

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 19, 2020

4:30 PM

Remote Meeting via Zoom

Members Present:

Andrew Weglinski, Chair
Councilor Catherine Workman
Hope Benik
Tia Hockett, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Mari Brunner, Planner

Members Not Present:

Nancy Proctor
Sam Temple
Hans Porchitz
Hanspeter Weber, Alternate
Joslin Kimball Frank, Alternate
Dave Bergeron, Alternate
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Weglinski called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM and read 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, stated their locations. The Chairman, Councilor Workman, and Ms. Hockett called from their home addresses, and Ms. Benik called from 34 Court Street.

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – July 15, 2020

Ms. Benik moved to approve the minutes of July 15, 2020, which Councilor Workman seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

3) Public Hearings

- a. COA-2020-07 – People’s United Bank Tree Replacement, 122 West Street – Applicant Wendy Pelletier, on behalf of owner People’s United Bank N.A., proposes to replace five mature Linden trees with four honey locust trees on**

the property located at 122 West St. (TMP# 576-001-000). This property is not ranked and is located in the Central Business Limited District.

Ms. Brunner recommended accepting this application as complete. Councilor Workman moved to accept application COA-2020-07 as complete, which Ms. Benik seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The Chairman welcomed the Applicant, Ms. Wendy Pelletier, who called alone from her home address. Ms. Pelletier said she was speaking on behalf of the property owner of 122 West Street. This property is located on the corner of West Street, School Street, and Gilbo Avenue. She showed photos of the site before and after a major storm in 2018, which damaged three of the five mature Linden closest to Friendlies to the west, resulting in their stumping and removal. In 2020, a landscaper recommended removing the remaining two trees, one of which was damaged. At the time of this meeting, all five trees were removed and ground to stumps and therefore the Applicant was seeking retroactive approval for removing the trees and approval to replace them with four new Honeylocust trees. Ms. Pelletier said that the owner was unaware HDC approval was needed to remove the damaged trees.

Ms. Benik asked if the Linden tree stumps would remain in the ground. Ms. Pelletier said yes, they are ground so flat that grass is already growing over and further, it is expensive to remove stumps. The new trees would be planted between the stumps.

The Chairman requested Staff comments and Ms. Brunner began by explaining that this property was once the site of the Noah Cooke House, a saltbox colonial that is one of Keene's oldest surviving buildings. Noah Cooke, a distinguished lawyer who helped establish the first courthouse in town, served as town clerk for 10 years, and was an incorporator of the Cheshire National Bank, built the house in 1791. It was purchased in 1906 by Horatio Colony, Keene's first mayor and was occupied by members of the Colony family until 1966. For many years, the road at the front of the house separated and passed on both sides of the old "Cooke Elm" until it was removed 1914 to widen the road. The elm was seven feet in diameter when it was cut down. The house (but not the property) was sold to Ruth and Delbert Meyer and relocated to Daniels Hill Road in 1973. It is presumed that the house would have been demolished to make way for commercial development, had it not been relocated. The structure that exists on the site today was built in 1978 for use as a bank. The Planning Board reviewed the site plan application for the construction of the bank, and as part of that review, approved the installation of shade trees along the perimeter of the site in the landscaping areas.

Ms. Brunner said the Applicant proposed to replace five mature Linden trees – already removed from the site – with four honey locust trees on the northern edge of the property bordering West Street. Per Section III.D.16 – Removal of trees in excess of 15 inches in diameter at a trunk height of four (4) feet above grade, this request is classified as a "Major Project" for review by the Historic District Commission. As such, Ms. Brunner reviewed the HDC regulations relevant to this application:

Sec. XV. A. 1. – Trees, Landscaping, and Site Work

b) Design Standards

- 1) Trees that contribute to the character of the historic district and that exceed 15” in diameter at a height of 4’ above grade shall be retained, unless removal of such tree(s) is necessary for safety reasons as determined by a professional arborist or other qualified professional.*
- 2) Grading or changes to the site’s existing topography shall not be allowed if existing mature trees might be negatively impacted by altered drainage and soil conditions.*
- 3) During construction, paving and any site work, existing mature trees must be protected.*

Ms. Brunner explained that the Applicant already removed five existing mature Linden trees and proposed to replace them with four, 3.5-inch caliper Shademaster Honeylocust trees along West Street. The Applicant stated in the project narrative that three of the Linden trees were either knocked down or damaged in summer 2018 during a thunderstorm. At that time, the three damaged trees were removed from the site and the stumps were ground down. The remaining two trees along West Street were removed in spring 2020. Following removal of the two trees in 2020, staff notified the property owner that the removal of mature trees from properties located in the Downtown Keene Historic District requires approval from the Historic District Commission. The proposed replacement tree, Shademaster Honeylocust, is a deciduous shade tree native to North America that grows 50 to 70 feet tall and almost as wide, is well-suited for growing in areas with a lawn, has a high tolerance for drought and salt, and is not usually affected by pests.

With no public questions, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

Ms. Hockett made the following motion, which Ms. Benik seconded, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

With a vote of 4-0, the Historic District Commission approved COA-2020-07 for the replacement of five mature Linden trees with four honey locust trees on the property located at 122 West St. (TMP# 576-001-000), as presented on the plan identified as “Tree Replacement Plan” prepared by Cardinal Surveying & Land Planning at a scale of 1” = 20’ and dated July 29, 2020 with no conditions.

- 4) New Business**
- 5) Next Meeting – September 16, 2020**
- 6) Adjourn**

There being no further business, Chair Weglinski adjourned the meeting at 4:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katrinya Kibler, Minute Taker
August 25, 2020

Reviewed and edited by Mari Brunner, Planner