

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

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

**Wednesday, May 20, 2020**

**4:30 PM**

**Remote Meeting via Zoom**

**Members Present:**

Andrew Weglinski, Chair  
Catherine Workman, Councilor  
Nancy Proctor  
Hans Porschitz  
Samuel Temple  
Tia Hockett, Alternate (voting)  
Peter Poanessa, Alternate (non-voting)

**Staff Present:**

Mari Brunner, Planner

**Members Not Present:**

Joslin Kimball Frank  
Erin Benik  
Thomas Powers, Councilor  
David Bergeron, Alternate  
Hanspeter Weber, Alternate

**1) Call to Order & Roll Call**

Chair Weglinski called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM and read a statement about the executive order authorizing a remote meeting: Emergency Order #12, issued by the Governor of the State of New Hampshire pursuant to Executive Order #2020-04.

Pursuant to this order, Ms. Brunner called roll and members present, all of whom called alone, and stated their locations:

Andrew Weglinski – 28 Valley Street, Keene  
Catherine Workman – Home address  
Hans Porschitz – 46 Probate Street, Keene  
Tia Hockett – 56 Page Street, Keene  
Sam Temple – 15 Page Street, Keene  
Nancy Proctor – 10 Algonquin Drive, Keene

**2) Minutes of the Previous Meetings**

**a. April 7, 2020 & April 15, 2020**

Ms. Proctor moved to approve the minutes of April 7 & April 15, 2020, which Councilor Workman seconded, and the Commission passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**3) Public Hearings**

- a. COA-2015-11, Modification #3 – 4-7 Central Square, Rooftop Screening – Applicant, Diane Abate of Stevens & Associates, P.C., on behalf of owner, CST Housing Associates LP, requests to screen HVAC and mechanical equipment on the south side of the roof for the property located at 4-7 Central Sq. (TMP# 568-074-000). The building is ranked as a Primary Resource and is located in the Central Business District.**

The Chairman asked staff for a recommendation on completeness and Ms. Brunner recommended accepting this application as complete. Ms. Proctor moved to accept application COA-2015-11, Modification #3 as complete, which Mr. Porschitz seconded, and the Commission passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The Chairman welcomed the applicant Diane Abate (calling alone from her home address), who represented the owner, Central Square Terrace Housing Associates, which is managed by Keene Housing. Ms. Abate said that Keene Housing provides and advocates for affordable housing. Keene Housing is not just a brick and mortar program, but also provides educational and recreational opportunities for residents. Ms. Abate said the Central Square Terrace (CST) building is a part of Keene Housing's broader building portfolio. She said that CST is actually two buildings – the seven-story Roxbury Street building built in the 1980s and the historic five-story wood-frame Colony Block building that faces Central Square. Ms. Abate said that CST is a 90-unit complex providing senior and disabled housing. This renovation came from a broader strategic plan committed to capital need projects in Keene Housing's portfolio and this CST building is one with great need. This building was from 1980s construction and has not had major improvements in those 40 years. Therefore, Ms. Abate said this is a great opportunity to take on this project and address some of the aging infrastructure. Modern ventilation, heating, cooling, and a new oil burner would enhance the quality of life for all residents. Eliminating window air conditioners is a major plus for the tenants.

Ms. Abate used the site plan to demonstrate how constrained the property is, with little outdoor space. The roof is also complex and poses challenges trying to locate equipment. She showed photos of the 70 heat pumps and three energy recovery ventilator (ERV) units on the roof, which provide fresh air circulation through the apartments. There is also a Verizon cell tower on the roof, around which construction and general access are prohibited, constraining where other equipment can be located. Ms. Abate showed the labyrinth of ductwork that requires a series of vertical shafts to feed individual units. She showed the proposed roof plans. Ms. Abate used a model designed to scale to demonstrate different street views of the equipment as well as challenges and constraints to screening. She showed an example of the proposed screening product, which is solid metal corrugated panels patterned horizontally, and said that she chose that orientation to minimize shadows and maximize visual appearance. She showed a photo of

the Winchendon Furniture building on Main Street, which has a piece of mechanical equipment on the roof that is painted nearly the same color that she proposes for this project (Twilight Gray). She showed photos of the horizontal pattern from the manufacturers catalog. The same paint color was proposed for the ERV equipment enclosure, which is currently a sky blue color.

Ms. Abate used the following street views of the CST roof equipment to demonstrate current visibility, as well as Photoshop altered images demonstrating the difference that the proposed screening and painting of the ERV would make:

- From Washington Street: heat pumps on the north/Roxbury Street side are visible in the distance, but the visibility changes easily with the angle on Washington Street. There are safety rails on the north side of the building that make minimal visible statement. Ms. Abate said shading out the ERV equipment from the blue to the gray color made a difference in the visual impact.
- From Central Square: none of the Roxbury equipment is visible.
- From corner of West & Main Streets: no equipment is visible.
- From Main Street: the blue ERV is visible and the heat pumps are minimally visible. With the Photoshop alteration changing the blue color to a gray color, Ms. Abate felt equipment visibility was significantly reduced.
- From Church Street Parking Lot: the ERV and mini splits are highly visible. Ms. Abate thought the altered images of the screens and repainted ERV improved the visual appearance.

Ms. Abate discussed the proposed screening cost, which was updated on May 14 because labor rates were not included in the original estimate. She said it is an expensive system at approximately \$350 per linear foot, which is why the owner is unable to screen any more than depicted in the plans. She said the quote to paint the three ERVs was reasonable at \$3,000.

Chair Weglinski asked the height of the screens above the deck, how far screens would be setback off the roof edge, as well as the height of the ERVs. Ms. Abate said the screens stand approximately 5'4" - 6' off the roof and the panels are set 4' from the steel dunnage, which the mini split units are mounted on. Ms. Abate added that the screens would also act as guardrails so that equipment can be serviced, which dictates where the screens are placed. This means she cannot push them any closer to or further from the heat pumps without the attachment system becoming more complicated and expensive.

The Chairman referred to the easterly side of the lower roof, where the equipment seemed highly visible from the ground and he asked why there would not be screens; he referred to the returns on the side of the building when looking at City Hall. Ms. Abate said those are safety rails, not screens. She noted that adding any more screening than proposed is cost prohibitive. The Chairman also spoke to reflectivity given that the rest of building is non-reflective masonry; he acknowledged that color could not be understood fully through computer screens. Ms. Abate said that the screens have low sheen and are minimally reflective. She said that glossy surfaces make poor screens and so she was confident that it is not a high gloss finish. She referred back to the photo of the equipment atop Winchendon Furniture to demonstrate gloss/reflectivity/finish, which would be similar to the screens proposed atop Central Square Terrace.

Mr. Porschitz asked the typical driving factor in color choice because in the past, manufacturers recommended blending screens with the building color versus what appears to be proposed here to blend with the sky on a cloudy day in Keene. Ms. Abate said that color is subjective and there is no manufacturer guideline in this instance. She considers herself as having a decent eye for color and her tendency is not to call attention to screens by attempting to blend them with the building and instead using something neutral to pick up the tone of the sky. While this is a brick building, she believes the more grey/beige is not trying to mimic a blue sky, which ERV manufacturers attempted. She said that eyes tend to focus less on muted tones and so she recommended something close to the Twilight Grey color she recommended.

The Chairman requested staff comments. Ms. Brunner said that the building at 4-7 Central Square was originally built in 1865 by Timothy Colony and served as a location for clothing stores, drugstores, small retail, and in the late 1800s, the Keene Public Library. In 1983, a seven-story addition (approximately 63,000 sf) was added to the rear of the structure, establishing a façade along Roxbury Street. Today, the building is owned by CST Housing Associates LP and managed by Keene Housing. The upper stories of the building are apartments for persons with disabilities and/or seniors, and the ground floor is primarily retail space.

Ms. Brunner continued explaining that this property has received several HDC approvals in recent years including approval for a façade restoration project in January 2016 (COA-2015-11) that recently finished, approval to replace natural slate siding with composite/simulated slate on the 7th floor of the Roxbury Street façade in June 2017 (COA-2015-11, Modification #1), and administrative approval to install two permanent planters with bench seats at the Roxbury Street entrance in December 2018 (COA-2015-11, Modification #2). The current request is to install screening on the roof of the Roxbury Street façade of the building, facing south, in order to screen HVAC and mechanical equipment that was recently installed.

Due to the high visibility and prominence of the building, its high resource ranking, and the potential for visual impact to the Downtown Keene Historic District, the Community Development Director has referred this request to the HDC for review as a “Major Project.” Ms. Brunner read the HDC standards relevant to this project: §XV. A. 5. Utility, Service, and Mechanical Equipment, b) Design Standards:

- 1. On commercial and industrial buildings, mechanical equipment, such as compressor units, shall be set back on the roof of the building, so as to be minimally visible, or ground-mounted toward the rear of the building, with appropriate screening or landscaping to minimize visibility.*
- 2. Every effort shall be made to position heating and air-conditioning equipment, fire alarm panels, telecommunications equipment, satellite dishes, and free-standing antennas and other equipment as low to the ground as possible, and where they are not readily visible from the public right-of-way.*
- 3. New mechanical supply lines, pipes and ductwork shall be placed in inconspicuous locations and/or concealed with architectural elements, such as downspouts.*

Ms. Brunner said that the applicant installed approximately 70 mini split units and other mechanical equipment on the roof of the seven-story portion of the building as part of a larger

interior renovation project in 2019. As originally proposed, the rooftop equipment would not have been visible from a public right-of-way. However, in order to meet building code requirements, the mini split units were installed on steel dunnage, which both raised the height of the units and shifted their location. As a result, the mini split units are visible from Church Street and a limited number of locations on Main Street, as well as being partially visible from Washington Street.

Ms. Brunner said that in order to screen this equipment, the applicant proposes to install ModWerk “Linea Screens,” a metal panel-screening product, in a “light gray” color. The color is open for HDC discussion. The applicant submitted a document entitled “Solid Metal Corrugated Panels” to show what this product looks like, a photo to show the proposed screen locations on the roof of the Roxbury Street façade, and a rendering to show what the screening would look like when viewed from Church Street. Ms. Brunner said that in the project narrative, the applicant notes that the selected screening product and screening locations were chosen in part based on budget limitations, and further notes that the screening of rooftop equipment was an unanticipated expense because the original configuration would not have been visible from the street. For that reason, the applicant requested to screen the equipment along Roxbury Street only, and not to screen the units on the north side of the roof, which are visible from Washington Street. The applicant submitted a quote to demonstrate that the cost of screening rooftop equipment on both the north and south sides of the roof would not fit within the owner’s budget

With no public comments, Chair Weglinski closed the public hearing and began deliberations.

Mr. Porschitz asked for other opinions about the screen color; whether to blend with the building or the sky. As a flat roof, he felt that blending with the building was an opportunity in this instance to extend the building higher visually instead of introducing a new color that could be jarring against a blue sky. Mr. Porschitz noted he is colorblind. Ms. Proctor expressed favor for the gray color proposed. Chair Weglinski recalled seeing many screening approaches in his years on the HDC and he did not think design choices were in the Commission’s wheelhouse, which is why he thought that design professionals present their ideas. The Chairman said he was fine with the gray color but it is hard to know without seeing it on site in the sun and shade. The Chairman expressed one concern with a fairly visible face seen in the photo on page 35 of 38 in the meeting packet. He asked if there should be screening at that location to minimize visibility from Roxbury Street traveling toward Main Street and no Commission members expressed concern.

Ms. Proctor made the following motion, which Mr. Porschitz seconded, and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

On a vote of 6-0, the Historic District Commission approved COA-2015-11 Modification #3 for the installation of screening for rooftop HVAC and mechanical equipment on the Roxbury Street façade of the Central Square Terrace building located at 4-7 Central Square (TMP# 568-074-000), as described in the application and supporting materials submitted to the Community Development Department on May 7, 2020.

#### **4) Staff Updates**

Ms. Brunner noted that the Building Better Together project continues, including the new Land Use Development Code, which will be presented to Council for review within the next few months. Some HDC standards will be updated as a result.

**5) New Business**

The Commission needs a Vice Chair and there are openings for new members. Current members should be recruiting and send interested parties to the Chairman or Ms. Brunner.

**6) Next Meeting – June 17, 2020**

**7) Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Weglinski adjourned the meeting at 5:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Katrnya Kibler, Minute Taker  
May 25, 2020

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner