

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

4:30 PM

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

Members Present:

Cauley Powell, Chair
Julie Emineth
Rose Carey
Louise Zerba
Kathy Halverson, Alternate (Voting)
Jill Bouchillon, Alternate (Voting)
Karl Sandy, Alternate (Voting; Arrived at
4:35 PM)

Staff Present:

Megan Fortson, Planner & Deputy Zoning
Administrator

Members Not Present:

Marilyn Huston
Acacia Johnston, Vice Chair
Councilor Molly Ellis
Connie Joyce, Alternate

1. Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Powell called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting minutes – July 8, 2026 & July 31, 2026

Ms. Zerba made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 8 and July 31, 2026. Ms. Halverson seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

3. Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant Discussion

Chair Powell stated that a draft of the Letter of Intent (LOI) language is in front of everyone for consideration today. She continued that Friday is the deadline to submit an LOI for the 2026 CLG grant cycle. Ms. Fortson reached out to the New Hampshire Division of Historic Resources (NHDHR) to get the confirmed timeline. The funds and the decision, if the HC were to be selected, would come through by the end of the year, but that cycle would probably begin in late winter or early spring, and resolve in early 2028. It is a little more stretched out than they had been discussing at the special meeting on July 31, 2026. The draft has the four ideas the group had landed on at that special meeting. She asked if anyone had thoughts or ideas.

Ms. Zerba stated that what Chair Powell wrote is wonderful. Ms. Bouchillon agreed.

Karl Sandy arrived at 4:35 PM.

Chair Powell asked if the group had thoughts on which order to put the four topics in. That is, she wondered if there was one topic in particular the group is most interested in. In the past, the NHDHR has advised the HC on which idea is most attuned with what the NHDHR was thinking about and what other communities might be proposing. It is hard to say. It might be that what the HC wants most would not be a good fit right now, but they can see how it goes.

Ms. Carey stated that she would like to see the topic of factories and manufacturing put first, and she does not have a preference for how to order the other three topics. Ms. Halverson agreed. Ms. Carey stated that there is a lot of enthusiasm for cemetery tours.

Chair Powell stated that Ms. Zerba had suggested double checking with the Historical Society about any projects they might already have so that the HC was not proposing to replicate something that had already been done. She continued that Ms. Fortson had already been in conversation with the Historical Society. Alan Rumrill emailed them. He said education in Keene is a great idea, and that the Historical Society might have presentations and publications that could help with that research. They think they have a lot of information to incorporate into such a project. Regarding the idea of the cemetery walking tours, he confirmed the boundaries of what he had done and the information he had included in his 90-minute walking tours of Woodland and Woodland Northeast cemeteries. Discussion ensued about the locations of “Woodland” and “Woodland Northeast.” Ms. Fortson stated that Woodland Cemetery has an entrance off Beaver St., and Woodland Northeast Division has an entrance off North Lincoln St. Chair Powell continued that Mr. Rumrill said he had thought about expanding his cemetery walking tour but has not had time, so the HC’s project would be a great fit.

Chair Powell continued that regarding the idea of the buildings that have been demolished in Keene, Mr. Rumrill again thinks the Historical Society would have many resources on that, and he himself had done some speaking on some of those buildings. Regarding the factory inventory, he said that at one point, the Historical Society had hoped to do something like that, and an intern had filled out forms about four or five buildings. It sounds like all of the HC’s project ideas are in line with the Historical Society’s interests. Jenna Carroll said that once the HC knows what project they are doing, the Historical Society’s research teams could start pulling things to assist them in their research.

Ms. Fortson stated that the LOI needs to be submitted by noon on Friday. She continued that a conversation with NHDHR staff would be next week, and then by next Friday, the NHDHR would invite them to apply. Full applications are due on October 16, 2026. That is a quick turnaround. Discussion ensued about whether the HC will have two meetings between now and October 16. Ms. Fortson replied that the next HC meetings are September 9th and October 16th, so that would be very close.

Ms. Emineth asked what the full application was like, and whether the project idea would be locked in at that time. Chair Powell replied that when the NHDHR invites them to apply August

21, 2026 is when they would lock in the project. She continued that it might behoove them not to wait until the September 9, 2026 meeting to begin working on the application. Along with written content, the application needs to include financial proposals for whatever consultant, service, or vendor is needed. The HC needs to reach out and get those quotes. Ms. Fortson replied that they do need to give a ballpark figure for that. They could probably determine the anticipated grant request amount just based off research. The form also asks for an explanation of the project idea, how the HC would implement it, and times for availability for meeting with NHDHR staff.

Chair Powell stated that with each project idea, it is indicated what the funds would go towards, except for the inventory. She continued that she assumed it would be obvious that the funds would be for a consultant to do the inventory. The Preservation Company did the HC's most recent one. Ms. Zerba asked how much money was spent on that. Chair Powell replied that they could easily find that information. That might be a good quote to reference for the dollar amount for the inventory.

Ms. Fortson stated that she wonders if, for the factory and manufacturing inventory, the intent of the research would be more about the architecture of the buildings, or more about the history of the buildings, like the people who lived there or the company the building was associated with. Chair Powell replied that she thinks it would be a combination, but generally, they are architectural inventories, with survey forms to fill out. Ms. Fortson replied that it is possible the City already has those on file. They do have files and rankings for some historic buildings outside of the Historic District. She will look through the files and check.

Regarding an HC member's question about the intended outcome of such an inventory, Chair Powell explained that the hired consultant would fill out the survey forms, which would become part of the larger database available to all. Typically, a report would accompany that, highlighting interesting takeaways. Collecting this information would build a base that the HC could use to pursue new projects, focusing on that more industrial side. Ms. Carey had some great project ideas. She confirmed that the HC would not need to do the research on the properties or give any kind of presentation. The consultant hired would do the inventory. Ms. Carey added that at the most, the HC would perhaps have a meeting with the consultant, who would give them a presentation at the end. Chair Powell added that the HC would probably have to narrow the list by deciding which buildings it would make sense to include. With previous inventories, that was part of it, like when the consultant for the urban barn inventory told them their scope was a little too big and they had to narrow it down.

Ms. Fortson stated that if the group was expected to have some type of deliverable, like how they had the tour after a previous inventory, they could speak to the Library about putting posters out or something like that. Chair Powell stated that the urban barn inventory was done during COVID, so they did a Zoom-style presentation, which was recorded and available for anyone to watch. Discussion ensued about how another HC grant in the past involved having posters in the City Hall lobby. Ms. Carey stated that maybe if they get this grant, they could work with the Historical Society to display the results there, because it would make a great exhibit. Others agreed.

Chair Powell stated that she thinks the cemetery tour would be an easier one to figure out. She continued that they could ask Mr. Rumrill for an example quote. Discussion ensued about how sometimes grant applications ask for multiple quotes. Ms. Fortson suggested getting Mr. Rumrill to give two quotes, as a Historical Society staff member and as a private consultant.

Chair Powell stated that the quotes for the history of schools and education in Keene, and the buildings no longer here, would be a little harder. She does not have a person offhand. Maybe they could ask Will Schoefmann, GIS Coordinator, if he knows someone who might be able to provide a quote, if that project idea ends up being chosen. Regarding education, she had been curious about whether the HC wanted to do something for the bicentennial regardless of whether the CLG grant is chosen for that. She was thinking that it would not have to be a CLG grant project. The HC could do something without money to support it. But money could make it easier and nicer. She asked for others' thoughts. Ms. Zerba replied that they might need to figure out how many hours of research would be needed. Chair Powell replied that they might be able to pull that from past projects.

Ms. Carey stated that maybe they could do some radio shorts for education in Keene, as part of the deliverable. Discussion ensued about how the HC thinks the air time is donated. Ms. Carey added that they could do radio shorts for any of these project topics, but she also likes the idea of having something that is viewable. Chair Powell stated that she does not think it would be hard to get quotes from video people. She continued that she just wanted the HC's thoughts on the topic. Typically, CLG grants are for projects that are different from ones the HC might do without a grant. She wanted to make sure the schools and education project idea was distinct enough to warrant it. She thinks it can be; the video aspect could be great and really helpful. Ms. Carey agreed and added that they could augment with posters, pictures, or short write-ups about some of what they find. Brief discussion ensued about specific buildings. Chair Powell stated that she is excited about the education in Keene idea. There are enough schools and buildings for everyone to have their own assignment and run with it.

Chair Powell stated that if everyone feels good about the set of proposals, they can reorder them to put the factory and manufacturing inventory first. If Ms. Fortson finds that the City has a substantial number of those surveys already, maybe they can change the order of the CLG proposal topics. Ms. Fortson asked for confirmation that the HC is talking about the Colony Mill building and the other buildings they discussed last time, like the brick ones behind Targett Cleaners that used to be housing for mill workers. Chair Powell replied that she thinks less the housing, and more the actual buildings that have been converted, like down Island St. Mr. Sandy mentioned Marlboro St., where many buildings off the rail trail are old industrial ones. Chair Powell added that the Carriage House building was an old factory. Discussion continued with a few more examples.

Ms. Emineth made a motion for the Heritage Commission to approve the draft Letter of Intent for submissions for a 2026 Certified Local Government (CLG) grant, with the order of the topics adjusted. Ms. Bouchillon seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4. Monadnock 250 Celebration Recap

Chair Powell stated that she had hoped Councilor Ellis would be here to share her experiences regarding the Monadnock 250 Celebration. She continued that Councilor Ellis could not be here today, but she did a write-up about it, which she can share with the HC.

Chair Powell reported on Councilor Ellis's behalf:

- The Fire Department did not estimate the turnout, but it was thousands of people
- Over 200 people participated in the parade, and there were about 20 volunteers that day
- Despite the limited route, the parade was wonderful, with incredible floats, costumes, and music
- She is grateful for everyone's effort and advice
- She wonders about continued Independence Day celebrations and/or the Memorial Day parade, and/or other ways of continuing the civic pride that came with the parade process

Chair Powell asked if Ms. Carey or others who attended the parade wanted to share anything. Ms. Carey replied that it was very nice, and she was impressed by how many different organizations participated, including children, walking groups, and the United Church of Christ. It was heartwarming to see so many people there.

Ms. Bouchillon stated that it would be nice if they had something like "Monadnock Day," maybe in June between Memorial Day and July 4th. She continued that there could be a big parade or something like that. It could be a time to reinforce civic pride on a day that did not conflict with the holidays people take off from work. Others agreed and spoke about the importance of downtown festivals, especially during the Downtown Infrastructure Project. Ms. Fortson stated that she thinks the Greater Monadnock Collaborative is planning a series of downtown festivals during the course of construction to keep people coming to downtown businesses. Chair Powell stated that the HC will continue to talk about this, especially when Councilor Ellis is back.

5. Staff Updates

Ms. Fortson gave information about the Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan the City is in the process of updating. It will include public bike and walk audits, which means having people walk and bike around town to identify areas that might be of concern or improvements that could be made. People will give that feedback to City staff, who will fill out worksheets they got through an AARP grant. If anyone is interested in participating, they can sign up through the City's website.

Ms. Carey spoke about a spectacular, seven-mile bike ride starting at what was "the narrows" up by the transfer station. It is a beautiful ride, and she does not think many people realize it. Ms. Emineth agreed and spoke about how she and her family enjoy that route, too, along with a nice trail by the YMCA.

Chair Powell asked about the hiring process Ms. Fortson had spoken about at the last meeting. Ms. Fortson replied that they have had about 90 applicants for the Assistant Sustainability Planner position. They have narrowed down the list and are in the process of conducting

interviews via Teams this week and next, followed by in-person interviews. They expect to finish that process and make an offer to someone by late August or early September. In response to an HC member's question, Ms. Fortson replied that it is a full-time position, and the position will be split 50-50 between sustainability work like implementation of Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP) goals, Community Power, and the Energy Plan; and the day-to-day planning tasks like development review for the Planning Board, drafting ordinances, and things like that.

6. New Business

Chair Powell stated that the HC had been discussing that since there is a lot of new membership in the group, and then also as they wrap up projects, the idea of revisiting the HC's mission and objectives and how they are best achieving them. Obviously, they will be busy over the next month or two, if the NHDHR chooses them to submit an application, but it would be good to be thinking about that in the background. She and Ms. Fortson might touch base and pull together some materials for people to read this fall after the CLG grant application is complete. That might be an opportunity for the HC to meet without a project in mind, to talk about the idea of the Commission, what the goals are, and how to best be stewards of the community's heritage. She thinks they already do well with this, but it is good to revisit these things, challenge themselves, and create opportunities.

Ms. Zerba asked how the topics will be ordered in the LOI for the CLG grant. Chair Powell replied that it will be the order as shown the draft they have today, but with the inventory first. She continued that at the September meeting, the HC will probably be working on the submission. There will be very little going on for the HC through the fall, unless they choose to take on a non-CLG project simultaneously. They could do website updates, which is something that always needs attention.

Brief discussion ensued about a recent meeting with the NHDHR that some HC members attended. Ms. Fortson clarified that the topics people brought up were, in general, very specific to the towns the people were from, not so relevant to Heritage Commissions in general. Chair Powell stated that they could think about finding other heritage commission groups from southwest New Hampshire or Cheshire County and trying to create some sort of event, whether in-person or on Zoom, to get to know each other.

7. Next Meeting – September 9, 2026

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 5:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Megan Fortson, Planner