

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

4:30 PM

Council Chambers,
City Hall

Members Present:

Andrew Weglinski, Chair
Russ Fleming, Vice Chair
Councilor Catherine Workman
Hans Porschitz
Hope Benik
Sophia Cunha-Vasconcelos (Arrived Late)
Gregg Kleiner, Alternate (Voting)

Staff Present:

Jesse Rounds, Community Development
Director

Members Not Present:

Sam Temple
David Bergeron, Alternate
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Weglinski called the meeting to order at 4:31 PM.

2) Minutes of the April 20 and September 21, 2022

A motion by Vice Chair Fleming to approve the April 20, 2022 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Chair Weglinski and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion by Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos to approve the September 21, 2022 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Ms. Benik and the motion carried unanimously.

3) Public Hearing:

- A) **COA-2016-06, Modification #7 – 31 Washington St – Washington Park Elevations - Applicant and owner Washington Park of Keene LLC, requests the removal of a condition of approval from COA-2016-06, Modification #6 related to the submittal of color architectural elevations stamped by an architect registered in the State of NH for the former Middle School building on the Washington Park property at 31 Washington St (TMP #569-056-000). The former Middle School building is ranked as a Primary Resource and the property is located in the Downtown Core District.**

Chair Weglinski asked for a Staff recommendation on the application's completeness. Mr. Rounds said the applicant requested exemptions from submitting products, specification sheets, material samples, an existing condition plan, and a proposed condition plan. Staff determined that exempting the applicant from submitting this information would have no merits on the bearing of the application. Staff recommended that the commission grants the exemptions and accept the application as complete. A motion by Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos to accept the application as complete was duly seconded by Chair Weglinski and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Weglinski welcomed Tony Marcotte, the project manager, on behalf of the applicant, Washington Park Keene. Mr. Marcotte has been involved in the project since the beginning and had presented to this Commission multiple times before, specifically on renovations to windows and the exterior. The last meeting of this Commission that he attended was a Zoom meeting when they were renovating a rear portion of the building to create residential units. It was an interior renovation, but Eversource wanted to put meters on the outside of the building, which required this Commission's review. The Commission encouraged the meters on the interior and Eversource complied. The only exterior changes for the residential units were vents for dryers and bathroom fans. When hearing these changes, the Commission made accepting the application subject to submittal of architectural elevations of the entire school. Mr. Marcotte said the original building was built in 1912, was added onto in 1939, when they built what it now the auditorium, which would be occupied by again in the near future. There have been other additions to the building over time. The building this project came to the Commission for was built in the 1960s and in the 1980s, there were more additions to the building. He said that throughout the process, they provided architectural elevations to the new buildings, and they worked with the Commission on all the changes.

Mr. Marcotte continued explaining that his last appearance before this Commission was a Zoom meeting, and the microphones were cut off early, so no one could hear him asking to interject at the end of the hearing. He said he would have interjected that architectural renderings of the entire building would be a very significant cost for work essentially completed already and that work was 99% on the building interior. He said every side of the building has multiple different depths, heights, and additions, all of which he said are unrelated to the work done to convert the residential portion of the building. Thus, the owners feel that it is an undue burden that does not offer any additional information on the eight residential units.

Mr. Marcotte continued that he submitted pictures of the renovation from before and after the matched windows were added. He said they then added some hardy plank siding because the window openings were so large. There was a small sliding window and some gray material that was submitted in the package, which they felt was an improvement over the yellow hardy plank siding. He submitted a photo of the new building's exit, which was painted per this Commission's preferences. He said at this point, the Commission's condition is holding up the final certificate of occupancy on the building. Approximately 60% of the building is rented and 70% of the building is renovated. There is one large tenant who is slowly working on a cafeteria and the auditorium. He reiterated that this was all interior work. There are a few exterior changes that are minor enough to be approved by City Staff. He reiterated the high costs of getting an architect to create such color elevations is prohibitive and that Staff recommended approving

the application. He said they had worked with the Commission throughout the project. He also reiterated that at the last meeting, “I did not feel I could express that at the time, and we got busy, so we were waiting for meetings to come in person and be more relevant,” which is why he said he was coming back after such a long time, after Covid restrictions ended.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked for the ballpark cost. Mr. Marcotte said \$40,000–\$50,000 because the architect would have to take photos and draft it, which he said sounds high, but he said it was not a typical square building and every elevation and view requires drafting in exceptional detail. Mr. Marcotte said they would have to find an architect and he did not think the cost was over inflated; it would not just be a sketch. He said it was a lot of work for no benefit. He was unsure the Commission considered what this would entail at the time they imposed the condition because there were no existing architectural renderings of the building because there were no structural changes per the owner’s commitment not to alter the building to that extent. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked whether the renderings exist in black and white. Mr. Marcotte said no, confirming that there are no architectural renderings in black and white or color.

Vice Chair Fleming noted that there were photos in the agenda packet showing new construction due to the apartments and two photos of before and after. Mr. Marcotte said he included the new photo to show why the yellow was used. Vice Chair Fleming asked about the flanking for the newer windows. Mr. Marcotte said it is hardy plank, which is essentially a concrete material that looks like either vinyl or cedar wood siding that is painted. Vice Chair Fleming referred to the photo packet and the last photo. Mr. Marcotte said they City asked them to remove academic trailers, so it looked uglier than the other pictures; he included it as an additional before perspective. He mostly shared before pictures because he did not have much need for overall after pictures. He was trying to portray in the photos that an elevation is not simple, with multiple different layers, and is costly.

Mr. Porschitz thought there was inconsistency in what was actually requested; it speaks of exterior renderings and elevations. He asked if there was a difference in cost. Mr. Marcotte said no, a rendering is what it is going to look like in color, but this is already there, so they cannot do a before architectural elevation. A rendering would be of what it looks like today.

Vice Chair Fleming knew one tenant was working on the cafeteria and auditorium area, and he asked about other intended uses. Mr. Marcotte said they came to the City five years ago and presented, with a public hearing, for a restaurant in the former cafeteria and performances in the former auditorium. Those areas had since been left unimproved, except for heating and sprinklers, until final plans arise. He said they hope to move more quickly, with performances by the first of the year. In the short-term, the cafeteria will serve snacks and drinks; due to supply chain issues, there will not be kitchen equipment until spring.

Mr. Porschitz thought the agenda packet reflected that the concerns for additional renderings were in part a response to inconsistencies with previous applications of a lot of retroactive approvals. He said the intent of the request was know what was going forward to be the end result. He was curious why the applicants waited until now to bring this forward again, “when the architect is actually retiring.” Mr. Marcotte said it does not matter which architect they use. He said there was never an original rendering and any changes that occurred were through a small HVAC company, which came before the Commission for various

penetrations, but they went forward on more penetration without permission that they needed retroactively. Mr. Marcotte agreed that the original architect is retiring but said that he never did a rendering. He continued citing the other instances for which he came before the Commission requesting retroactive approval. He said they were not intentional, and he tried his best. Mr. Marcotte restated the changes to the building.

Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos thought that at the root of the question is something that actually ties to Mr. Marcotte's clarification, which is that the renderings occur before everything is done and now everything is done. She asked, if there were supposed to be renderings, why they were only getting to this now that the work is done. Mr. Marcotte said because 99% of the work was done and the only renderings would have been of the penetrations for the vents, which was the only thing not on the plan. He reiterated the condition for approval and inability to get a Certificate of Occupancy.

Chair Weglinski said he came to the Commission after the first building was approved. Still, he stated that since then, Mr. Marcotte had been before the Commission for various things, like landscaping, a terrace, exterior penetrations, and window openings. The Chair said it was not like this was new, and this seemed to be more of a formality.

With no public comments, the Chair closed the public hearing for deliberations.

A motion by Vice Chair Fleming to approve the request for the removal of the condition for approval regarding architectural elevations was duly seconded by Councilor Workman. The motion carried on a vote of 6–1, with Mr. Porschitz voting in opposition.

4) Staff Updates

Mr. Rounds had no updates.

5) New Business

No new business ensued.

6) Upcoming Dates of Interest

A) Next HDC Meeting: November 16, 2022 – 4:30 PM, City Hall 2nd Floor Council Chambers

B) HDC Site Visit: November 16, 2022 – 3:30 pm (To be confirmed)

7) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Weglinski adjourned the meeting at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katelyna Kibler, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Jesse Rounds, Community Development Director