

**MINUTES OF WORK SESSION
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
ONE JUNKINS AVENUE, PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

7:30 p.m.

January 23, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Joseph Almeida; Vice Chairman Tracy Kozak;
Members John Wyckoff, George Melchior; City Council
Representative Esther Kennedy; Planning Department
Representative William Gladhill; Alternates Dan Rawling, Reagan
Ruedig

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Richard Katz

ALSO PRESENT: Nicholas Cracknell, Principal Planner

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**I. DISCUSSION OF HDC GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND ACTION
PLAN FOR 2013**

Chairman Almeida opened the discussion, encouraging Commissioners to evaluate and provide feedback on changes to their official property evaluation form. Chairman Almeida said he hoped it would be a useful tool to use in all applications no matter how big or small.

Mr. Wyckoff said the package was well done, but he thought quite a few of the criteria like driveway design, materials, and landscape materials were not in their purview.

Vice Chairman Kozak said she thought it might be good to add building size, scale, and massing under building design. She also thought there should be a reference to context and style somewhere. Mr. Cracknell agreed that is an important part and should have been included. He said they could make a new category at the top for context. Chairman Almeida said there could be sub-categories added like street and neighborhood. Vice Chairman Kozak said the check boxes at the bottom could be expanded at the top under context. Mr. Cracknell said the check boxes at the bottom were part of the code, and the top part of the page is background data that the staff would prepare so he wasn't sure what their proposal would look like. Mr. Almeida said he understood, and asked what items would be left under purpose and intent.

Mr. Wyckoff asked what they would do with the forms. Chairman Almeida said it could be kept as a record, but he hoped everyone would use one for their review notes before hearings to prompt questions, and also keep it in front of them during hearings to make note of applicant responses. Mr. Almeida said they could also put the form on the website for reference, and share blank forms with the applicant and so they could also follow along with the checklist of requirements.

Mr. Cracknell said it would be a good idea to have a rotating scribe so there would be a master sheet with decisions for the file at the end of the project. Councilor Kennedy said she also sees it as a good tool for Commissioners to add their own notes, but would hate to have everyone hand them in and see different interpretations used as an official legal document. Instead she thought someone from the city should do the notes for an official copy that can be added to the minutes, instead of ending up in a file. Mr. Cracknell agreed but also thinks there should be a designated scribe to listen and take notes so it can be passed to the person making the motion, so it would be there as an official document. Mr. Almeida also liked the idea of each member keeping a log. Mr. Wyckoff said there's not enough room to write comments, especially for a work session. Mr. Cracknell said they could flip the page over and they wouldn't use most rows for many projects. Mr. Almeida said it would be helpful to keep notes and refer to previous comments and requests, especially when they're on the sixth or seventh work session.

Mr. Melchior said it would be fine as a tool, but he didn't think it should be official, especially when everyone is doing due diligence on design guidelines and form-based zoning and ordinances. He also said he does not look at systems by their elements alone, but by the relationships between the elements. He went on to say it is difficult to come up with a method of elemental scoring, so he thought content discussions were most important.

Mr. Wyckoff said it might be good for their own use, but asked if they would use it for small projects like doors, steps, siding and windows. He said he thought they were trying to simplify their process. Mr. Cracknell said the form is mostly meant to be comprehensive for big projects, and they don't have to apply to all the categories.

Mr. Rawling said he had trouble with making it official because thoughts sometimes shift and their notes would be illegible. Mr. Cracknell said everyone's document would not be collected. Chairman Almeida said this is better for a work sheet because their biggest concern was that many things are missed, and it would be good to use as a check list. Chairman Almeida said they can always modify it as needed. Mr. Gladhill agreed that it could work well as a worksheet for notes, but that it would not be good to be official as they would have to take a vote to determine what would be appropriate to add to the official record, and it would bog down the process. Councilor Kennedy agreed it should be used as a working document, and also would be good for new people coming on board.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if the form would be part of their package and Mr. Cracknell said it would be printed and included. Mr. Wyckoff said it would be good to pass out with the application because they have received incomplete applications sometimes. Chairman Almeida said it would be helpful to see what the applicant sees on the application with the requirements listed. Vice Chairman Kozak said the application is hard to find on the website and it would be nice to have some direct links on the HDC page. Mr. Wyckoff said some people ignore following the application criteria.

Ms. Ruedig said it would be a good tool for consistency with everything in front of them. Mr. Wyckoff said consistency might vary depending on the context of the project, however. Mr. Cracknell said those would be divided under: B) Building Design and C) Site Design.

Mr. Cracknell said it would be important to add the precedent of how different parcels are reviewed, for instance the difference between Custom House Court and the Northern Tier. They would need to add a map with a project location identifier with categories to show its level of significance, and identify priority areas for preservation. Someone could take a stab at qualifiers to treat similar areas the same as one another, but perhaps not the same as another area. Most agree on extremes, but not the gray areas so it would not be 100% spot on but most people agree on the areas that make Portsmouth special. Mr. Cracknell said he has a map from the Portsmouth Advocates that shows contributing and non-contributing, focal and intrusive classifications for 440 buildings downtown that would be a good map to start working from for a context base.

Councilor Kennedy said the Portsmouth advocates are moving in a positive direction. Ms. Ruedig is on the board of the Portsmouth Historical Society, and was originally part of the newly formed Portsmouth Advocates and they are trying to recruit new members, however it was determined that it would be a conflict to be on both boards.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if the study for form based zoning included Islington Street, and Mr. Cracknell said the pilot study does not include Islington Street. It covers 50 acres and about 400 buildings in the downtown area working out from Market Square. The study costs \$45,000 and they are looking at how and which areas work or don't work, and trying to determine what needs to be done from there.

Chairman Almeida said Vice Chairman Kozak pointed out that chimneys are missing from the form and also asked if lighting was on the form. Mr. Cracknell said site design lighting is on line 49. The idea of the form was to move from top of building projections like chimneys and then work down. Chairman Almeida suggested lines 18, 19, and 21 simply say windows, which would include the various aspects of windows in parenthesis. Discussion continued regarding which items needed to be included and which items could be consolidated. Councilor Kennedy suggested trying to get it all on one page.

Chairman Almeida said they are getting more requests for substitutions from authentic natural materials to synthetic, artificial materials of varying colors, and asked if they should address that on a separate line, or in each section. Mr. Cracknell said he thought they should be addressed in whatever section to which it pertains.

Mr. Wyckoff asked if they would bother with the form for minor applications like windows. Councilor Kennedy said they might consider a separate application just for windows. Vice Chairman Kozak asked if they could consider a separate form for minor applications that is simple. Mr. Gladhill said they could do a trial run. Mr. Cracknell said they should use the same form to be consistent, and to get used to using the form. He said it would make more work trying to decide which form to use, especially when there's uncertainty if a project is major or minor. Mr. Cracknell said he would already be entering the applicant information on the form to include in the packets.

The Commissioners accepted the form with minor changes, and agreed to use it for the next meeting.

Chairman Almeida moved on to the 2013 HDC Strategic Plan goals and objectives. The rest of the meeting was spent determining which goals would be high, moderate or low levels of priority, which principal commissioner would be in charge of seeing the goal through, and the completion dates for Project Review Process, Review Criteria, Priority Areas for Preservation, Special Projects, Project Design, and Advocacy for Historic Preservation.

II. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:30 p.m., a motion was made to adjourn, was seconded, and was passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane K. Kendall
Acting Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Historic District Commission meeting on August 7, 2013.