

**Town of Newcastle**  
**Historic Preservation Ordinance Committee**  
**Meeting Date 6/21/23 at 5:30pm**  
**At the Town Community Room (Fire Station)**

**Members Present:** Ben Frey, Karen Paz, Catherine Burke, Tor Glendinning, Bonnie Stone  
**Also Present:** Isabelle Oechsle (Consulting Planner), 5 members of the public

**Minutes**

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Tor Glendinning called the meeting to order at 5:34pm.
2. **Review of minutes of previous meeting: June 8, 2023:** Karen Paz noted that Bonnie was not marked as present in the draft minutes, but she was there. ***Ben Frey moved to accept the meeting minutes as revised. Karen Paz seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.***
3. **Public Comment:** Tor asked members of the public present if they would like to provide comment.

The following comments were offered, with the answers from the Committee or the Consulting Planner in *italics*:

- Katharina Keoughan: Noted that it would be helpful for the public to be able to present examples of alterations to understand how they fit into this Ordinance. *Ben noted that they previously had the experience when, in the development of the Core Zoning Code, people wanted the opportunity to ask “worst case scenario” projects to test if the Core Zoning Code would prevent them. He noted that if she has a specific question, the Committee will attempt to answer, or that the answer would be provided in the forthcoming Design Guidelines Manual.* Asked how the Committee is judging the period of the house, and asked what is considered historic? *Isabelle directed her to Article 7, Section D for new additions to the Historic District or Local Landmarks. Otherwise, everything in the SD-Historic districts on the Town’s adopted Zoning Map would be subject to the Ordinance if adopted. Karen noted that it would be up to the applicant to show what buildings they are inspired by/attempting to be compatible with, in the instance of New Construction proposals.* Asked about the determination from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission before something can be demolished. *It was noted that the draft Ordinance is intended to provide a process for deciding if something can be demolished, not fully limiting demolitions. If something is a hazard building, the Code Enforcement Officer/the Town can get that determination through a civil case and tear the structure down.* Urged the Committee to consider allowing solar panels. Asked how windmills would be reviewed? *Ben answered under the same standards as solar panels.* Asked about existing structures and if they would be “grandfathered in”? *Isabelle answered that the intent of this Ordinance is not to force compliance with buildings that otherwise would not be doing work, however, when a permit is sought, the applicant would be required to abide by the standards of the Ordinance (if adopted). Any permits under review with the CEO but not yet approved at the time of adoption would be reviewed according to existing regulations, not this new Ordinance.*

- David Levesque: Urged the Committee to weigh solar panels or other renewable energy systems as of higher importance than historic preservation initiatives. Asked for further explanation of the grants that the Town would be eligible for if this Ordinance were to be adopted. *Tor and Isabelle explained that the Town would be eligible to apply for a number of grants from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission/National Parks Service to complete historic preservation initiatives in the community. In addition, income-producing property owners would be eligible to apply for grants as well as historic preservation tax credits (both state and federal) for qualifying projects. Finally, there is movement in the Legislature in the most recent session to expand the state historic preservation tax credit for all property owners, including residential property owners (homes rather than income-producing properties).*
  - Adrian Zahner: Noted that the restrictions in the draft Ordinance seem to be focused on lower visibility residential areas rather than “high-traveled, classic” areas of the community (such as Downtown). Urged the Committee to expand the scope so as not to miss important commercial areas. Asked that answers to the public’s questions be included in the minutes. Noted the use of the word “feasible” [in regard to Renewable Energy Systems] and that this needed to be defined. Urged the Committee to consider standards or design guidelines for certain weatherization efforts. Asked for clarification about the Local Landmarks/Historic District Expansion standards and how that works in practice (are people allowed to subject their neighbors to this Ordinance? What is the benefit of being involved in this Ordinance in comparison to the time that it would take to review applications for expansion of the historic district?) *Ben noted that there is a public benefit to recognizing and telling the history of Newcastle through regulation, and the time of Committee members is worth that public benefit. Becoming a Local Landmark provides both recognition and regulation of a building for future generations, unless or until the entire Town votes to remove the building. In the case of Historic District Expansion, the Planning Board, the Selectboard, or a citizen group could initiate a petition to amend the Ordinance (just like any other municipal ordinance) to include a building or group of buildings. This is a process provided under [State Law](#).*
  - Celeste (last name not provided): Noted that the Ordinance as drafted seems to note that the preference would be for solar panels to be placed in rear yards rather than on the roof of historic buildings. Asked why that would be the preference? *Ben responded that he does not believe that that is the trade-off being considered in the Ordinance, rather, that the Ordinance is asking the applicant to simply consider all alternatives rather than simply placing the panels on the roof and impacting the structure. After discussion by the Committee, there was general agreement to change the language around (1) what feasibility means in relation to this section and (2) create a list of priority considerations for placement of panels.*
4. **Overview of Historic Preservation Ordinance, Draft 6:** Isabelle provided an overview of this draft, indicating the sections where changes occurred based on Committee and public feedback from the previous meeting (see memo for Draft 6, available in the meeting packet [here](#)).

In general, discussion at this meeting focused on the following items:

- Solar panels and Renewable Energy Systems: After discussion in relation to this item and

public comment above, the Committee asked that solar panels be a Tier 2 project and that discussion occurs around a “priority considerations” list for applicants to consider in siting solar panels on historic properties.

- Tor asked for language surrounding how often the Review Board must meet. He suggested at least once a month.

5. **Discussion of Next Steps:** The Committee discussed dates of the public informational meeting and potential dates for public hearings. At this meeting, it was agreed that the Committee would have a “prep meeting” on July 5th (to prepare for the informational meeting) and that the public informational meeting would occur on July 26th at 6PM. Isabelle suggested that if all property owners within the SD-Historic areas are invited, we may need a bigger room. Ben noted that he would discuss using space at Lincoln Academy.
6. **Adjournment:** Ben moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:37PM. Karen seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.