

Meeting Minutes
Amherst Historical Commission
Wednesday, June 23, 2021
6:30 PM

Present: Robin Fordham, Hetty Startup, Jan Marquardt, Jane Wald (Chair), Pat Auth (joined at 6:35pm)
Staff: Ben Breger, Planner
Guests: Kyle Wilson (Archipelago Investments)

Called to order at 6:30pm

1. Announcements

Breger announced that meetings will continue over Zoom for the foreseeable future

Breger announced that 8 of the 12 Writers Walk sign are installed.

2. Discussing impacts to West Cemetery of proposed 11 East Pleasant building

Breger described that since the site visit, Archipelago Investments have revised their plans and resubmitted proposal to Planning Board. Similar to previous submission with some changes to interior and now a 10' setback from Cemetery.

Breger summarized a conversation with Alan Snow and Chris Brestrup. Alan described that the metal fence and property line don't directly align which creates maintenance issues, should take opportunity to align fence and property line, which would involve removal of trees. Alan also feels that there will be damage to roots of trees independent of fence issue due to construction. Identified 3 trees closer to 1 East Pleasant as nice specimen trees that should be encouraged to be saved. Role of Historical Commission is informal and advisory, no mechanism for official review, but can offer suggestions to Planning Board which will grant any approvals for project. Historical Commission can put together suggestions in a memo for Planning Board in terms of border treated during construction (trees, fence, replanting of trees, and permit for waiver on setback).

Kyle Wilson (Archipelago) described there is a grade change between the historic West Cemetery and the asphalt area of about 5' and this revised plan attempts to reduce this grade change and add plantings along the 11 EP property line. The existing structures are closer to 2 feet of the property line and we are proposing 10' setback.

A discussion ensued regarding the exact property line, the possibility of moving the fence to the property line, and adding trees to the Town side of the relocated fence. Marquardt felt a 20' setback

was essential given the proximity of graves to this area and to allow for large shade trees to grow. Wilson agreed they'd be willing to work with the Town to improve the view from West Cemetery but felt that the 20' setback would impede this development and set a precedent for future developments. Auth commented that 10' setback is about as close as she could imagine the building being located to West Cemetery.

Public comment, including correspondence submitted

Hilda Greenbaum - concern over increasing use of "non conformities." Residential apartment building is more intense use than retail, concerned over the "use" being increased. Encouraged Historical Commission to consider if change is substantially more detrimental than what exists currently.

Startup commented on the significant historical importance of Cemetery and this part of Amherst and the Commission should do everything they can to preserve the boundaries, acknowledging that a 20' setback would be appropriate.

The Historical Commission developed the following recommendations for transmittal to the Planning Board:

- A strong preference for a minimum 10' setback from the West Cemetery property line to the building and support for a 20' setback.
- The black metal fence should be relocated to align with the property line to more accurately demarcate the boundary and make clear who has responsibility for maintenance.
- No trees should be planted along the back edge of the building on the building-side of the fence. Instead, a new line of trees should be planted along the cemetery-side of the fence. If trees were planted on both sides of the fence, they could grow into one another and cause issues in the long-term. The Commission felt it made more sense to establish a new line of shade trees along the cemetery-side of the relocated fence.
- Every effort should be made to protect the southernmost 2 trees on the cemetery-side of the fence nearest One East Pleasant.
- Archipelago should help the Town of Amherst defray the costs involved in relocating the bordering fence and in planting a new row of large shade trees along the portion of the western edge of the cemetery abutting 11 and 15 East Pleasant Street

Fordham moved to approve the recommendations listed above. Marquardt seconded. Vote passed unanimously (5-0)

3. Review and approval of the Jones Library Preservation Restriction

Breger described that when a project is funded with CPA money for historic preservation, most often a Preservation Restriction is required to accept that money. The Jones Library received CPA funds in 2010 and the PR has been slowly developing over the past decade. The Historical Commission, on behalf of the Town, enforces the Preservation Restriction and must accept the PR, which must be done via vote.

The PR recognized the 1927 library building and focuses on the original building. The PR restricts major changes to the exterior of the building and there are also changes that can be made with Historical Commission approval. Marquardt and Auth stated they had looked through the document and saw no red flags or issues.

Marquardt noted her name was spelled wrong on the signature page.

Commission members indicated their approval of the document and willingness to sign.

Public comment

Letter from Sarah McKee - points to address before final version approved

Sarah McKee - McKee would suggest that there is a tense issue (work to be done vs. work that is done), and has looked forward to this being finalized for over a decade.

Hilda Greenbaum - question regarding plexiglass canopy in current project, would that be allowable under preservation restriction? With regard to new construction, would Historical Commission have design review over new addition?

Wald replied yes canopy would be subject to approval if permanent. Regarding the addition, Commission would not have formal role with design decisions. Commission role would relate to public view of the original building (exterior facades) and impact of removal of newer addition on original structure.

Marquardt made a motion to approve the Preservation Restriction pursuant to the Library Trustees and Planning Department's final revisions. Auth seconded the motion. Vote passed unanimously 5-0

4. Finalizing the Bylaw for the Preservation of Historically Significant Structures

Breger described that he had presented the new bylaw to the Planning Board and the CRC in the past few weeks. He gave an overview of the changes and helped the groups understand that these changes have been made over a longer process with input from staff and the Historical Commission.

Commission members inquired whether there should be an appeals process in the new Bylaw. Breger described that it might make sense to lay out a process with a third-party arbiter, as is the process in the Local Historic Districts, or decisions could simply be appealed to court. Members discussed that an abutter is likely to appeal if a delay is not issued and thus would need to file the appeal immediately to stop the issuance of the permit. After discussion, Commission members were leaning towards removing language about the appeals process in the new bylaw and allowing the process to play out in court.

Commission members then discussed how to prepare for future presentations to the Planning Board and CRC regarding the new bylaw. Marquardt and Wald were willing to co-present at upcoming meetings and would work on updating the slideshow'

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5. Approval of Minutes – March 25, 2021, April 21, 2021 May 19, 2021,

Marquardt moved to approve three sets of minutes listed above. Fordham seconded. Vote passed unanimously 5-0.

6. Update on efforts to preserve historic buildings along North Pleasant St.

Update that the LHDC had voted to begin studying the expansion of the Lincoln-Sunset District. Auth and Startup will help out the LHDC however they can. Auth had already downloaded the Form B's for many of the properties.

7. Next Meeting Date

Next meeting set for July 13, 2021.

Startup voted to adjourn. Fordham seconded. Vote passed 5-0 at 9:25pm