

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 13, 2016 4:00 PM 2nd Floor Conference Room

Members Present:

Louise Zerba, Chair
Katherine Snow
Susan D'Egidio
Rose Carey, Vice-Chair

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner

Members Not Present:

John Bemis
Ardis Osborn, Alternate
Terry Clark, Councilor

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Zerba called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Roll call was conducted. Chair Zerba welcomed guests Eloise Clark and Kevin Dremel.

2) Approval of Minutes – December 9, 2015

Ms. Snow made a motion to adopt the minutes of December 9, 2015 with the following changes/corrections: on Page 3 of 5, 4th paragraph 5th line change “would level” to “what level”; in the same sentence change “require” to “required”. Ms. Carey seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3) Friends of Open Space Spring Event - Eloise Clark

Chair Zerba introduced Eloise Clark to talk about Friends of Open Space's Spring Event. Ms. Clark invited the Commission members to attend the event, which is being held on April 12, 2016 from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM, at the Keene Recreation Center. She noted the objectives and outlined the event. Ms. Clark asked if the Commission would like to participate as a co-sponsor and noted the participation of other City groups, such as the Conservation Commission and Cities for Climate Protection. The expectation would be for the Commission to spread the word about the event and to bring a simple table display or poster. Ms. Clark suggested the Commission highlight the recent preservation work on the Stone Arch Bridge. Commission members agreed they would like to participate in the event. Ms. Kessler indicated staff could assist with creating a larger poster for the event.

4) Election of Chair and Vice-Chair-

Ms. Snow nominated Louise Zerba to continue as Chair. Ms. D'Egidio seconded the motion which carried unanimously. Ms. Zerba agreed to continue in the position.

Ms. Snow nominated Rose Carey for the position of Vice-Chair. Chair Zerba seconded the

motion which carried unanimously. Ms. Carey agreed to accept the position.

5) Demolition Ordinance Review Discussion -

Chair Zerba noted this is a continued discussion regarding the numerous properties that will be reaching the 50 year mark in Keene. Chair Zerba asked Ms. Kessler for an update.

Ms. Kessler referred to a study done in Newton, MA which is the only document she could find that thoroughly analyzes and compares the different types of demolition ordinances around the country. Ms. Kessler will send this document out to members after today's meeting.

Continuing Ms. Kessler noted she pulled together a matrix from our existing ordinance and what she has seen from others (handout distributed). Ms. Kessler also distributed a compilation of the total number of buildings in Keene that will be turning 100 years old in the next 20 years.

Ms. Kessler also distributed copies of a map (Age of Keene's Building Stock) and explained the color coded legend. Noting previous discussions and Councilor Clark's reason for wanting to look into amending the Demolition Ordinance Ms. Kessler suggested that many of the buildings reaching the fifty-year mark in the next five years are located in the area of Maple Acres. Maple Acres was a significant development built in the 1960s and 1970s. Ms. Kessler provided specific numbers. Currently, there are approximately 190 properties that are 50 years old or older located within the area of the development. Between 1967 and 1973 there were 252 properties built, and 7 were built after 1970. Ms. Kessler also reviewed the following information on the chart.

Total residential and commercial buildings built in Keene in 1966 or earlier: 4,466
Total residential and commercial buildings built in Keene between 1967 and 1975: 825
Total residential and commercial buildings built in Keene in 1967 or later: 2,728

Ms. Kessler continued, noting that in the last year the Demolition Review Subcommittee reviewed 7 permit applications with almost 4,500 properties in Keene that meet the criteria for review. She asked the group to consider whether the increase of buildings turning 50 years or older in the next five years (approximately 825) is significant enough to have an impact on the demolition permit review process.

Ms. Snow suggested she would like to know the numbers for residential and commercial demolition permits issued. Ms. Kessler indicated she would divide that up and bring the numbers back. Ms. D'Egidio commented that most of the demolition permits reviewed by the Demolition Review Subcommittee in recent years have been for auxiliary structures/building.

Suggesting that everyone would like to maintain the 50-year threshold, Chair Zerba asked if anyone was willing to do research to find other criteria that might help narrow the scope of which projects would require demolition review. Ms. Kessler indicated that the matrix she prepared outlines the various types of criteria used by other communities in their Demolition Delay Ordinances. Ms. Kessler noted that there seem to be two areas of concern with the City's current Ordinance: 1) the influx of properties built in 1965 or later and the potential impact this increase will have on the Demolition Review Subcommittee and the applicant; 2) whether or not the Ordinance is effective at helping to preserve historic structures. Ms. Kessler walked through the handout with the Commission. This matrix is included below.

Review of Keene’s Demolition Delay Ordinance

Purpose: Establishes a review process of structures as a way to ensure that structures deemed worthy of preservation are not inadvertently demolished. Allows for a review of applications for demolition permits for a specific period of time to assess a building’s historical significance. If the Heritage Commission or Historic District Commission deem a building to be significant, then the issuance of a permit may be delayed for a specific period of time to explore various preservation solutions. However, this review does not always prevent the demolition of historically significant buildings or structures.						
	Trigger	Review Period	Delay Period	Admin. Review	Public Notice	Review Criteria
Keene's Existing Demolition Review Ordinance	500+ sq. ft.; 50+ years and/or is listed or eligible for National Register of Historic Place and/or is located in a historic district	5 days after application is submitted	30 days	Permitting Technician refers eligible applications to Heritage Commission or HDC	Review Committee can conduct public hearings as necessary; A sign must be posted outside structure proposed for demolition	Building or structure is of such interest or quality that it would meet national, state or local criteria for designation as a historic, cultural or architectural landmark.
						The building or structure is of such unusual or uncommon design, texture or materials that it could not be reproduced or could be reproduced only with great difficulty and expense.
						The building or structure is of such architectural or historic interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest.
						Retention of the building or structure would help preserve and protect a historic place or area of historic interest in the city.
Review of Other Demo Ordinances	Commonly ranges from 50+ - 75+ years, some use 100 years; Location in Historic District or listed/eligible for National Register; Partial Demolition; Determined to be preferably preserved*	Varies depending on level and type of review	Range from 30 days to 2 years (many are within 90 days to 6 months) - date delay starts varies	Some areas have staff who apply specific criteria to determine whether a structure is significant. If it is, the application goes on to a Commission for review	Some areas require publication of notice in newspapers, mailing notices to abutters, signs outside the structure	Criteria differ in various communities. Language seen in many ordinances includes the following criteria:
						The building is listed on or is eligible for, or is within an area listed on, the National Register of Historic Places;
						The building is importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the city;
						The building is historically or architecturally important (in terms of period, style, method of building construction or association with a recognized architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings.

* Preferably preserved means that the building or structure’s loss would be detrimental to the city

While discussing the “Public Notice” column Ms. Kessler pointed out the option to conduct public hearings. Commission members agreed they were unaware of this option, noting that it has not been utilized in the past. Ms. Kessler continued with her review with the bottom half of the matrix, “Review of Other Demo Ordinances”.

Concluding her review Ms. Kessler commented that some considerations of Demolition Ordinances such as longer delay period, trigger, and public notice are used to encourage an opportunity for preservation, and do not necessarily address the concern for streamlining the application and review process. Chair Zerba asked if City Council established the delay time in the Ordinance. Ms. Kessler advised that any changes to the Ordinance would have to be reviewed and approved by the City Council following a public workshop(s) and hearing(s). Discussion continued regarding the delay period. Ms. D'Egidio noted that in some instances it would be nice to have more time. In response to Chair Zerba's comments regarding contacting other Heritage Commission's around the state, Ms. Carey asked if there was something else that could be done without changing the Ordinance. She referred to the previous discussion regarding notifying homeowners when their homes reached the 100 year mark.

In that same vein, Ms. Kessler referred to the table (Keene Buildings Turning 100 Years or Older in the Next 20 Years) that had been distributed earlier. She noted that this information was obtained from the Assessor's Office. The table contains the number of buildings that are currently 100 years or older, and the number that will be turning 100 years over the next 20 years. Today, there are a total of 2,753 properties that are 100 years or older. At today's postal rate of forty-nine cents to mail letters, the total cost to mail a notice to each address would be \$1,349. For subsequent years, the average annual cost to mail a notice to homes when they turn 100 years would be \$18. Discussion continued regarding the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Ms. Carey suggested that the notice would need to encompass many things and offer resources for historic preservation. Chair Zerba asked how the Commission could move forward and share the work load.

Ms. Kessler noted the Commission still needs to answer the question as to whether or not the Ordinance needs to be changed. If so, does the Commission feel changes should be made to the delay period, review criteria, and/or the period of significance? Commission members agreed this question has not been answered. Ms. Kessler asked if more information was needed. Chair Zerba noted she would like to know what other communities do. Ms. Kessler indicated she would share information at the next meeting reflecting what other communities similar to Keene do. Commission members will forward any research they do to Ms. Kessler. Chair Zerba commented in March we can come up with a suggested list of criteria to consider and a recommendation to Council on the Ordinance.

Ms. Kessler reported she was able to get a full list of properties from the Assessing Office, and was able to attach it to the spatial GIS. Ms. Kessler also has a call into Deb Gagne, at NHDHR to see if there are any grants available to cover the costs of the initial mailing. Ms. Kessler also suggested folding in some of the work Ms. Carey has been doing.

Ms. Snow drew the discussion back to the Demolition Delay Ordinance handout Trigger section; specifically, the preferably preserved category. Discussion ensued with regards to federal tax credits and preservation grant availability for those properties on the National Historic Register. Ms. Kessler indicated the information links for the National Historic Register and the federal tax credit are on the webpage for the Commission. Ms. Kessler will verify if a property is on the National Register this is where the federal tax credits can kick in.

Chair Zerba summarized for the next meeting Commission members and Ms. Kessler will do some research. She also asked how the Commission felt about starting to work on crafting the

letter. Mr. Dremel offered to work on a draft provided he is given all the necessary information. Ms. Kessler noted she would share the information prepared for the website with Mr. Dremel.

7) Report of the Community Outreach Commission –

a. Display at City Hall Update – Rosie Carey

Chair Zerba thanked Ms. Carey for her work, noting the many compliments that have been received. Ms. Carey verified the display will be up for three months and that she does have plans to modify it. Ms. Carey also suggested she could tie this display in with the Friends of Open Space event in April.

Noting the lack of time left today, Ms. Carey indicated she would like to brainstorm what the Commission's focus will be for the coming year, asking what is the true goal of what we're trying to do. Commission members were in agreement they would like to do the Sunday Social again in some form. Ms. Carey would like to see a plan completed before March. Ms. Kessler recommended suggestions be sent to her for distribution.

8) Report of the Research Commission – Not at this time.

a. Historic District Commission (HDC) / Heritage Commission Sub-Committee Update –

Ms. Kessler reported the Sub-Committee will be meeting January 14, 2016 at 4 PM in the second floor Conference Room at City Hall. It is anticipated that the proposed draft Ordinance and supporting documents will move forward to the HDC for their February meeting.

9) Staff Updates- Nothing at this time.

6) Report of the Demolition Review Committee -

Ms. D'Egidio distributed a photo relative to the proposed demolition at 99 Wyman Road. She noted the process is just beginning and she will provide further updates. Ms. D'Egidio reported it has been determined that there is no Native American or archeological importance in the ground there. Ms. D'Egidio listed the buildings on the property noting those that might be of some importance to the Commission.

10) New or Other Business – None at this time.

11) Adjournment – Chair Zerba adjourned the meeting at 5:00 PM.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March 9, 2016.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats-Hall, Minute-taker
January 16, 2016

Edited by,
Tara Kessler, Planner
March 1, 2016