

FINAL

**LEBANON HERITAGE COMMISSION
MEETING ROOM 3, CITY HALL OR
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
6:00PM, WEDNESDAY MAY 10, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicole Ford Burley (Chair and City Historian), Matt Smith (Vice Chair), Jeremy Rutter (Planning Board Rep.),

MEMBERS ABSENT: Devin Wilkie (City Council Rep), Karen Zook (Alt. Council Rep)

STAFF PRESENT: Rebecca Owens (Planning & Development Rep)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Ford Burley called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 12, 2023

A MOTION was made by Mr. Smith to approve the April 12, 2023 Meeting Minutes as presented. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Rutter.

** The Vote on the Motion was approved (3-0).*

3. PUBLIC REVIEW

None

4. STUDY ITEMS

A. Special Projects

• Historic Districts Ordinance and Application Review

Ms. Owens said the zoning text for Heritage preservation was discussed at the April CAMP training meeting and she said she would share the relevant power point slides that were reviewed at the meeting once she receives them. Ms. Owens said the City will be hiring a consultant to review Lebanon's zoning ordinance text and compare it to other communities that have made updates more recently. She suggested the Commission members review the ordinance, apply what was learned at CAMP, and assemble comments and examples that will help the consultant's review. She said the application form language would be the last thing to get updated unless a current project requires revisions immediately.

Chair Ford-Burley suggested improvements to the requirements for information from applicants could be discussed. She said the City could help make it easier for applicants to provide supplemental materials that may be difficult for applicants to locate. Ms. Owens said that might be a good "Best Practice" idea, but she said many applicants do have guidance from the City's Planning and Development Department staff on how to collect those materials before the application might be reviewed by the Heritage Commission.

Chair Ford Burley said the question about whether a property is near wetlands/flood plains/historic district may be challenging for applicants to ascertain. Ms. Owens said the Planning Department staff provides a memo for each application that includes this information.

Ms. Owens said a lot of projects happening within historic district boundaries may be small, like window replacement, and she said she feels Lebanon's ordinance text is more permissive than other communities' ordinances. She said she was on a panel at a state conference and staff from other communities had really good ideas for zoning edits. She said she would share the video with Commission members.

Chair Ford Burley said the group discussed the CAMP training at the last Heritage Commission meeting.

Ms. Owens said the Commission could also consider clarifying screening – she said right now the ordinance language talks about roof form but for most historic districts in NH the language is related to the slope and pitch of roofs. Lebanon has been applying the current criteria a little more broadly to include situations involving appearance of equipment installed on flat roofs by the ground-view on main thoroughfares, for example. Lebanon already has comparable language in its zoning ordinance for the Lebanon Downtown district for site plan applications. But an application for a building permit that goes for historic district review might not include screening requirements. She said the Commission needs to incorporate these requirements without conflicting with other zoning requirements.

Ms. Owens suggested the Commission consider recommending the creation of an illustrated Design Guide - either community-wide or specific to Historic Districts – as an outcome of its ordinance review and to possibly use other communities' guides as templates or examples. She said the Commission could review the Lebanon Historical District language for areas where more clarity or examples may be needed. She said this structure or guide could be helpful if a new Historic District were created in West Lebanon, for example, where no district has existed previously.

Mr. Smith noted that the ordinance language may not be “one size fits all” and that the Commission should review the language with future uses in mind.

Ms. Owens also noted that the Planning Department is working on a Pattern Zoning Project, where a consultant reviews and identifies architectural similarities among structures in each neighborhood. She said these architectural similarities could help facilitate new housing development that may happen in these neighborhoods and the Heritage Commission guidelines should be included in Pattern Zoning Project. Mr. Smith said he also liked the Home Owners Guide idea that was presented at the CAMP meeting.

Ms. Owens said if the Commission is able to make the language more user friendly but cannot get the illustrated historic guide developed, another option is a general community guide for common building styles and architectural features. She said this

way, the Commission could develop a guide that would have impact community-wide as an educational tool. She said one of the takeaways from the CAMP training is that “education has more impact than regulation.” Chair Ford Burley said the CAMP training had a grassroots approach to generating interest and enthusiasm for preservation.

Ms. Owens said she would create a shared folder that Commission members could use to review the documents and view materials from other communities. She said the consultant who completed the Phase I Colburn Park National Register area form review which produced an outcome of a recommended scope of work for Phase II. She said the City has until September 2024 to use funding for Phase II, which is to officially submit the area form for federal agency review and to review our zoning district for the Lebanon Historic district and recommend updates to the language. The Commission’s comments would be very helpful in this endeavor.

Mr. Smith asked if the Planning Department is considering changes to the boundaries of the Regulatory District. Ms. Owens said the state seemed to be encouraging that the historic and regulatory boundaries to be aligned. Ms. Owens said the Commission could ask the consultant what the justification for changing the boundaries would be. Mr. Smith said the core downtown area was the crossroads of development for the City and it seems like a good time to figure out how Preservation fits into what comes next. Ms. Owens noted that there are areas of the downtown area that fall between the neighborhood scale districts so that is something to understand from the consultant. Mr. Smith said he is curious about what the Pattern Zoning Project would reveal about neighborhood characteristics. Ms. Owens said she will try to be included in the meetings once that project is launched.

The Commission members reviewed the language of the ordinance related to historic preservation. Mr. Rutter noted that the term “Community value” is included in Section 408.2 and asked how that could be measured. He also asked what “community” means in Bullet A and how preservation could help “Conserve property values” as stated in Bullet B. Ms. Owens said these are good questions that need to be posed to the consultant to help clarify the language. She said that some time ago, Urban 3, a firm that analyses property values and tax relationships, presented to the City Council that there is an overlap between preserved downtowns and property value and tax income of a community.

Chair Ford Burley said she thought it was interesting that “landscaping” and “fencing” are not included in Section 408.5. Ms. Owens said one topic the Commission may want to avoid including in a revised ordinance is signage. She said it is perhaps better to have overall good zoning regulations for signage than to bring Heritage requirements to it. Ms. Owens also noted that “color” is not included in that section as well and therefore may be harder to regulate. She said the Commission could make recommendations as to the color residents choose and explain that certain colors may not fulfill the intent of Lebanon’s historic district including fostering “civic beauty.”

Ms. Owens said another example is consistent setbacks in a particular area. She said a lot of communities have historic district guidance to encourage consistent setbacks for properties along particular streets. She said the Commission could encourage consistent setbacks in the downtown Historic District.

Ms. Owens said Section 408.6 of the ordinance provides the Commission with more flexibility and additional criteria for consideration. But she said it can be difficult to apply these additional criteria unless the Commission knows how to apply them, and it can be difficult for residents to understand also.

The Commission members said they would begin compiling comments and other review to the shared document that Ms. Owens said she would provide.

- **Landmark Designations**

No update

- **Oral History**

No update

B. Dana House

Ms. Owens said Mr. Andrew Cushing, of the NH Preservation Alliance and who had presented at the CAMP training in April, is eager to help the City discuss the future of Dana House. Chair Ford Burley asked Ms. Owens to reach out to Mr. Cushing and arrange a time for the Commission to meet with him.

C. Education

- **Remaining CAMP Training**

No update

5. OTHER BUSINESS

A. West Lebanon Revitalization Committee Update

Mr. Smith said he was not able to attend the last West Lebanon Revitalization Committee because the agenda had been finalized and he was not able to get on it. He said he is planning to attend the next meeting, which is scheduled for Monday, May 15. The Commission members agreed Mr. Smith could discuss the following:

- The possibility of a Crafts Ave Historic District and/or a Regulatory District
- The vision for Dana House
- Ways that the Historic Commission could help the West Lebanon Revitalization Committee. Mr. Smith also suggested that a member of that Committee could be invited to participate on the Heritage Commission as well.
- An outreach letter could be sent to homeowners regarding possible Landmark Designation. Ms. Owens said she would share a sample letter with Mr. Smith to reference during the meeting.
- Review the known list of West Lebanon-related historic studies compiled by the original West Lebanon Revitalization Committee

- Acquisition of funding for the possible development of Seminary Hill School
- Review the CIP projects that the City is considering to see if the committee should lends its support to anything already being considered

Mr. Rutter asked why residents would want to live in a community that is designated a Historic District, given that it means more regulation and having to consult the Heritage Commission when considering restoration or preservation projects. Chair Ford Burley said there is a level of prestige and perceived increased property values that are incentives for residents. Ms. Owens said there may also be tax incentives happening at the state level. She said these are all good questions to ask the consultant during ordinance language review.

B. NHDOT/DHR Exit 18 Rest Area & Mechanic Street/Mascoma Street/High Street Mitigation Updates

Chair Ford Burley said the Historical Society accepted the scale electronics from the Weigh Station into its collection.

Chair Ford Burley said there was a public hearing to discuss the Route 120 Bridge project and there does not seem to be much impact that would involve the Heritage Commission review. She said a public hearing is planned for next Thursday to discuss the Mechanic Street/Mascoma Street/High Street (also known as “Jones Crossing”). She the DOT stipulates that only members attending in person could ask questions or participate. Remote attendance is for viewing only.

C. Historic Marker and Interpretive Signage – Follow up from 4/24 NPS Meeting

Chair Ford Burley said a group met with a representative from the National Park Service and a designer about signage for the West Lebanon Greenway through Westboro Yard, River Park (Crafts Ave), and Riverside Park on Glen Road (not the skate park). She said the NPS has funding and is offering to design and produce sign templates to be used throughout the City. She noted the funding must be used by the end of August.

She said the sign designer used to work at NPS and has a lot of experience with sign layout. She said the signs take about 12-18 months to produce, which should coincide with the completion of the Mascoma Greenway project. She said elements of the current signs will most likely be repurposed and each new sign will focus on different aspects of each site. She said a sign planned for Westboro Yard will be designed and held for future production as that project evolves. Chair Ford Burley noted the Commission may be able to help with the text of the signage, which is the next step.

Chair Ford Burley told the Commission that she has been asked to speak at the Women’s Club for the Lebanon High School Senior Tea for graduating seniors.

Chair Ford Burley said she provided a draft of the new History of Lebanon page to the DEI for review and is awaiting feedback. She said the content may perhaps be on the City’s website by next meeting.

6. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No members of the public were present.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A. “How to Research Your Historic Home” Workshop with Andrew Cushing

Chair Ford Burley said she attend a talk by Mr. Cushing and said it was a very good and educational public engagement event.

B. Historical Society Coordination

C. Lebanon Master Plan, Chapter 11 (Heritage) Implementation

Mr. Rutter said the Planning Board is reviewing the Conservation Commission’s report on Chapter on Natural Resources in the Master Plan, which included changes to the original 2012 document.

He suggested that the Heritage Commission could review the Chapter of the Master Plan on Historic Preservation in a similar way and provide a list of what has been accomplished. He also suggested the group review the Outcomes list at the end of the chapter and identify two or three items to complete in the next five years, before the entire Master Plan is updated.

The group discussed some of the items that have been accomplished, such as obtaining status as a Certified Local Government. Mr. Smith noted the Heritage Commission’s continuing efforts to be part of signage and other unifying education aspects. Mr. Rutter said it might be good to talk to High School administration to add local history to students’ history curriculum. Chair Ford Burley said high school students used to complete research projects about local history that were accepted by the Historical Society. Ms. Owens said it would be wonderful if a set of modules about local history or current topics covered in the Lebanon Citizens Academy were developed that could be easily integrated into existing history classes curriculum.

D. Lebanon HC Design Guidelines Review and Update

8. ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION was made by Mr. Rutter to adjourn the meeting at 8:02pm. The Motion was seconded by Chair Ford Burley.

**** The vote on the Motion was approved (3-0).***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paula Roux
Recording Secretary