

## AMHERST HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

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

**Staff Present:** Brandon Toponce, Historical Commission Staff Representative

**Meeting Date:** June 12, 2018

**Time Started:** 6:00 PM

**Time Ended:** 8:45 PM

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### AGENDA ITEMS

#### Minutes

The Commission reviewed and approved the May 7 meeting minutes without any changes.

#### 462 Main Street, Demolition of Garage

The Commission reviewed the application for the 1930s garage located in the rear of the property. The group commented on the use as being commercial and how the garage, after being demolished would become two parking stalls.

Ms. Marquardt said it was a shame to see the garage demolished for two parking spots, yet believed that perhaps it was sentimentality.

Ms. Wald mentioned that in looking at the guidelines (Section 13.4, of the Zoning Bylaw), the structure does not meet them in relation to historically significant. She then made a motion to hold a public hearing.

Mr. Romer seconded the motion and it failed to pass with a 0 – 5 vote and one abstention.

#### Review of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) Projects

Mr. Toponce stated that many of the projects have been submitted in the past several weeks, yet the last remaining project is to document barns and outbuildings. The PVPC needs assistance from the Commission to narrow down a list of outbuildings from 160 to 100, in order to begin the documentation process. He also mentioned the deadline of June 30, 2018, for all projects to be complete. He believed this date may be difficult to reach. His suggestion was to ask for an extended time period from the Amherst Accounting office to allow this project to be completed.

Ms. Lovett added that most of the items the PVPC have been working on preceded everyone on the current Commission.

Ms. Wald detailed several options in selecting 100, a subcommittee of the members could be created in order to work down the list. Another idea was for staff to look at the list and make a

determination of which ones should be selected. Finally, the Commission could have them address the first 100 on the list.

Ms. Marquardt believed that taking the first 100 was a good idea

Ms. Lovett, noticed that many of the properties appear to be in the local historic district and perhaps that's where the group should start.

Mr. Parker added that not only looking first in the local districts, but the National as well.

Ms. Wald suggested they go with the first 100 in National and Local Historic Districts and if there is not enough, than to go with the first 100. She also agreed with staff that a letter should be sent to extend the time to September 1, 2018. The group agreed this was the best decision.

### **West Cemetery Amended Contract**

Mr. Parker asked staff to explain what the difference was between the work PVPC conducted at the North and South Cemetery and what MCC was doing at the West Cemetery.

Mr. Toponce explained, MCC was doing the actual repairs to the stones, while PVPC was documenting the stones of the North and South Cemeteries for future repairs.

Ms. Wald explained a new contract was signed that added new stones to the repair work by MCC. She made a motion for approval of the selected additional stones. Ms. Marquardt, seconded the motion and it passed 6-0.

### **Future Maintenance of the West Cemetery**

Ms. Wald explained that Mr. Romer wanted to distribute a memo to the Board earlier, yet since it had suggested motions in the memo she believed it would be more in line with open meeting law to have the item on the agenda.

Mr. Romer read from his memo which concerned the ongoing maintenance of the cemetery headstones. He suggested conservation efforts through the Department of Public Works should be budgeted by the Town each year. He believed that funding with CPAC may be uncertain if the Committee places the headstone repair as a last priority.

Mr. Romer made a motion that the Historical Commission begin discussion with Town officials with the goal of making care and repair of the headstones in the Town cemeteries a regularly budgeted item, as opposed to having such repairs dependent on allocation of CPA funds. Such repairs should be done in consultation with the Historical Commission.

Mr. Bloom seconded the motion and it passed 6-0

Ms. Lovett agreed this was a good idea and should be pursued.

**CPA Accounting Thompson Memorial**

Mr. Romer requested time to read another memo to the Commission concerning the Thompson Memorial funds. He stated that the commission has a responsibility to see how CPA funds for historic preservation projects are spent. He believed that the recent oversight of the mishandling of funds was a good example of not relying on the Planning Department to carry out the oversight. He believed that if he would have not looked at the accounts, it may have never been found.

Mr. Romer made a motion that the Planning Department provide to the Historical Commission (at least every six months) a financial report on each Historical Commission project, showing the total allocation, the expenses to date (amount, purpose, and payee for each payment), and the funds remaining.

Mr. Bloom seconded the motion

Ms. Wald explained the error came from the accounting office being one number off from another account. After it was found the error was corrected.

The motion then passed 5-0 and 1 abstain

**Bylaw Review**

Mr. Bloom read over a report he created that reviewed the highlights of the Town of Newton's Demolition Delay Bylaw. He also suggested other edits such as changing the time frame of a building considered historic from 50 years to 75 years, and the addition of a section on demolition by neglect.

The group discussed the inclusion of an expiration of the approval for a demolition at two years and the demolition approval as non-transferrable.

Mr. Parker requested that at a later date the group discuss the commission review process, such as when a project would go to a public hearing, or be reviewed by Town Staff for approval.

Ms. Wald added that if clear guidelines have been determined then it should be able to go directly to a public hearing and not require a preliminary review by the Commission.

The group then discussed which listing they should use to determine something being a significant structure, MACRIS or the Amherst Significant site list.

Ms. Marquardt believed that both lists should be reviewed side by side to see what properties are missing, or have been demolished. She volunteered to help with this project and requested staff send her both listings.

Ms. Lovett suggested the Bylaw state that MACRIS be used until a local listing is created and approved. Which the group believed was the best option.

Mr. Bloom then reviewed the concept of demolition by neglect and believed the Town of Newton had an excellent example that could be reviewed. He also brought up the idea of creating design guidelines and requiring developers to show what they are going to build in place of the historic structure.

Mr. Toponce stated the Local Historic District Commission is also looking at design guidelines for the two Local Historic Districts, which he believed was the more appropriate location for design guidelines.

Ms. Marquardt suggested that design of new buildings is already being taken care of by the Design Review Board and if the Commission starts reviewing the design of a structure it would be overstepping their bounds.

The group reviewed documentation for those structures that were to be demolished. Some in the group felt the documentation should be minimal, just enough to keep a record of what was once at a location. Others believed it should be much more extensive with drawings and historical narratives.

Mr. Romer believed that a requirement of extensive documentation would be a burden on property owners.

Ms. Wald asked the question if the group wanted documentation for every project

Mr. Parker answered by stating the group could require full documentation when it was needed and was not completed previously.

The group agreed documentation was something they wanted to include in the Bylaw.

Ms. Wald believed that the next meetings on the Bylaw should focus more specifically on each topic. She also believed it would be best to first create an outline.

Mr. Parker volunteered to work on an outline with Mr. Toponce

### **Commission Members Term Ending**

Ms. Wald stated that it was the last meeting for Steve Bloom, Laura Lovett, and Bob Romer. She thanked them for their service and wished them the best in their future endeavors. She also added that the Commission will need to have two new members in order to have a quorum plus one additional member as per the requirements of the Charter.

### **Adjournment**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, August 1, at 6:00 PM. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM