



Historic District Commission

AGENDA

Wednesday, January 17, 2024

4:30 PM City Hall, 2nd Floor Council Chambers

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

2. Election – Chair/Vice-Chair

3. Minutes of October 18, 2023

4. Advice & Comment

- a) **Rooftop Solar System – 44 West Street** – Representatives from the St. James Episcopal Church are seeking input from the HDC regarding the proposed installation of a rooftop mounted solar system on the south facing roof of the existing church building at 44 West Street (TMP # 575-034-000). The property is ranked as a Primary Resource and is located in the Downtown Core District.

5. Staff Updates

- a) **CLG Grant for Property Inventory – Update**
b) **Joint Historic District & Heritage Commission Meeting**

6. New Business

7. Upcoming Dates of Interest:

- a) Next HDC Meeting: February 21, 2024 – 4:30 pm, TBD
b) HDC Site Visit: February 21, 2024 – 3:30 pm (To be confirmed)

8. Adjourn

1 City of Keene
2 New Hampshire

3
4
5 HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
6 MEETING MINUTES
7

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

4:30 PM

Council Chambers,
City Hall

Members Present:

Russ Fleming, Chair
Sophia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Vice Chair
Councilor Catherine Workman
Anthony Ferrantello

Staff Present:

Evan Clements, Planner

Members Not Present:

Hope Benik
David Bergeron, Alternate
Peter Poanessa, Alternate

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9
10 **1) Call to Order and Roll Call**

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

13
14 Chair Fleming asked for confirmation that a quorum was present. Mr. Evans replied yes, four is
15 a quorum. He continued that unfortunately, Gregory Kleiner has resigned from the HDC,
16 effective earlier this week, due to his schedule. The HDC needs a new member and he welcomes
17 suggestions. Discussion ensued about the membership list. Mr. Evans clarified that currently,
18 the full members are Russ Fleming, Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos, Anthony Ferrantello, Hope
19 Benik, and Catherine Workman; and David Bergeron and Peter Poanessa are Alternates. There
20 are two regular member vacancies.
21

22 **2) Minutes of July 19, 2023**

23
24 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of July 19, 2023.
25 Councilor Workman seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.
26

27 **3) 2024 Meeting Schedule**

28
29 Chair Fleming stated that the 2024 meeting schedule is in the agenda packet. He continued that
30 the HDC meets on the third Wednesday of each month. They usually meet in Council

31 Chambers, but during budget season when the room is unavailable at that time, the HDC would
32 meet at the Rec Center on Washington St. if needed.

33

34 Mr. Ferrantello made a motion to approve the meeting schedule of 2024. Councilor Workman
35 seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

36

37 **4) Staff Updates**

38 **A) Administrative Approvals**

39

40 Mr. Clements stated that it has been a quiet year, with not a lot of projects in the Historic
41 District. He continued that the owner of 28 Washington St. came in for minor project approval
42 for the work they are doing, repairing the grout and mortar on the front façade. He himself
43 climbed the scaffolding the other day to see the test patch. He compared an existing mortar
44 sample with their proposed mortar. They are using sand aggregate for the color. It looks very
45 close. The mortar was in rough shape and nearly all will be replaced on the façade, so it should
46 be a uniform color. They are not touching the windows themselves, but the wooden window
47 trim is rotting and will be replaced in kind and painted white. They will sand and paint the
48 wooden trim around the storefront. It is all maintenance, a little overdue. Bergeron Construction
49 is doing the woodwork and Mike Stone is the mason. Mr. Stone is motivated to do all the grout
50 at once and get a nice, uniform color, maintaining the character of the façade. He will use hose
51 water and a bristle brush for the stone dust. Mr. Clements stated that he is comfortable with the
52 proposed work.

53

54 Mr. Clements continued that the owner of 31 Washington St. technically came in for minor
55 project approval, but they were just installing some mini splits. They put it far back in an
56 alleyway and thus did not really even need an application. It cannot be seen from the right-of-
57 way.

58

59 Mr. Clements continued that the owner of a small commercial building at 17 Vernon St. came in.
60 The sidewalk has a strange dip in front of their property. They are adding an ADA ramp but it is
61 barely a grade change. It is a small ramp with a handrail. Although they are not modifying the
62 opening of the door, they are changing the direction in which the door swings to accommodate
63 the ramp. There is no change to the storefront otherwise.

64

65 Mr. Fleming asked if the old Colony Mill building is in the Historic District. Mr. Clements
66 replied that he does not believe so. Chair Fleming stated that some work is being done with the
67 smokestack. Mr. Clements replied that he thinks they got historic preservation money from a
68 federal grant for that, but it is not in the Historic District. Brief discussion continued about the
69 smokestack.

70

71 Mr. Clements stated that he had a conversation with someone from a local church, regarding
72 their plans for maintenance on their slate roof. He continued that they might be coming in for a
73 major project approval at some time, but the conversation was very preliminary. He also had a

74 conversation with the owner of 104 Emerald St., who plans to turn the building into either
75 condominiums, rentals, or first floor retail with apartments on the second and third floors. He
76 was originally contemplating changing the roofline to give more headroom on the third floor, but
77 he thinks that is no longer the plan. He will probably come in for a major project approval,
78 because he will have to add a lobby and possibly an elevator shaft. The work will be to increase
79 the functionality of the building while still meeting the requirements of the District.

80
81 Chair Fleming stated that he imagines he would want the lobby out front, but there is limited
82 space there. Mr. Clements replied that he might end up creating a secondary lobby. He
83 continued that he had a productive conversation with him about additions being complementary
84 but not matching. The building has vinyl on it now, which the owner wants to take out and then
85 put Hardie Board in. The slate roof used to have skylights, probably to vent excess heat. They
86 cannot be seen on the outside of the roof, but if you look from inside, all of the blocking is there.
87 He might want to restore the skylights. He seems motivated to improve the property in a way
88 that meets the regulations. That is preliminary. He will hopefully come in sometime next year.

89
90 Chair Fleming stated that he sees that the property across the street is working on their parking
91 lot, which is a big project. Mr. Clements replied yes, 85 Emerald St. He continued that they will
92 put Hardie Board over the cinder blocks. Part of that approval was resurfacing the parking area.
93 The hope is to get food trucks in there. There is some opportunity in that neighborhood. It looks
94 like the owners are willing to spend some money on it. It is encouraging.

95

B) CLG Grant Update

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97
98 Mr. Clements stated that regarding the Certified Local Government (CLG) grant [from the NH
99 Division of Historical Resources], (City staff) has done everything on their side, and the City
100 Council officially accepted the \$12,000 grant [to inventory the properties on Gilbo Ave. in the
101 Historic District]. He continued that the City Manager signed the agreement, and it is waiting to
102 go to the Governor's desk for final approval to do their side of the grant agreement. Hopefully
103 the (City) will get started on that early next year. He needs to get in touch with consultant that
104 helped with the grant application and suggested the modified inventory form that will best serve
105 their needs, to make sure she still has capacity for them next year. Then, they will figure out a
106 kick-off and get that project started. It is exciting.

107

108 Mr. Evans stated that the Historic District mailer went out about two weeks ago. He continued
109 that he wants to give a shout-out to Rebecca (Landry), Communications Director, and the new
110 Communications Department. She did a great job tweaking the initial design to meet the City's
111 new branding. Only a handful of the trifolds have been returned as 'undeliverable,' which is to
112 be expected, and most of them arrived. They will need to decide if this is something they want
113 to do annually, which he is not opposed to, or if they want to do a more targeted approach.

114

C) NH 101 Improvement Project

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116

117 Mr. Clements stated that a consultant hired by the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)
118 sent a letter to every board and commission in the City, regarding the Rt. 101 Improvement
119 Project. Led by the City Engineer, the City has done a targeted response to that, as opposed to
120 having the consultants come do public outreach to every board, commission, and committee.
121 The City has (told NHDOT) it prefers the option farthest to the east [as shown on the map of
122 proposed options, in the HDC's agenda packet], which is more in line with the existing Swanzey
123 Factory Rd. straightening out and making the existing intersection better. Some of the other
124 proposed options directly conflict with Stone Arch Bridge, so no one is interested in those. He is
125 working with the Heritage Commission (HC) on that as well. This project is very preliminary
126 and there should be more information and more opportunities for discussion down the road. It is
127 rather out of the purview of the HDC, but since the HDC received a letter, he wanted to bring it
128 up at this meeting.

129
130 Mr. Ferrantello asked clarifying questions about the options depicted on the map in the agenda
131 packet, and asked for more information about the current conditions of/problems with this
132 intersection. Discussion continued, and Councilor Workman stated that there was already a full
133 presentation about this project at a recent Municipal Services, Facilities, and Infrastructure
134 (MSFI) Committee meeting. She recommends that anyone wanting more information about the
135 project watch that MSFI Committee meeting video.

136
137 **5) New Business**

138
139 Mr. Clements stated that he does not foresee any major projects coming in before the end of the
140 year. He continued that that could change, but there is not a lot of the year left. Thus, he wanted
141 to get next year's (meeting) schedule adopted, as opposed to this year when they did not get the
142 schedule adopted until approximately April. The HDC might not need to meet again this year.
143 Chair Fleming asked if anyone had any new business. He asked about the HDC having a joint
144 meeting with the HC. Mr. Clements replied that the HC was supposed to meet last week but that
145 meeting ended up being canceled. Chair Fleming asked what it says in the rules of procedure,
146 and whether the HDC and HC are supposed to conduct any business together, or if it is just a
147 matter of knowing what the other group does. Mr. Clements replied that it is more like an
148 "annual report" on the heritage/historic preservation work that both groups have been doing. He
149 continued that at this point, they could consider doing this in the New Year. If the HDC wants to
150 try to meet with the HC in November or December, he would not say no to that.

151
152 Chair Fleming asked what the HC has been doing. Mr. Clements replied that they have two
153 CLG grant projects happening now. They are wrapping up one, an oral history of the Italian
154 neighborhood, which was combined with a story map website. It allows you to geo-locate points
155 of interest and write narrative blurbs, creating a website that you can scroll through, with
156 different maps that the written blurbs pop up on. It is about to go live. They are also working in
157 tandem with the Cheshire County Historical Society and the Black Heritage Trail of NH on the
158 Recovering Black Histories project. The HC's project has hired an associate professor to work
159 on documents within the City of Keene. She has a couple graduate students working on taking

160 primary and secondary sources and contextualizing them, writing narratives and stories about
161 people who were members of the community in the 1800s. That has just started. The Historical
162 Society's project has been underway for about a year. The HC will work with the Historical
163 Society and the consultant to pick through documents that might not be as easily available to
164 outside volunteers. That is just kicking off and they are figuring out how to best use the HC's
165 time with that.

166

167 6) **Upcoming Dates of Interest**

168 A) **Next HDC Meeting: November 15, 2023 – 4:30 PM, TBD**

169 B) **HDC Site Visit: November 15, 2023 – 3:30 PM (To be confirmed)**

170

171 7) **Adjourn**

172

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

174

175 Respectfully submitted by,

176 Britta Reida, Minute Taker

177

178 Reviewed and edited by,

179 Evan J. Clements, AICP - Planner

St James Episcopal Sustainability Projects

St James Episcopal Church is committed to reducing our usage of fossil fuel. Currently the heat for our entire building is provided by oil boilers. Air conditioning in the basement spaces is provided by AC units that are currently about 25 years old and will soon need to be replaced. We would like to replace these AC units with heat pumps. In addition we would like to install heat pumps into our common room adjacent to the Sanctuary that currently has heating but no air conditioning. These projects will greatly reduce our usage of fossil fuel. The size and construction of the sanctuary itself makes heat pumps not a practical solution for heating the sanctuary.

These projects will increase our electric usage so, in keeping with Keene's commitment to reusable energy, we are investigating the possibility of adding solar panels to the south-facing roof of the common room to offset the increased electricity usage. This is the portion of the roof facing the Gilbo St Parking lot.

We have received a preliminary evaluation from Revision Energy who suggested placing 60 solar panels on the roof which would generate a large portion of the energy we would need. (see attached photos of the proposed array)

The current roof is more than 130 years old and needs some repair. Because the roof is slate, it would need to be replaced to allow for the installation of the solar panels. The replacement roof would be synthetic slate or asphalt shingles; any new roof would only be partially visible because most of the roof will be covered by the solar panels. In addition, there is currently a small brick chimney on the south side of the roof that services a fireplace in an office that is no longer used. Removing the chimney would simplify the installation of the solar panels and would also increase the amount of energy produced. The chimney is only visible from the parking lot side of the church. We do not believe the existing chimney adds to the character of the building. (see attached photos) We would plan on requesting a variance to remove the chimney.

We are just beginning this evaluation process and want to present our idea to the Historical District Commission before proceeding.

We are grateful for the opportunity to visit with the commission and look forward to addressing your questions and concerns.

From: [Kerry Ford](#)
To: [Evan Clements](#)
Subject: St James Sustainability Projects Narrative and photos
Date: Thursday, January 11, 2024 2:53:35 PM
Attachments: [St James solar array location.png](#)
[St James from Gilbo St parking lot.png](#)
[St James Lamson St Closeup.png](#)
[St James Episcopal Sustainability Projects.pdf](#)

Evan,

I am sending a narrative regarding our upcoming projects along with some photos. The photo of the front of the church is to show that the solar panels would not be visible and the chimney we want to remove is also not visible from most of the Historical District, only from the Gilbo St Parking lot.

The other photos show approximately what the layout of the solar panels would look like. We will get more definitive plans once we know that we are able to proceed.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your assistance,

Kerry Ford





