

AMHERST HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Members Present:	Jane Wald - Chair, Patricia J. Auth, Robin Fordham, Jan Marquardt, Ted Parker
Staff Present:	Brandon Toponce, Historical Commission Staff Representative
Meeting Date:	August 30, 2018
Time Started:	6:00 PM
Time Ended:	9:15 PM

AGENDA ITEMS

Minutes

The Commission reviewed and approved the June 12 meeting minutes without any changes.

Welcome New Commission Members

Ms. Wald welcomed Patricia J. Auth and Robin Fordham as new members of the Amherst Historical Commission.

Each member introduced themselves and shared a brief description of their experience, interests and why they have chosen to be on the Commission.

Ms. Wald explained that the Bylaw requires the Commission have seven members, yet currently the Charter only allows a quorum, plus one member. Once the Town Council takes their position, the Historical Commission will once again have seven members.

Mr. Toponce conducted an orientation on what the role of the Commission is and the purpose of historic preservation.

Ms. Wald requested that all Commissioners be given the same booklet that was created by staff for the new members as part of the orientation.

51 East Pleasant Street, Preliminary Review

David Lewis, who represents the property owner, gave a brief history of the building as being built in 1946 for the purpose of overflow garage space for Row's Garage Inc., located at 37 East Pleasant Street. Row's eventually moved the entirety of the Business to the building at 51 East Pleasant, and added the use of vehicle sales. Over time the garage closed and the site eventually became a Bertucci's Restaurant.

Mr. Lewis added that the property has been in the family for years, yet they did not have many records on the building.

Ms. Auth asked the applicant if the lot would remain vacant.

Mr. Lewis explained the redevelopment of the site would be in stages. First, this building would be removed and a new building constructed. Next, the landowner would file for another demolition permit for the building located at 37 East Pleasant.

Seeing that a member of the public was in attendance, Ms. Wald asked if he would like to speak. Mr. Michael Birtwistle responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Birtwistle expressed his concern on the building being demolished, stating the purpose of the demolition delay is to look at a new use for historic structures. He believed the building in question would be the perfect site for a performance space. By granting the delay, it would allow time for the Town and groups that would find this space useful, an opportunity to consider this option.

Mr. Lewis disagreed with the public comment by stating that others have mentioned this idea, but the location would have parking issues and the site is worth far more than the building.

Ms. Marquardt said that with this project being in the center of Town and so well known, the project was likely to concern many people, and therefore a public hearing should be held.

Mr. Parker asked the Commission if the proposed building were located in another location would the group still be inclined to hold a public hearing? He believed the reuse was not under the Commissions purview and was up to the owners. He also added that holding a hearing may be prudent and in the best interest of the Commission.

Ms. Auth commented that if the building is kept, it will help preserve the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Parker made a motion to hold a public hearing on the demolition delay of 51 East Pleasant. The motion was seconded by Ms. Marquardt and the Commission voted 5-0 to hold the Public Hearing.

The Commission selected Wednesday, September 12, at 7:00 PM for the Public Hearing.

West Cemetery film proposal

Ms. Wald stated that a new comedy film on Emily Dickinson, starring Molly Shannon, has been created and the film maker would like to show the movie in the West Cemetery, near the Town Tomb, around the time of the block party. She and other Town officials visited the West Cemetery to see if the idea would be workable. The Police Chief did not have any issues with the proposal, Public Works also believed it would be feasible and Paul Bockelman, Town Manager, did not see any major issues. She also explained that Mr. Bockelman gives the final approval, yet he wanted to hear from the commission.

Ms. Wald recused herself from the rest of the discussion and the group nominated Ms. Marquardt to act as chair for this item.

Ms. Marquardt expressed her concern that more damage could occur with all the people going through the cemetery.

Ms. Auth questioned how the activity would be organized.

Mr. Parker believed it was dangerous with some of the stones possibly collapsing.

Ms. Auth also stated that it could be a liability concern for the Town.

Mr. Parker made a motion to recommend to the Town Manager that the movie not be shown in the West Cemetery, due to the fragile nature of the monuments and as a restoration project is underway. Ms. Marquardt seconded the motion and it passed 4-0.

Review Outline for Article 13

Ms. Wald and Mr. Parker explained the background of Article 13 to the new Commission members.

Mr. Parker asked how the Commission was going to conduct this process.

Ms. Wald suggested a small group be organized and then work on two sections at a time. This would then be presented and discussed at a meeting with the entire group. She suggested that Article 13 remain an open topic on each agenda.

The Commission decided on Mr. Parker, Ms. Fordham and Mr. Toponce be part of this small group.

Ms. Marquardt also gave an update on her work with creating a master list of historic sites. She suggested that MACRIS be used for now since the Town inventory is missing and she only had the supplemental list at the end of the Preservation Plan for comparison. The Commission agreed this was a good decision.

CPA Updates

Mr. Toponce went over the CPA tracking sheet and updated the Commission on where each of the items are in relation to progress of work and payments.

Adjournment

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, September 12, at 7:00 PM. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM