

City of Keene
New Hampshire

HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

4:30 PM

**Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Cauley Powell, Chair
Molly Ellis, Vice Chair
Marilyn Huston
Julie Emineth
Rose Carey
Louise Zerba

Staff Present:

Evan Clements, Planner
William Dow, Deputy City Clerk and
Records Manager

Members Not Present:

Susan DeGidio, Alternate

1) Call to Order – Roll Call

Chair Cauley Powell called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

2) Approval of November 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Louise Zerba moved to approve the November 8, 2023 meeting minutes which was promptly seconded by Marilyn Hutson. The motion carried unanimously.

3) Elections

Vice Chair Molly Ellis moved to nominate Chair Powell as Chair which was duly seconded by Ms. Zerba. The motion carried unanimously. Chair Powell moved to nominate Molly Ellis as Vice Chair which was promptly seconded by Ms. Zerba. The motion carried unanimously.

4) Adoption of the 2024 Meeting Schedule

The adoption of the 2024 Meeting Schedule was approved at the previous meeting. Mr. Clements will send the schedule out via email. The frequency of the meetings was discussed, as the Committee may decide to change the meetings to a bi-monthly schedule.

5) **2022 CLG – Recovering Black History in Keene Project**

William Dow (Deputy City Clerk and Records Manager) was present at the meeting.

Mr. Dow presented the archival records related to the Recovering Black History Project, highlighting the tax invoice payments and “mortgage chattel” (reported liens on owned property) as potentially valuable sources of information for the Committee to use for research. The “mortgage chattel” binders were organized by year but Mr. Dow stated that he wasn’t especially familiar with how they were categorized within the binders (chronologically, by property type, etc.) The tax invoice payments were organized alphabetically, which would make research on the list of names easier.

Mr. Dow outlined specific guidelines for accessing and handling the records, emphasizing the need for scheduling and careful preservation. The City will provide gloves if necessary and he asked the Commission to only use pencil when doing research with the records. The City also stored documents in a separate facility (350 Marlboro Street) from City Hall. He discussed the availability of a part-time helper in the morning at the Marlboro Street facility, potential locations to review the pallets of records, and the importance of coordinating access to the records.

Chair Powell asked about additional potential sources of information, to which Mr. Dow suggested poll tax records, selectman records, city directories (located at the Keene Public Library) and annual reports. He explained that it would be easy to access vital records (birth, death, and marriage records) as they are stored in a vault within City Hall. Mr. Dow discussed the decentralized nature of the records as the town developed over time and the need to visit different locations, such as city hall, the Marlboro Street facility, and the historical society, for additional information. Discussion ensued on the potential methods of dividing research between the Commission members. Mr. Dow suggested the Commission start by researching the vital records at City Hall, as that could give leads that could help to individualize research projects.

Mr. Clements stated that the Commission could reach out to Mr. Dow directly to schedule a time to view records and to copy him on the email so he can track and report the volunteers’ time for the grant.

Chair Powell asked the members about their time commitment to the project. Discussion ensued on the members’ availability and when they could commit time to the project. Mr. Clements stated that he would email the members the excel file of the names to aid their research. The Commission discussed the method of dividing research, to which they decided upon dividing it by groups of names. Chair Powell stated she would go through the names with Mr. Clements to match names, dates, and households before dividing the list for the members.

Chair Powell stated that they are working with a consultant who hoped the Commission would upload their findings in a Google Doc. Discussion ensued on how they would research and upload information.

Chair Powell made a motion to purchase a book (suggested by Mr. Dow) titled Vital Statistics of the Town of Keene, NH for \$40.00. Rose Carey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6) 2021 CLG – Italian Neighborhood Heritage Project

Mr. Clements stated that Will was still working on the website and that it would be finished soon.

7) Staff Updates

Mr. Clements stated that, due to the Right to Know Law, the Demolition Review Committee (Julie Emineth, Rose Carey and Chair Ellis) was an official subcommittee of the Heritage Commission and therefore it needed to have posted notice 24 hours before the members met. The DRC would email Mr. Clements with their availability and he would find a time that the members could all meet. He would also provide them with a simple minutes form to fill out. Mr. Clements stressed the importance of the subcommittee consisting of at least three members according to law. He reminded the members that two members present constitutes a quorum, and therefore, not all three members must be present to review a proposed demolition site. Discussion ensued on the reason for the sub-committee and their responsibilities, which include viewing the site and taking photos.

8) New Business

Chair Powell stated that the Commission would like to have a cross-meeting with the Historic District Commission. Mr. Clements stated he was meeting with them the following week and would invite them to the meeting in March.

9) Next Meeting – February 14, 2024

Chair Powell asked the Commission if the next meeting date would work for them as it falls on Valentine's Day, to which the Commission had no objections.

10) Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Powell adjourned the meeting at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Melissa Danneker, Minute Taker

HC Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2024

ADOPTED

Reviewed and edited by,
Evan J. Clements, AICP - Planner