

AMHERST HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Jane Wald, Bob Romer, Laura Lovett, Janet Marquardt, Ted Parker, Steve Bloom

Staff Present: Chris Brestrup, Planning Director, Rob Morra, Building Commissioner, Brandon Toponce, Historical Commission Staff Representative

Meeting Date: March 6, 2018

Time Started: 6:00 PM

Time Ended: 8:35 PM

AGENDA ITEMS

Article 13

Mr. Parker asked Mr. Morra, Building Commissioner, if the desired changes by the Historical Commission could take place if they only created Rules and Regulations. He added that this way, the commission could avoid coming up with a document quickly in order to have it reviewed at the next Town Meeting.

Mr. Morra responded by stating that it would not be recommended to focus on the Rules and Regulations since the changes are much broader than what can be covered without a change to the Bylaw. Mr. Toponce, staff representative for the Commission, added that the Rules and Regulations must still follow the Bylaw and cannot replace it. Ms. Brestrup, Planning Director, agreed the Bylaw would need to be changed to reflect the desired outcome.

Ms. Wald then requested the Commission move forward with the discussion on Article 13, and began to review the March 6, draft copy.

The group discussed Section 13.10 concerning the Purposes of the Commission and decided to combine the wording of 13.10 and 13.11. They also discussed the idea of removing the term "Archaeological" from the definitions, stating that perhaps archeological sites belong in its own section created at a later time. The "Massachusetts Cultural Resources Inventory System (MACRIS)" was also removed from the definitions. Ms. Marquardt made a motion to remove "Archeological" and "MACRIS" from the definitions and subsequent locations in the Bylaw, Mr. Romer seconded the motion which passed 6-0.

The group replaced MACRIS in Section 13.41 with the Town inventory list found in the Preservation Plan. The group voted on this change with Ms. Marquardt making a motion to replace MACRIS in the Bylaw with the Town Inventory, Ms. Lovett seconded the motion which passed 6-0.

The Commission reviewed other small errors, such as clarifications and grammar. Wording of the definition of “Significant Alteration” was also discussed in length and ultimately stated that alterations or removal without replacement of more than 25% of the total incorporated area would be considered significant.

The Commission also looked at the Procedure section and clarified the building permit review process, and added if important features are removed without replacement the application will need to go before the Commission.

Ms. Brestrup asked that in order to avoid confusion the reference to recognized local historic districts be removed since they will already go through the process with the Historic District Commission. The Commission agreed this removal was acceptable.

Mr. Bloom reintroduced the issue of a 12 or 18 month demolition delay. He believed that it would be more beneficial for the Town in helping to preserve important historic buildings. He also believed it would give people more time to find alternatives to demolition.

Mr. Parker stated that one argument to the 18 months was that it is considered anti-development and puts an unnecessary burden on the developer or property owner. He believed that 12 months would be better with the option of 18 months.

Mr. Bloom responded to Mr. Parkers comment by stating that it is not considered anti-development and should be considered a good preservation practice.

Ms. Marquardt asked what positive evidence is there for 18 months when often times the developer just waits it out.

Mr. Bloom stated that the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) considers the 18 month delay period as best practice and that several communities are going toward this.

Ms. Lovett commented that her opinion has now changed, knowing that MHC recommends the 18 month delay period as a best practice.

The Commission then discussed the idea of having 18 months with the option of reviewing the demolition at any time to release the delay period. They decided that this should be based on new data that was submitted or historical information that may impact the decision for the length of a delay.

Mr. Bloom made a motion to extend the demolition delay to 18 months with the option of lessening this time if new information is submitted that impacts the decision. Mr. Romer seconded this motion and it passed 4 yes, 1 no, 1 abstain.

Ms. Brestrup reminded the commission on March 21 at 7:00 PM, the Planning Board would be reviewing the Bylaw at a public hearing. She invited everyone to come and requested that Mr.

Toponce post this on the Town website as a public meeting since enough for a quorum would be present.

Ms. Wald then stated the Commission should meet after the Planning Board meeting to discuss any modifications the Planning Board may suggest. The group selected Monday, March 26 at 6:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM