

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, Brandon Toponce, Historical Commission Staff Representative
Meeting Date:	March 26, 2018
Time Started:	6:00 PM
Time Ended:	8:00 PM

AGENDA ITEMS

Minutes

After the Commission discussed the meeting minutes from February 26 and March 6, Mr. Toponce was asked to make correction and bring the minutes back to the Board at the next meeting for approval.

East Street School Presentation

Mr. John Horneck, Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee, presented the Committees intentions for the East Street School. He stated the building was originally built in 1893, yet over the years have received several modifications. Some of the uses have been a school, a book depository and now it is Town owned. If it is feasible, the Committee would like to pursue the building be turned into affordable housing. However, many issues with the building may hinder its reuse such as nearby wetlands, structural, and the high cost for renovation. Mr. Horneck stated that he doubts it will be possible and believed that it may need to be demolished.

Mr. Romer asked if the exterior remains unchanged.

Mr. Hornik responded that since the 1930s remodel the building exterior has essentially remained the same.

Ms. Marquardt added that if the building was in fact constructed during the late nineteenth century, it has been greatly altered

Ms. Wald asked if wetlands on the site had been addressed previously and if they were extensive to the area.

Mr. Hornik said the wetlands are found in the back of the property and could have an impact on future construction.

Ms. Wald thanked Mr. Horneck for an update on the site and stated that she would expect the Committee to come before the Historical Commission as the time gets closer to a final decision.

She also requested that as part of the future review, a plan be presented for the adaptive reuse of the building.

Thompson Stone

At the March 6, 2018 meeting, Mr. Romer expressed concern over a financial inaccuracy on the CPA funding report for the Thompson Stone. He requested staff find the reasoning behind the discrepancy of \$2,000 and report back to the Commission.

Mr. Toponce explained to the Commission that originally the Thompson Stone project was approved with a \$5,000 budget. The total cost and the amount submitted to the Town for reimbursement was \$2,788. This would have left the remaining amount to be \$2,212. Yet, the financial report has a remaining budget of \$297. He stated that he spoke with Holy Bowser, Assistant Comptroller, on the discrepancy. After researching the issue she notified him that there was a posting error and the accurate balance is \$2,212 and not the \$297. This project would be closed out and the money returned.

Mr. Romer, questioned how this could have happened.

Mr. Toponce stated that Ms. Bowser did not go into further detail on the mistake, only that it was now corrected. She did state the remaining amount could not be used for any other purpose and would therefore be closed out at the end of the 2018 fiscal year.

Article 13

Mr. Bloom reviewed a document created by the Massachusetts Historical Commission concerning the creation of a demolition delay bylaw. He mentioned the idea of structures being preferably preserved and believed this should be identified in Article 13.

Mr. Romer agreed with Mr. Bloom yet was concerned that it may be too late to add substantive changes if they wanted the document to go before Town Meeting.

Ms. Marquardt added that by making this addition it would change the entire review structure.

Mr. Bloom recommended to the group that they not pursue going to Town Meeting until they are able to do more research on what other communities have done.

Ms. Lovett believed that this new concept of preferably preserved would articulate the streetscape rather than locking the review process into one concept.

Mr. Bloom added that in return for allowing the HC to have input into design, developers could have demolition delays on historical properties waived or, if imposed, lifted. Instead of a delay acting just as a punitive measure, it would provide developers with an incentive to do contextual design. He referred to an example on page 38 in the Mass Historical Commission guidebook on demolition delays and ordinances.

Mr. Romer believed it was a good idea to pull back and Mr. Parker also agreed.

The Commission requested Mr. Toponce research communities that have a demolition bylaw and return and report the findings.

Mr. Bloom made a motion to withdraw the amendments of Article 13 from the Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Parker seconded and the motion passed 6-0

The group clarified with staff that they would like to see more detail on the term “preferably preserved” and how it is used in other bylaws. They suggested that a matrix would be helpful and that a running list of items that are the most important be created.

Election of Chair

Ms. Marquardt stated that a chair for the group has never been formally voted on. The past several months Ms. Wald has been known as the acting chair. She proposed that the group vote on Ms. Wald becoming the official chair. Ms. Lovett seconded, and the motion was passed 5-0 with Ms. Wald abstaining.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 23

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM