

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

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

**Wednesday, April 19, 2017                      4:30 PM                      2nd Floor Committee Room,                      City Hall**

**Members Present:**

Hanspeter Weber, Chair  
Dan Bartlett, Vice Chair  
Thomas Powers, Councilor  
Anita Carroll-Weldon  
Nancy Proctor

**Staff Present:**

Tara Kessler, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Joslin Kimball Frank

**Site Visit:** At 3:30 PM, a site visit was held of 173 Main Street, the St. Bernard Church Rectory, and at 3:55 PM of 15 Main Street, Citizens Bank. Commission members in attendance included Chair Weber, Councilor Powers, and Anita Carroll-Weldon.

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

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM and Ms. Kessler conducted roll call.

**2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – March 15, 2017**

Councilor Powers made a motion to approve the minutes of March 15, 2017, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and carried unanimously.

**3) Public Hearings**

**COA-2015-07 Mod. 2 - 173 Main St, St. Bernard Church Rectory Column Replacement - Applicant, Michael B. Forrest, on behalf of owner, Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester, requests the replacement of four structural columns on the front of the Rectory building located at 173 Main St. The property is Tax Map Parcel #048-03-003. The Applicant is requesting a waiver from Section XV.A.3 Lighting of the Historic District Commission Regulations. The building is ranked as a Primary Resource.**

Ms. Kessler recommended this application be accepted as complete. Councilor Powers made a motion to accept application COA-2015-07 Mod. 2 as complete, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and carried unanimously.

Chair Weber welcomed Michael Forrest, Chair of Finance at St. Bernard Church. Mr. Forrest explained the application is to replace the four, originally wood, columns at the front of the church rectory, which are rotting and not structurally sound. While they anticipated the columns had wooden frame supports inside, they do not and the columns are only supported by rotting

wood. Therefore, the application is to remove the rotting wood columns and replace them with fiberglass, with a granite base. He added the porch ceiling is also in poor condition and may require structural repairs as well. Because they are excavating to replace the column footings, they also plan to replace the sewer line from the building to the sidewalk but do not anticipate having to excavate the street.

Mr. Forrest continued explaining the waiver he seeks. The intention is to remove all shrubs at the front of the rectory (where homeless sleep) and add two spot-lights in the lawn (each centered in the lawn between the two columns on each side of the building) to illuminate the front of the Rectory at night. He said the reason for the waiver is because of the spot-lights. However, while the lights will face upward to illuminate the building, there is no risk of light spilling-over onto adjacent properties as the two properties adjacent to the rectory are also owned by the Church.

Mr. Bartlett noted the photo in the application looks as though the proposal is for uni-directional up-lights. Mr. Forrest replied the style of lighting in the application is what the consultant proposed, to reduce shadows on the building, but they have not finalized the light fixture yet; they wanted to know if the waiver was agreeable to this Commission first. He suggested they will not be drastically different from the lights currently in front of the building. The proposed lights would be moved farther back than the existing fixtures to illuminate more of the building. Ms. Proctor suggested the shrubs in front of the columns could be contributing to the rot, and suggested trying to improve sewer lines into the street as many in town are overgrown with tree roots. Mr. Forrest replied there are no trees in that location, but excavating to the sidewalk will allow the lines to be cleaned into the street without excavating. Councilor Powers suggested speaking with Billy Byrne and Public Works as that section of street often floods; perhaps this issue can be resolved at the same time. Mr. Forrest agreed to speak with them.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted that during the site visit, it was clear the base of the columns are deteriorated and asked if the columns have been inspected for rot beyond their bases. Mr. Forrest replied the base and top of all columns are rotting and that he has not had the rest of the columns inspected for rot. Ms. Carroll-Weldon suggested having that inspection before commencing. She noted that if only the top and bottom of each column is deteriorated, perhaps the remaining elements of the original columns could be preserved. Mr. Forrest replied that he has not heard of this being done, and he fears this suggestion would potentially require restructuring the whole roof. He noted that as opposed to wood, painted fiberglass will never peel and is easy to clean. Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted the relevant Historic District regulation on this matter states, "*if repair is necessary, only the deteriorated element shall be repaired, through patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the deteriorated section.*" She encouraged the applicant to ensure only deteriorated original elements are replaced.

Mr. Forrest noted that they propose to remove the concrete walkway that leads from the front porch of the rectory to the public sidewalk and replace it with grass. That front door is no longer used and they hope to discourage use and/or eliminate confusion about its use. He added that the walkway is in disrepair. Mr. Bartlett noted that walkway is a historic feature, representing historic use of the building. He understands the reason for the request, but suggested another way to indicate that the walkway is off limits without eliminating the path is to install granite posts with a chain. He also suggested replacing the walkway with low cost gravel as the walkway is in disrepair. Mr. Forrest agreed to consider this option and recognized the walkway should be maintained in some form.

Ms. Proctor asked if the concrete rectory porch will be replaced at the same time as the columns. Mr. Forrest replied yes it will be replaced with a stamped concrete treated with a flagstone pattern.

Ms. Kessler indicated the staff report lists the Historic District standards related to this application. She noted that while the material of the proposed walkway for removal is not of the historic material, it has been there since the early 1900s or potentially earlier. Regarding the lights, Ms. Kessler indicated the waiver criteria on page 11/73 in the meeting packet. Both the Historic District and Planning Board standards require fully shielded light fixtures with downcast lighting. This is why the applicant is seeking a waiver, in order to cast light upward onto the building. The Commission needs to determine if the applicant meets these criteria and whether the location, level, and direction of lighting are appropriate for the location.

Chair Weber asked if members of the public wished to comment.

Mr. Bartlett noted he has misgivings about the lights because of the Dark Skies initiative, which prohibits up-lighting in the City. He asked Mr. Forrest if he would consider concealed lighting in the overhang of the porch instead, as it would not illuminate the face of the columns but would light the building and be self-contained. Mr. Forrest replied he had not considered that, but fears that it would back-light the columns, not highlight them. He thinks the lights in the lawn would also highlight the historic balcony. Mr. Bartlett disagreed, stating he thinks there would still be enough ambient light to highlight the columns. He also thinks concealed lights from the overhang would better highlight the balcony; whereas, lights installed in the lawn will cast shadows of the columns on the building. Chair Weber asked if it is possible to have lights on long arms facing down from the edge of the roof. Mr. Forrest replied he fears this would not be attractive during the day. Mr. Bartlett agreed it would deface the building and stated he does not want to see any lights visible on the street-facing elevation.

Chair Weber closed the public hearing.

Mr. Bartlett asked if other Commission members agreed with his suggestions about the walkway. Commission members agreed that retaining a walkway with granite posts and a chain limiting its use is more historically appropriate than removing walkway. Ms. Proctor also suggested a wrought iron gate to match the rectory balcony. Ms. Carroll-Weldon replied if the purpose is to discourage use, a chain would cut off use; whereas, a gate leaves the impression that access to the walkway is still possible. The Commission agreed the choice of appropriate closure should be left to the applicant as long as the walkway is maintained. Ms. Kessler suggested rather than proposing a material, the Commission encourage the applicant to submit a new proposal for the walkway to be approved at the Planning Department's discretion based on the Commission's recommendations; the Commission agreed.

Mr. Bartlett noted he feels strongly that up-lighting is not appropriate for this application, specifically because of the Dark Skies initiative. The Historic District regulations prohibit up-lights and he does not believe the applicant meets the criteria for a waiver, so he will not support the request. He said the Commission could request the applicant submit the specific light fixture they hope to use, and to have a lighting company analyze the photometric's to determine how much light would spill into the sky. He thinks the applicant should resubmit for the sidewalk and provide more specifics on lighting. Ms. Kessler indicated it might be difficult to gauge how much light is projected into the sky. She said if the Commission asks the applicant to submit this information as a condition of approval, it is important for staff to know how the Commission wants the light fixtures/sidewalk materials to be reviewed by staff in order to satisfy the

Commission. Mr. Bartlett replied that photometric data on beam angle, shape of light, and lumens projected upward could be calculated as easily as sideways. He said if he knew the shape of the light, calculations on how the shape of the light will be predominantly on the building, especially at high levels of illumination, he would be satisfied. Councilor Powers agreed with that idea but noted that may not be economically advantageous for the applicant. Mr. Bartlett replied he is unsure of cost and a directional fixture will likely be more expensive than the current flood lights, but an electrical engineer or lighting company should be able to assist the applicant. Because of the Dark Skies initiative, he said this application should be reviewed with some scrutiny. He is comfortable having the Planning Department verify and approve further information the applicant provides; the other Commission members agreed.

Mr. Bartlett made a motion to approve COA-2015-07 Mod. 2 and the waiver from Section XV.A.3. Lighting for the rehabilitation of the front porch, replacement of columns and footings, and associated site work at 173 Main Street (TMP #048-03-003) as described in the application materials submitted to the Planning Department on March 27, 2017 with the following conditions: 1) that the front walkway be retained and the applicant submit a new proposal for the walkway to be approved by the Planning Department; and 2) submission of a photometric plan and fixture cut-sheet to be reviewed and approved by the Planning Department. The motion was seconded by Councilor Powers.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted there are several different things being approved in this motion and she is not in favor of replacing the columns, a primary resource and major architectural feature of the building. She does not think fiberglass is appropriate. Ms. Kessler replied these are typically grouped into one approval because it is a full application. She said a motion could be put forward to approve the waiver and not the rest.

The motion carried with a vote of 3-2, Ms. Carroll-Weldon and Mr. Bartlett voted against.

**COA -2016-08 Mod. 1 - 15-23 Main St, Citizens Bank Entrance Ramp -Applicant, GPI Construction, Inc., on behalf of owner, ARC CBKNENH001, LLC, requests the installation of a ramp in front of the building entrance at 15 Main St. The property is Tax Map Parcel #046-01-004. The building is ranked as a Contributing Resource.**

Ms. Kessler recommended this application be accepted as complete. Councilor Powers made a motion to accept application COA-2016-08 Mod. 1 as complete, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and carried unanimously.

Chair Weber welcomed the applicant Art Greenbaum, GPI Construction Project Manager. The applicant proposes an ADA accessible ramp with a landing platform in front of Citizens Bank on Main Street. Mr. Greenbaum explained the two options they have proposed:

- 1) A railing that extends across the front of the building; or,
- 2) Maintain a step down from the platform with railing only along the ramp and a small railing and handle on the left side (the railing would not block the platform or doorway).

He explained how the door and vestibule will also be equipped with handicapped doors and sufficient turning space for wheelchairs. Ms. Kessler noted she asked the applicant to develop the second design because of questions about blocking the entrance from street view. She added the applicant has the right to use that space in the City right of way. Mr. Greenbaum explained the sidewalk in front of the building is sloped and in the design the step down would be 7" on the left and 5" on the right. This could be altered to two 4" steps down if the grade in the sidewalk were altered.

Mr. Bartlett said he prefers design one because design two seems to have a busier appearance from the street view. He added the idea of stepping from a flat step onto a pitched sidewalk is not ideal. Chair Weber said he likes the idea of the front door view being unobstructed in design two although he sees Mr. Bartlett's point. Mr. Bartlett replied he has been learning about how to mitigate the visual impact of ADA ramps and the recommendation is a level railing as opposed to sloped and he thinks design one is a cleaner straight line than the break in the railing in design two.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon questioned the material of the railing. Mr. Greenbaum referred to page 36/73 of the meeting packet, which displayed a photo of a similar railing at a hotel across the street. The intention is for the proposed railing to be as similar to that as possible, a steel railing with coated black paint.

Ms. Proctor said she also prefers design one and thinks the contiguous railing would be more attractive; Councilor Powers agreed. Chair Weber said he is in favor of design one as long as the applicant ensures the step down from the new platform will be compliant with the 7" requirement. The applicant agreed that it will be compliant.

With no public comment, Chair Weber closed the public hearing.

Councilor Powers made a motion to approve COA-2016-08 Mod.1 for the installation of a ramp and railing at 15 Main Street (TMP#046-01-004) as presented on the drawings entitled "Citizens Bank Entrance Vestibule, Site - Plan View" and "Citizens Bank - Elevation" drawn by GPI Construction Inc. at a scale of 1/4"=1' on March 28, 2017 with the condition that the railing be horizontal with a sloped handrail. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and carried unanimously.

**COA-2010-09 Mod. 1 - 2-20 Main St, Eversource Pad Mounted Transformer - Applicant, Mark Fraser of Eversource, on behalf of owner, Mountain River Realty Corp., requests the installation of a 500kVa pad mounted transformer at 2-20 Main St. The property is Tax Map Parcel #022-01-001. This property is ranked as a Primary Resource.**

Ms. Kessler recommended the Commission accept this application as complete. Councilor Powers made a motion to accept application COA-2010-09 Mod.1 as complete, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and carried unanimously.

Chair Weber welcomed Laurel Boivin and Mark Fraser of Eversource to present the four remaining applications. Ms. Boivin noted this application form for this proposal includes a faxed copy of the property owner's signature. She anticipates receiving the original in the mail shortly. She said he hopes the public hearing can move forward with the understanding that approval is contingent on the Planning Department receiving the original signature.

Mr. Fraser explained this property is owned by Mountain River Realty and comprises the corner of Roxbury and Main Streets. The proposed transformer location is in the parking lot behind the businesses adjacent to the Hannah Grimes building. The 500kVa transformer will supply power to all businesses in this general vicinity. The proposed screening is a one-panel, 10' long, 8' high cedar fence. The fence will be perpendicular to the Hannah Grimes building and painted red to match the building. The dumpsters that are currently located there will be relocated.

Ms. Proctor asked who will maintain the fence. Mr. Fraser replied, the property owner. Ms. Proctor asked if the Commission can require the owner to maintain it. Ms. Kessler replied at a minimum the fence must stay in place but this Commission cannot mandate maintenance. Mr. Bartlett suggested the fence be stained instead, which will not require as much maintenance as painting it would. Commission members agreed staining the fence is preferred in this location.

With no public comment, Chair Weber closed the public hearing.

Councilor Powers made a motion to approve COA-2010-09 Mod.1 for the installation of a pad-mounted transformer and concrete pad in the parking lot at 2-20 Main Street (TMP #02-01-001) as described in the project narrative and as shown on the drawings, "Section D, Mountain River Realty Site Plan, Transformer Location" dated March 28, 2017 and prepared by Mark Fraser. The motion was seconded by Ms. Proctor and carried unanimously.

**COA-2017-03 - 51 Railroad St Unit F, Eversource Pad Mounted Transformer - Applicant, Mark Fraser from Eversource, on behalf of owner, Railroad Land Development, LLC, requests the installation of a 500kVa pad mounted transformer on Unit F of the property at 51 Railroad St. The property is Tax Map Parcel #023-04-027.9000.**

Ms. Kessler recommended the Commission accept this application as complete. Mr. Bartlett made a motion to accept application COA-2017-03 as complete, which was seconded by Councilor Powers and carried unanimously.

Mr. Fraser explained this property is adjacent to the Monadnock Food Co-Op where Jack Dugan anticipates developing condominiums. The 500kVa transformer would supply power to that property, The Works, Thai Garden, the Pawn Shop, and the Monadnock Maker Space. The proposed screening is two panels of cedar fence to screen the transformer from Eagle Court with the understanding that fencing may need to be modified as that site is developed. Ms. Kessler noted there are no current applications or proposals for development on that property. Ms. Boivin added this transformer will eliminate the need for a previously approved transformer on Eagle Court. Ms. Kessler suggested that without development on the property, a fence may draw more attention to the transformer. Mr. Fraser said temporary planters around the transformer are possible. Mr. Bartlett replied he would prefer planters to the fence; Ms. Proctor agreed.

With no public comment, Chair Weber closed the public hearing.

Councilor Powers made a motion to approve COA-2017-03 for the installation of a pad-mounted transformer and concrete pad at the south end of 51 Railroad Street Unit F (TMP #023-04-027.9000) as described in the project narrative and as shown in the drawings, "Railroad Street Condominiums, Section D, Railroad Street Condominiums Site Plan Transformer Location" dated March 28, 2017 and prepared by Mark Fraser with the following condition: submission of a revised screening plan to the Planning Department. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and carried unanimously.

**COA-2017-02 - 0 Lamson St, Eversource Pad Mounted Transformer- Applicant, Mark Fraser of Eversource, on behalf of owner, County of Cheshire, requests the installation of a 750kVa pad mounted transformer at 0 Lamson St. The property is Tax Map Parcel #046-02-003.0100.**

Ms. Kessler recommended the Commission accept this application as complete. Mr. Bartlett made a motion to accept application COA-2017-02 as complete, which was seconded by Ms. Proctor and carried unanimously.

A 750kVa transformer is proposed on this property, owned by the County of Cheshire. The transformer will service the Greenwald building, Ye Goodie Shop, Timolean's, and Hundred Nights Shelter. The transformer will be placed close to the building with unpainted cedar fencing on three sides to blend with the split rail fence currently there.

Mr. Bartlett said this fence would also be a good candidate for staining. Mr. Fraser replied he discussed this with the property owner and they prefer plain cedar because of the existing fence on the property. Chair Weber questioned if a plain cedar fence really matches the split rail, but will leave that decision to the County.

With no public comment, Chair Weber closed the public hearing.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon made a motion to approve COA-2017-02 for the installation of a pad-mounted transformer and concrete pad at the northeast corner of the parking lot at 0 Lamson Street (TMP #046-02-003.0100) as described in the project narrative and as shown on the drawings, "Cheshire County, Section D, Cheshire County Site Plan Transformer Location" dated March 28, 2017 and prepared by Mark Fraser. The motion was seconded by Councilor Powers and carried unanimously.

**COA-2017-04 - 15-23 Main St., Eversource Pad Mounted Transformer - Applicant, Mark Fraser of Eversource, on behalf of owner, ARC CBKNENH 001, LLC, requests the installation of a 150kVa pad mounted transformer at 15-23 Main St. The property is Tax Map Parcel #046-01-004. This property is ranked as a Contributing Resource.**

Ms. Kessler recommended the Commission accept this application as complete. Councilor Powers made a motion to accept application COA-2017-04 as complete, which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett and carried unanimously.

Mr. Fraser said this proposal is for a 150kVa transformer on the property of Citizens Bank, in the back parking lot adjacent to the street. The transformer will be placed under the Bank's sign and therefore a fence is inappropriate for screening. The proposed screening is to redress the plantings already there, add mulch, and add granite curbing. Mr. Fraser noted the Commission's previous concern about yellow numbers on the transformers and said the intention is to paint over these on transformers in the Downtown. The height of transformer will reach the bottom of the Bank's sign. There is a large 800amp service in one of the buildings this transformer will service and therefore the proposed 150kVa transformer will be changed to be a 2" taller 300kVa transformer. This proposed transformer will still not obstruct the sign. Ms. Boivin added the transformer is being placed in this location so it will not interfere with Bank parking and a smaller concrete pad will be created to take up less space.

Ms. Kessler noted that approval should be contingent upon the applicant submitting a revised plan with landscaping specifics.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon made a motion to approve COA-2017-04 for the installation of a pad-mounted transformer and concrete pad at the west side of the Citizens Bank parking lot at 15-23 Main St (TMP #046-01-004) as described in the project narrative and as shown on the drawings,

“Citizens Bank, Section F, Citizens Bank Proposed Site Conditions” dated March 28, 2017 and prepared by Mark Fraser, with the following condition: submit details of the proposed landscaping type, size, and location to the Planning Department for review and approval.

**4) Staff Updates**

Ms. Kessler had no updates.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon noted her term limit expired in December 2016. At that time she agreed to serve on the Commission until a replacement was found; she asked that the search continue so her term can end. Ms. Kessler encouraged all members to help in the search effort. Mr. Bartlett and Chair Weber’s terms have also expired. In addition, there is one vacancy on the Commission and the need for alternates. Councilor Powers said he spoke with the City Clerk about this and will have a conversation with the Mayor.

**5) Next Meeting – May 17, 2017**

**6) Adjourn**

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 6:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker