

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 16, 2016 4:30 PM 2nd Floor Committee Room

Members Present:

Hanspeter Weber, Chair
Dan Bartlett, Vice-Chair
Anita Carroll-Weldon
Joslin Kimball Frank
Thomas Powers, Councilor

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Planner
Rhett Lamb, Asst. City Manager/Planning
Director

Members Not Present:

Dave Bergeron, Alternate
Jim Duffy

1) Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM. Roll call was conducted.

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – February 17, 2016

Mr. Bartlett made a motion to adopt the minutes of February 17, 2016 with the following changes/corrections:

1. Correction to Agenda Item 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting - January 20, 2016 - change the last sentence to read, Would the Commission like the applicant to come back to the Commission?
2. On page 4, 3rd paragraph, 5th sentence - add the word, “meetings,” before “were open to the public.”
3. On page 4, 5th paragraph, 9th sentence - delete “from 21.”
4. On page 6, 7th paragraph, 2nd line - remove “it”.

Ms. Kimball frank seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3) Friends of Public Art Consultation Regarding Murals in the Downtown –

Presentation by Georgia Cassimatis and Rosemarie Bernardi

Ms. Kessler noted that she met with Ms. Cassimatis to discuss the work proposed by the organization, Friends of Public Art, in Keene’s downtown. Many of the projects the group is proposing are within the Historic District. Although the HDC does not regulate paint choice on previously painted structures, Ms. Cassimatis is interested in the Commission’s feedback on the proposed project.

Georgia Cassimatis, representing Friends of Public Art, introduced Rosemarie Bernardi, a professor of art at Keene State College. Ms. Cassimatis noted that Friends of Public Art was formed in May of 2014 and the group is now permanent with the goal of helping to promote cultural, social, economic, and historic vitality through the creation of public art installations in the Monadnock region. Ms. Cassimatis reported working with many groups in the community. She noted receipt of a recent grant for a bicycle bench made out of recycled bike parts, which will be located in an area adjacent to the rail trail. Another project includes working with KSC students to create murals that will be affixed to buildings in the downtown area. Ms. Cassimatis indicated that she understands the importance of the Historic District and that there are rules and regulations. She would like to work with the Commission and come to agreement on future projects.

Ms. Cassimatis reported on the two things happening this year. One is the proposed Keene Yoga Center mural on the concrete retaining wall at the former Middle School recreation field that is adjacent to the Yoga Center building. The property owner of this wall has addressed needing permission through the City's Sign Ordinance. Continuing, Ms. Cassimatis indicated that they are currently in the planning stages. This will be a member-centered mural. When completed, the mural design will be presented to the Commission and an application will be made through the Sign Code Ordinance. The timeline for this project is late May early June.

The second project is a Keene State College mural project, which Ms. Cassimatis and Ms. Bernardi hope will help to bridge the relationship between the College and City in the community. This project is also currently in the planning stages. Ms. Bernardi provided her background as a community member, noting her disappointment with the lack of visual art in Keene. Her personal vision is that historic Main Street is kept pristine, but as one walks off Main Street there may be visual images to see. Ms. Bernardi noted that she set developed this project with her students and will soon inform her colleagues at the College of their work. Ms. Bernardi is teaching an advanced print making class. Students are developing large-scale vinyl cuts that will be printed on paper which will be pasted onto walls. These murals will not permanent. She has 12 students, each working with a 3' x 4' section. The total mural dimension is 6'x24' long. Ms. Bernardi reported on the sites she has investigated for hanging this art, and noted that the desired location is on the south-facing wall of the building adjacent to the Citizens Bank drive through. After looking at the location, she decided it was perfect and would also prevent the tagging that is occurring there. Students had discussed the proposal with the Historical Society; however, they ultimately decided the theme would be Community Kitchen. Ms. Bernardi noted that the students are currently working on the drawing that will be both animated and historical, mimicking an old fashioned advertisement in black and white. Ms. Bernardi continued, noting that she is proposing to mount the mural on 4'x8' sheets of plywood and then mount it to the brick wall. This idea would be more permanent. She also noted there is the possibility of pasting the mural to the wall using wheat paste. This way the mural can easily be removed from the brick. Ms. Bernardi referred to the Philadelphia Mural Project, which was started in the 1980s to prevent tagging and has been very successful. She displayed a black and white mural done by high school students as an example, as well as an example of one done in Philadelphia.

In response to Ms. Kimball Frank, Ms. Bernardi explained tagging is graffiti where they spray paint their initials or other designs. Mr. Bartlett asked why the murals wouldn't be tagged. Ms. Bernardi explained that it has been proven that they are not typically a target for graffiti. She continued stating that many taggers consider themselves artists and respect other artists work.

Chair Weber asked how many murals are in Keene today. Ms. Bernardi noted there are approximately five and described the ones present in Keene.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon asked how long they last. Ms. Bernardi replied that she didn't know and is still doing research on the life-span of wheat paste. Ms. Bernardi explained that they could come down as soon as two weeks after affixing. She also noted that the murals last longer using an acrylic medium with the wheat paste. She noted this is also a decision for the Commission to make. Ms. Bernardi would like to see the mural stay up at least through the course of the summer.

Chair Weber asked for staff comments.

Ms. Kessler noted this is a very unique project and the HDC Regulations don't necessarily speak directly to public art. Painting of previously unpainted brick is regulated, and the Regulations don't address any temporary alterations to the exterior. Affixing the plywood to the brick could impact the masonry and another thing for the Commission to consider is whether or not the pasting would have an impact on the exterior surface of the brick. Discussion continued with Ms. Bernardi noting she is experimenting on her own brick to see if there is any impact after the gluing is removed. She suggested the wheat paste and water would be more easily washed off, knowing the mural wouldn't be up very long. Ms. Bernardi is also unsure if any staining would occur after removal of the paste. Ms. Kessler noted these are the considerations for the group moving forward with the development of these projects. Ms. Bernardi noted the deadline for applications and indicated that she would like to get started in May, as she only has a few months left with the students.

Chair Weber asked for questions/comments from Commission members.

One by one, the Commission members noted they liked the idea. They were also in agreement that the least invasive application should be utilized (pasting), and that cautious cleaning processes should be used for removal. They noted that power washers are prohibited. Ms. Cassimatis agreed to do more research on the paste. Ms. Kessler will share the necessary regulations with Ms. Cassimatis and Ms. Bernardi. Ms. Bernardi noted she would like to see the mural up for Art Walk and that she would keep an eye on it so that it could be removed when it started to deteriorate.

Discussion continued with Chair Weber asking Ms. Bernardi how she intended to deal with the existing stains on the proposed wall for the Keene Yoga Center. Ms. Cassimatis indicated that she is doing research with other muralists; she continued there is lots of

visioning going on right now, including how to include the rust stains in the mural. Ms. Cassimatis commented she will be coming back to the Commission once the image is designed. Ms. Kessler noted that she would share the application process with Ms. Cassimatis and work with her to meet the deadline for the April 20th meeting. Ms. Kessler clarified that the Commission would be considering the treatment of the masonry, whether or not they would approve painting over it, and the methods to be used. They would not be reviewing/approving the art work itself.

**4) Proposed Main Street Historic District Commission (HDC) Draft Ordinance -
Review of Draft Ordinance prepared by the HDC Ordinance Review Subcommittee**

Ms. Kessler began the continued discussion by reminding the Commission of the presentation given by Ms. Carroll-Weldon at the previous meeting on the proposed Ordinance. The presentation addressed the three documents the HDC Ordinance Review Subcommittee worked on - Chapters 18 and 102 of the City Codes and the draft regulations for the proposed Main Street Historic District. Ms. Kessler reiterated that the City Council has authority over amendments made to Chapters 18 and 102 of City Code, and if the City Council adopts the proposed changes to these sections of City Code, this Commission would have authority over to draft, adopt and amend regulations for a Main Street Historic District. If City Council decides not to adopt the proposed Main Street, the HDC would not be able to develop regulations for such District.

Ms. Kessler noted that the Commission began the review of the proposed ordinance changes and proposed Zoning map change at the last meeting. At this meeting, the Commission was in agreement with the changes made to Chapter 102 (Zoning Ordinance). There was significant discussion on the changes proposed for Chapter 18, specifically section 18-361 Exemptions. There was a concern that the list of exemptions for the Downtown Historic District is longer than that of the proposed Main Street Historic District. The concern was that the discrepancy in the length of the lists would imply that the proposed Main Street Historic District was more restrictive than Downtown, when, in fact, it is less restrictive. Ms. Kessler noted staff's recommendation to retain the existing list of exemptions for the proposed Main Street District. She provided staff's reasoning noting there are many more items in the Downtown District that are regulated, therefore there is a need for more clarity on what activities are exempt. Ms. Kessler providing examples for the Commission. Discussion on the lists continued with Ms. Carroll-Weldon suggesting a note be added. Ms. Kessler noted the proposed suggestion from the last meeting to add a note that states that any activities not listed in 18-360 do not require a Certificate of Appropriateness. This is staff's recommendation moving forward. Discussion on changes to make here continued with Mr. Lamb providing additional clarity. Mr. Lamb also recommended not making the extending the list of exemptions for the Main Street District, pointing out the average citizen will probably go to the Regulations for guidance and not the Ordinance. He added that the more language you add to the Ordinance the more confusion you create. No disagreement was noted by Commission members.

Chair Weber asked if there were any additional questions for Mr. Lamb. As there were none, Ms. Kimball Frank requested to go back to 18-360 (2) to finish the discussion on

the order in which items are listed. She noted the discussion regarding the desire to have the order items are listed here being the same as in the Regulations. Ms. Kimball Frank provided her suggested changes; a. to c. would be new construction, c. to f. would be existing buildings, and g. would be demolition or relocation. Additionally she requested the number of items be reduced from eight to seven by combining b. and c. Ms. Kessler noted the Subcommittee decision to keep them separate, which is why this version was presented to the HDC. The reason was to eliminate confusion between the two types of activities that have the same threshold. Ms. Kimball Frank then stated that the Commission should continue it that way and just reverse g. and h. Ms. Kessler noted the list would be reflected in the Regulations.

Ms. Kessler asked if there were any additional edits/changes to be made to Chapter 18. She reiterated the timeframe discussed at the previous meeting for when this would be introduced to City Council (approximately early summer) She noted the Commission's desire to discuss the Regulations and pointed out they will be coming back to the Commission for review and discussion after the Council approves the proposed ordinance changes.

Ms. Kessler asked if the Commission wished to begin discussing the Regulations at this time.

Although not a public hearing, Chair Weber did invite public comment and there was none offered.

Chair Weber asked the Commission members if they were ready to make a motion with regards to Chapters 18 and 102. Mr. Bartlett noted his confidence in staff to make the recommended changes, and that he was ready to move this forward. This being Councilor Powers' first meeting he indicated he would abstain from voting until he could give the issue more attention.

Ms. Carroll-Weldon referred to the last meeting and the discussion where the Commission was stuck on the idea of application for an exemption. The term exemption is being used for something that doesn't require a COA. She then read from the Regulations on Page 5, the first paragraph. Ms. Kessler reported that she made a note at the last meeting that although this is the language in the Downtown Regulations it might be too strong for the proposed District, and that it would be removed from the draft Regulations. So that everyone was clear she noted the edit would be to remove the entire first paragraph at the top of Page 5 of the draft Regulations. Ms. Kessler also clarified the other edit would be to reorder the list of activities on Page 4 to model how they appear in Chapter 18. In addition, Chapter 18 would be reorganized so that h. precedes g. on the list.

Discussion continued regarding the use of the term exemption, and how waivers are used. Commission members agreed this could be discussed further if/when the Regulations come back. Ms. Kessler noted the language change to Chapter 18 to activities that did not require a COA, and indicated she would make the language change on Page 4 with the Commission's permission. Commission members agreed to the change.

HDC Meeting Minutes
March 16, 2016

Ms. Kimball Frank made the following motion which was seconded by Mr. Bartlett.

On a vote of 4-0, the Historic District Commission moved to pass the proposed amendments to Chapters 18 and 102, including the map titled Main Street Historic Overlay District, onto the City Council. Councilor Powers abstained from the vote.

5) **Other Business**- None at this time.

6) **Next Meeting** - April 20, 2016.

7) **Adjourn**- There being no additional business before the Commission, Chair Weber adjourned the meeting at 5:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats Hall
March 17, 2016

Respectfully edited by,
Tara Kessler, Planner
April 14, 2016