

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

4:30 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Joslin Kimball Frank
Hans Porschitz
Peter Poanessa
Andrew Weglinski

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

Councilor Thomas Powers
Nancy Proctor

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM. Ms. Kessler conducted roll call and welcomed the new members.

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – April 19, 2017

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to approve the minutes of April 19, 2017, which was seconded by Mr. Poanessa.

Ms. Kimball Frank noted a correction on page five, in the third paragraph, the word “ensure’s” should be corrected to “ensures.”

The motion passed unanimously as amended.

3) Public Hearings

a. COA-2015-11 Mod. 1 – 4-7 Central Square – Center Square Terrace

- i. Applicant, Jonathan Saccocia of Stevens & Associates, P.C., on behalf of the owner, Keene Housing, requests to replace the failing slate siding on the 7th story of the building with composite slate material. The property is Tax Map Parcel #017-07-011. The building is ranked as a Primary Resource.**

Ms. Kessler recommended this application be accepted as complete. Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to accept application COA-2015-11 Mod.1 as complete, which was seconded by Mr. Poanessa and carried unanimously.

Chair Weber welcomed Jonathan Saccocia, Alan Berry, Sandy Clark, and Linda Mangonas. Mr. Saccocia explained that slate is coming loose from that 7th floor addition to Central Square Terrace on Roxbury Street. He and Mr. Berry, both architects, inspected the roof and found these natural slates are not mounted to the typical full rust sound wood and therefore, in combination with vertical installation and weather, they are coming off the roof very easily. Several slates have fallen off and this has become a safety hazard. Keene Housing is trying to find the safest and most economical way to address this issue. They hope to install composite slate on the existing plywood substrate. Replacing the substrate and natural slate would cost \$80,564 while the composite would only cost \$62,039.

Mr. Poanessa asked how many square feet of slate have to be replaced. Mr. Saccocia replied 900 square feet. Mr. Poanessa asked the longevity of composite slate. Mr. Saccocia replied the composite has a 50 year warranty. He explained the natural slate varies in color, so they will determine the percentage of each color natural slate currently on the roof to purchase similarly colored composite. Chair Weber asked the weight difference between the natural and composite slate; Mr. Saccocia demonstrated the significant difference. He said additionally the composite can be installed using a nail gun as opposed to copper nails. Mr. Weglinski noted the area where the slate will be replaced is not a part of the historic structure; it was an addition in the 1980s.

Mr. Porschitz expressed concern because composite edges have been known to curl with time. Mr. Berry replied the manufacturers have worked to improve this feature; Mr. Saccocia will address this concern with the manufacturer. Chair Weber asked what material the composite is made of. Mr. Saccocia replied it is made of recycled rubber and plastic.

Ms. Kimball Frank said because this is an addition and not a historic part of the building, and because it is at the rear of the building and so high up, she is in favor of the composite because of the financial savings for Keene Housing.

Mr. Weglinski asked to compare the natural and composite in the sunlight. Mr. Saccocia demonstrated and the Commission observed a difference in sheen between the two but noted that would likely dull with time. The comparison will not be seen in this project as all the original slate will be removed from this part of the roof. Additionally, the change will not be easily visible from street level.

Ms. Kessler addressed the Historic District standards relevant to this application:

- *Removal of historic materials or alteration of features that characterize a building or structure shall be avoided*

- This part of the building is an addition and not historically significant; staff believes using a composite will not alter the historical significance of the rest of the building.
- *Slate shall be retained whenever economically feasible*
 - The applicants provided evidence of the cost difference. Considering the safety concerns this was determined an emergency situation.

Ms. Kimball Frank asked what will be done with the natural slate removed from the building. Ms. Clark replied it will be kept for use on other buildings. Ms. Kimball Frank asked how often the roof and natural slate are inspected. Ms. Clark replied buildings are inspected once per year, though the slates themselves are not actively inspected on a regular basis, besides visually. She noted that other building emergencies have taken priority. She added the significant cost difference and financial burden between natural and composite replacement for Keene Housing.

Chair Weber closed the public hearing. He said between the height, location, and safety he is in favor of composite. Mr. Poanessa and Mr. Porschitz agreed.

Ms. Kimball Frank made a motion to approve COA-2015-11 Mod. 1 for the replacement of natural slate siding with composite material on the 7th floor of the Roxbury Street façade at 4-7 Central Square as described in the photographic survey “KH-Slate Siding Replacement, 575 Central Square, Keene, NH, Keene Housing” prepared by Stevens & Associates P.C., dated June 1, 2017 and received by the Planning Department on June 12, 2017. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Poanessa and carried unanimously.

Ms. Kessler noted this is the final decision on this application; it will not go before the planning board. She will issue a letter of approval to the applicant, A Certificate of Appropriateness, which is good for one year.

4) City of Keene Boards and Commission Survey

Ms. Kessler noted this survey is not relevant to the new Commission members. She explained this survey was not issued by staff, but by the City Manager in order to better understand how staff resources are utilized and to determine if Commission members can take on further roles to alleviate staff time. She said this Commission is unique because it is judicial, with a specific role outlined in State Statute and City Code; there are a specific set of regulations this Commission oversees. Therefore, like for the Planning Board, staff support is critical. For many Boards and Commissions this is an opportunity to evaluate how staff resources are utilized and how committees can be better supported and organized to work more independently. The City Manager intends to meet with each Chair following survey review. Ms. Kimball Frank noted this is in line with the City Manager’s statements in the Keene Sentinel that the City could be more efficient.

5) Historic District Application Fee Discussion

Ms. Kessler said this is related to increasing City efficiency and responsibility with resources. All City Boards and Departments that collect fees were asked to evaluate the current fee schedule to determine if they need to be updated. It was intentional that this Commission does not have an application fee, because it is another level of regulation that could discourage applicants. Despite there being no official application fee, there are fees associated with applications:

- Legal notice when an applicant appears before the full Board: \$9 (an arbitrary amount); the actual cost is often up to \$26 depending on the length of the notice
- Notice to direct abutters: \$3.78 (subject to USPS certified mail rates); this can become expensive when there are many abutters.

Applications that require a public hearing must pay both fees, which usually amount to approximately \$60-\$70. Ms. Kessler explained there will be a public hearing at the next meeting to discuss and approve new fees. At that public hearing, Ms. Kessler will propose the following fees:

- \$25 – administrative review
- \$50 – full application
- \$25 – legal notice fee

Chair Weber asked how much time Ms. Kessler spends on an application. Ms. Kessler replied she has compiled that data for the City Manager but did not have the data with her; but for a light meeting like this one, approximately 6-8 hours between communications, coordination, drafting memos, application preparation, legal notice, staff reports, meeting time, and post-meeting approvals and filing. A lot of staff time is spent just walking applicants through the process. Ms. Kessler will present more details on how she arrived at the new proposed fees at the public meeting.

Mr. Weglinski asked if applicants voluntarily come before the Commission. Ms. Kessler replied if a project is outside HDC regulations, they do not have to come before this Commission. The Heritage Commission is working with the public to encourage historic building owners outside the Historic District to treat their homes as historic resources. Ms. Kessler will review City Code to determine if this Commission is authorized to work with citizens in a non-regulatory form, as consultants for those outside the Historic District.

Ms. Kimball Frank explained the difference between the Historic District Commission and the Heritage Commission for the new members. The Heritage Commission oversees buildings and tries to curb demolition of any building greater than 50 years old. Buildings are inspected to determine if salvageable. Ms. Kessler continued that the Heritage Commission researches and inventories properties, facilitates public outreach and engagement, and reviews demolition requests. There is a 30 day demolition delay if the Heritage Commission subcommittee deems the structure has historical significance in order to work with the property owner to find other options. They will begin State funded public workshops in September.

6) Review of Window Cost Comparison Worksheet

Chair Weber noted the Commission has had questions about cost of materials that look more or less historical. He asked David Ride from Millwork Masters to compile this list of window cost comparisons so the Commission can be well informed when judging the economic burdens of the conditions they place on projects. The prices on the list ranged from \$377-\$1,080. The Commission agreed, after reviewing the list that no modern, efficient windows will be made with historic material; the more critical consideration now is to what degree modern materials can mimic the appearance of historic windows authentically and provide the efficiency required. Ms. Kessler agreed this has been a difficulty for the Commission – some regulations do not easily support the need to use newer materials when aesthetics are comparable. The Commission agreed this list is helpful when judging the potential financial burden of recommendations. They also agreed the degree of importance of appearance and materials varies depending on the historic structure in question.

7) Staff Updates

Chair Weber indicated the need to nominate a Vice Chair at the next meeting.

Ms. Kessler reported on the upcoming Heritage Commission public workshops:

- September 14, 2017: How to Research Your Home – a partnership between Historic New England and the Horatio Colony House Museum.
- February 2018: How to Rehabilitate a Historic Home
- June 2018: Diverse Architectural Styles in Keene – with the President of the Cheshire Historical Society

8) Next Meeting – July 19, 2017

Ms. Kessler will communicate with Commission members to confirm if the July meeting will take place, based on if there are public hearings.

9) Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 5:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker