

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, September 8, 2021

4:00 PM

**2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Cauley Powell, Chair
Susan DeGidio, Vice Chair
Councilor Gladys Johnsen
Rose Carey
Marilyn Huston
Brian Lee

Staff Present:

Tara Kessler, Senior Planner

Members Not Present:

Louise Zerba, Alternate
Erin Benik

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Powell called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM. Roll call was taken.

2) Minutes of Previous Meeting – July 14, 2021

Ms. Huston stated it should be added to the minutes that she offered to go to the Historical Society for information on the Italian neighborhood. She made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Ms. DeGidio, who participated remotely as a precautionary measure related to COVID, seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) Urban Barn Inventory Project Discussion

Mrs. Kessler introduced the Urban Barn Inventory Project Consultants from Preservation Company and referenced the completed report shared with the commission prior to the meeting. The report included an overview of the neighborhood and the completed inventory forms for the identified properties. Present from Preservation Company was Lynne Monroe, Reagan Reudig and Laura Driemeyer.

Ms. Monroe began by showing a map of the neighborhood they worked on, stating that they started off by exploring the area and collecting data by taking pictures and notes. The orange

dots on the map represent every property they considered in the survey, and the blue dots represent the properties they chose to go further into detail with.

Ms. Reudig went on to state that their original survey of the area came up with around 150 properties that had either a carriage house, an urban barn, or a historic garage. She first went over the property located at 73 High Street, noting that the interactive map consisted of pins, which when clicked on could be populated with photos and information. She then showed the commission a database of all the properties that had been photographed and surveyed, with the following categories: Tax Map/Parcel Number, Street Name and Number, Outbuilding Type, and Description. She noted that the photographs are organized by address and consist of various shots from the right of way of the properties. She then showed an example of the individual inventory forms, stating that they each have a photo of the house and information, historical background, architectural description focused mainly on the outbuildings, statement of integrity, and additional photos at the end.

Ms. Driemeyer stated that most of the urban barns in the neighborhood are attached to the houses. The few that are freestanding are chosen if they have a high degree of integrity. For example, the freestanding 73 High Street building has most of its original footprint, massing, exterior siding, sliding doors, a window in the gable end, hayloft door, and limited decorative detailing.

Ms. Reudig then showed 143 High Street, an example of a property they did not choose to do a survey form on. She referenced the database and pointed out that it does have character defining features but there was an addition at some point. Ms. Driemeyer added that the relationship between the barn and the building had been changed, which impacts its integrity and thus caused them not to choose it.

Ms. Monroe added that choosing properties wasn't a contest, but rather them showing examples that demonstrate various elements. She made note that all the buildings are worth looking at and added that the 14 criteria are there to help clearly illustrate the big picture and not to diminish the outbuildings that weren't chosen for a form.

Ms. Driemeyer added that the map, database, photographs and individual forms all work together to provide different types of information that help us understand all of the outbuildings in the neighborhood.

Ms. Reudig then showed the commission the 25 Howard Street property. She noted that a loft door is present but it has been glazed, a window has been put in and it has very clearly been converted to a garage unit.

Ms. Driemeyer added that a lot of the buildings in the neighborhood had been converted to garages with the introduction of the automobile in the 20th century, which often meant an

additional door being added. Ms. Monroe stated it's a good property to showcase the evolution from stables to garages.

Ms. Reudig then showed the property located at 67 High Street, which is an example of a freestanding garage with a lot of its original characteristics intact.

Ms. Driemeyer then took the commission through the overview report stating that the initial part lays out the methodology of their fieldwork process and identification of properties. She stated the purpose of the document was to try and overview the resources (urban barns, carriage houses and garages) present in the neighborhood and the different elements about them. Ms. Driemeyer stated that to increase the understanding of the buildings they would need to take a look around the inside. Other information included was a background on how the buildings were used in the past, the 4 main types of urban barns, and examples like 43 Cross Street which highlight changes and elimination to the historic features. She pointed out that they didn't include a photo of carriage houses in the document because they tend to be individually distinctive, meaning there is no common look. Ms. Driemeyer went on to state that the information gives the commission questions to ask about the character-defining features that are important to maintain when looking at these buildings.

Ms. Carey thanked them for the information and suggestions and stated they could possibly integrate them into demolition work they do or grants they may give for restorative consideration.

Ms. Kessler stated the demolition review is an option to work with the owner to find resources to preserve or salvage a structure or reconsider demolition, and they could possibly institute a review process with standards related to the urban barns and carriage houses. Ms. Monroe added that prior to a historic district there is public education and their reports give the commission a wonderful ability to do all kinds of education.

As an example, Ms. Reudig showed the commission Rochester Historic Commission's Google Earth with scanned historic photos for particular locations and some write-up.

Chair Powell stated the plan is to do an event on Tuesday the 21st at 7pm and mentioned it should be discussed whether it will be fully remote or hybrid. She added that the consultants will be there remotely running the event for them. Additionally, she stated they need to discuss what the event will look like.

Chair Powell was inclined to do it remotely. Ms. Carey stated she'd agree with doing it remotely and it could help make it more educational for people. She also asked if they could air the event again on something like Cheshire TV. Ms. Huston agreed and stated the owners of the barns would probably love to hear the small details and it would be a wonderful educational tool.

Ms. Carey brought up that there wasn't much said about the at-risk barns in the project. Ms. Kessler stated the consultants tabled that aspect of the project due to budgetary limits; however, the tools they provided are there to help the commission narrow down which properties are at risk. Ms. Huston asked what would then be done once properties were identified as at-risk. Ms. Kessler answered that the intent was to have the at-risk list and prioritize the properties by highest risk, and then work with individual property owners to help them with preservation. She added they could package the information from the consultants and give it to the 150 property owners so they could be aware of what they have.

There was short discussion about making walking tours and information public and whether or not property owners should give permission first. One idea was to invite owners to a virtual event or utilize Facebook groups, and ask the City Council to announce the event if possible. Chair Powell mentioned that the website they are building might be where the material ends up and wondered if there had been negative feedback in the past about historical information being publicized. Ms. Kessler stated all historic district properties have an inventory form and they are all public; however, a publicized walking tour of a neighborhood may require consent from the owners. She added that she will talk to the city manager on what would be required to demonstrate consent.

Chair Powell stated that Ms. Carey completed some posters that will be on display in the lobby of City Hall next week. They are waiting on official confirmation for use of the library space for posters and displays as well.

Ms. Kessler stated the consultants could take people on a tour of the neighborhood based on the work they've done and will give a brief overview of their methods and neighborhood context, as well as explain the difference between urban barns and carriage houses along with any other educational components. There was short discussion on whether the tour should focus on the 14 properties or a general overview of the neighborhood and focus in on examples. General consensus was to do a more general overview with examples from the 150 properties to educate on retaining historical significance.

Mr. Lee suggested they could display some posters during the DeMar Marathon when people will be passing through that neighborhood, or possibly even having their own event, like a 5k, with the information displayed.

Ms. Kessler reviewed that she would touch base with the consultants on doing a presentation that involves a description of urban barns and carriage houses, the neighborhood itself, examples of what those resources and important features look like, and then tips and tools for owners of properties to understand why they are so special.

Chair Powell felt the 43 Cross Street property could be excluded from the report so as not to glaringly point out the architectural features that were lost, out of respect for the property owner. Ms. Carey also mentioned that it implies the Keene Heritage Commission had power to

change that property circumstance and that would be false. Short discussion ensued about how the heritage commission's work is about public education and they are not trying to create standards or rules about what people do with their houses, only trying to help them understand what is historical significant and what helps a neighborhood retain its character.

4) **Continued Discussion on Neighborhood Heritage Project/Website**

A) **Grant Update**

Ms. Kessler stated the grant funds were confirmed about 3 weeks ago, but because it took so long their paperwork is outdated, so they need new signatures. Their consultant Ray Corson is aware of the timeline and has sent Ms. Kessler work samples, which she will send to the commission.

B) **Review of Consultant Work Samples**

C) **Project Design**

D) **Next Steps**

5) **Next Meeting**

Ms. Kessler stated the next meeting is November 10, 2021 at 4:00 PM.

6) **Adjournment**

Due to being over time, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 5:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Nicole Cullinane, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Tara Kessler, Senior Planner