May 13. He continued that the HDC had discussed whether to have a regular meeting as well, and it turns out they do need a regular meeting, because they have a major project application to review. The regular meeting will be May 20. A quorum is needed for both meetings.

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if there is anything the HDC needs to prepare for the joint meeting. Mr. Clements replied that he does not think so. He continued that it is more about getting the two bodies together to talk about what everyone is doing. There is definitely some overlap in the two bodies’ goals and projects. It should be a productive discussion. He, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos, HC staff liaison Megan Fortson, and HC Chair Cauley Powell should start putting their heads together to work on the agenda for that joint meeting.

6) New Business

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

7) Upcoming Dates of Interest:

A) Next HDC Meeting: May 20, 2026 – 4:30 PM

B) HDC Site Visit: May 20, 2026 – 3:30 PM (to be confirmed)

Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos asked Mr. Clements if there will be a site visit on May 20. Mr. Clements replied that they might want a site visit. He continued that he and Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos should briefly talk about it after this meeting.

8) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Cunha-Vasconcelos adjourned the meeting at 4:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

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