

**AMHERST HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Members Present: Jane Wald - Chair, Robin Fordham, Jan Marquardt, Ted Parker
Staff Present: Brandon Toponce, Historical Commission Staff Representative
Meeting Date: September 12, 2018
Time Started: 6:00 PM
Time Ended: 9:15 PM

AGENDA ITEMS

South Common Bandstand

Mr. John Kuhn who represented the Amherst Business Improvement District (BID), explained that their group was working on holding a design competition for the South Common Bandstand. He said the committee would have seven members and one of the members would come from the Historical Commission.

Mr. Parker expressed a desire to be on the jury

Ms. Wald made a motion for Mr. Parker to be on the design jury, Ms. Fordham seconded the motion which passed 4-0.

Public Hearing, 51 East Pleasant Street

Ms. Wald welcomed David Lewis who represented the applicant to the Public Hearing. She explained the process of reviewing an application as described in Section 13 of the Zoning Bylaw.

Mr. Lewis stated the building in question was a basic utilitarian brick structure constructed in 1946. He also stated the building has had several changes, including the filling in of windows and doors, and the alteration to front entry way.

Ms. Fordham suggested that perhaps the building would appear more historic if it had less alterations.

Ms. Wald opened the public hearing.

Mr. Michael Birtwistle requested the Commission place the delay on the property. He stated that Section 13.1 of the Bylaw discourages demolition and promotes adaptive reuse. He believed that the site had geographic importance as being close to Kendrick Park. Granting the delay would allow the Town to look at the space for a new community use. He believed that because of the shape of the building and the clear span of the ceiling, it would make a good

performing arts center. Mr. Birtwistle explained that he was a retired producer and may know people that might be interested in looking at the space.

Mr. Lewis said that holding a development up for a hypothetical project that may not be feasible is unfair. He stated that suggesting the structure is geographically important because of the park across the street is not accurate, since the park is much newer than the building. Mr. Lewis said the property is worth a lot of money and believed it would be an uphill battle to reuse the building for a performing art space.

Ms. Wald closed the public hearing and reviewed Section 13.4 of the Zoning Bylaw with the Commission:

13.40 It is listed on, or is within an area listed on, the National Register of Historic Places, or is the subject of a pending application for listing on said National Register, or;

➤ **Commission Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**

13.41 The Commission determines that the structure meets one or more of the following criteria:

13.410 **Historical Importance.** The Structure meets the criteria of historical importance if it:

13.4100 Has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the Town of Amherst, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the Nation, or;

➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**

13.4101 Is the site of an historic event, or;

➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**

13.4102 Is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society, or;

➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**

13.4103 Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.

➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**

13.411 **Architectural Importance.** The structure meets the criteria of architectural importance if it:

13.4110 Portrays the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style, or;

➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**

- 13.4111 Embodies those distinguished characteristics of an architectural type, or;
➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 3-1, YES**
- 13.4112 Is the work of an architect, master builder or craftsman whose individual work has influenced the development of the Town, or;
➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**
- 13.4113 Contains elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represents a significant innovation.
➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, NO**
- 13.412 **Geographic Importance.** The structure meets the criteria of geographic importance if:
- 13.4120 The site is part of, or related to, a square, park, or other distinctive area, or;
➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 3-1, YES**
- 13.4121 The structure, as to its unique location or its physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, village center, or the community as a whole.
➤ **Commissioner Vote/Response: 4-0, YES**

Ms. Wald stated that since the vote consisted of three areas the Commission voted “yes”, the building would be considered a significant structure. She added that the Commission has two choices, to vote for a demolition delay, or to grant the demolition.

Ms. Marquardt believed the building was significant since the structure is iconic of the car culture, and part of the structures distinctive characteristic is the lack of ornamentation. She added it might be detrimental to the neighborhood to have it demolished and agreed that more time is needed to explore possibilities of reusing the building in the overall future development.

Ms. Wald said that she would like to see alternatives to demolition and believed that it was significant to its geographic place and its minimalistic architectural style.

Mr. Parker believed the commission should look at previous approvals that were granted by the Commission, and he used the example of other demolitions that occurred on North Pleasant. He posed the question on whether the cultural and historic fabric would be detrimentally changed.

Ms. Fordham said that she believed it would be detrimental since there is not a lot of this type of architecture left.

Ms. Marquardt made a motion, that in accordance to Section 13.36 of the Zoning Bylaw, a demolition delay be placed on the building located at 51 East Pleasant.

The Commission discussed various conditions, yet believed these conditions were being placed unfairly on the property owner and therefore did not impose conditions.

Ms. Wald, recommended that a meeting be setup with the Town Manager, Mr. Birtwistle, Mr. Steve Schreiber, and two members of the Historical Commission to review possible reuses for the building.

Ms. Marquardt added that if nothing can be done, the applicant can return to the Commission and have the delay lifted, yet allowing the delay gives an opportunity for alternatives to be explored.

Ms. Wald requested that staff place this item on the agenda in 3 months to review the progress of the applicant and options for reuse. She then reminded the Commission of the motion on the Table. Ms. Fordham, seconded the motion and the demolition delay passed 3-1

Adjournment

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, October 3, at 6:00 PM. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM