

**Amherst Historical Commission**  
**January 9, 2008**  
**Second Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**  
**7:15 p.m.**

**Present:** Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Lynda Faye, Louis Greenbaum, Michael Hanke, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald. **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning. **Visitors:** Elizabeth Armstrong, Honoré David, Libby Klekowski (Amherst Woman's Club), Vince O'Connor

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m., introduced himself, and asked the Commission members and guests to introduce themselves. He asked for announcements, and for consideration of the minutes of December 11, 2007. Ms. Faye moved approval, Mr. Denit seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Wald invited the Amherst Woman's Club representatives to present their proposal, and described how the Historical Commission works with CPAC to vet proposals. Ms. Klekowski introduced Ms. David to talk about the architectural importance of the Amherst Woman's Club house. Ms. David spoke about William Fenno Pratt's work as an architect, and the many examples of his work around Amherst. Ms. Klekowski spoke on the history of the Amherst Woman's Club, founded in 1893. Leonard Hills built the house that his son Dwight inherited. Alice Maude Smith married Dwight, became active in the Amherst Woman's Club which then had no home. When Dwight died in 1917, she engaged in World War I service as a nurse in France. She came back in 1919, and in 1922 left for a trip to California; on the way back she jumped overboard and was never found. Alice left the house to the Amherst Woman's Club along with a \$10,000 legacy, subject to her conditions. After some debate, the club decided to accept the house with the condition that it be kept in perpetuity, and raised some funds to improve the property, but by the 1970s the same debate recurred about whether the club could afford to keep the house. An Alice Maude Hills Society was founded in recent years to raise additional funds from the membership for maintenance.

Ms. Sharpe raised a question about preservation work needs at the house; Ms. Klekowski responded on the carriage house, and the porch on the northeast corner of the house that needs shoring up. The house also needs work on the emergency exit area on Triangle Street. She emphasized that the Club is just asking for support for critical needs. Ms. Faye asked whether the current requests, to the Historical Commission and other sources of funds, would complete immediate repair needs or whether there is another phase of work to be done. Mr. Denit posed a question about the carriage house roof, which is described as in need of work, but not included in the current request to the Historical Commission. Ms. Faye rephrased the question of whether the Club has a long-term plan for its buildings. Mr. Greenbaum extolled the virtues of the house, the Amherst Woman's Club and their work. Ms. Klekowski described the state of the house when the Club inherited it, and noted that they have some of the original furniture.

Mr. Tucker posed questions about the Amherst Woman's Club and other historic women's organizations in Amherst, asking specifically whether the Club has been used as a focal point for other research. While it has not, the representatives agreed that it could be and cited some examples of women's work that could be tied to the AWC's role. Mr. Tucker also asked about other potentials of the facility, and noted the expectation of an historic preservation restriction in exchange for financial support. Ms. Faye commented on the implications of a preservation restriction for any subsequent changes to the buildings. The Commission got responses to its questions and continued a cordial conversation with the Amherst Woman's Club representatives about their plans and projects and the potential uses of the building. With thanks from the Commission, the Amherst Woman's Club representatives bid their adieux.

Mr. Wald moved the discussion to consideration of CPA policy. Mr. Greenbaum observed that support for the Amherst Woman's Club was a "no brainer" but Ms. Faye emphasized the need for some standards before making decisions. Mr. Hanke said he doesn't think standards are all that

important in making decisions, but useful in rationalizing those decisions. The Commission proceeded to a discussion of standards and of other towns' policies. Ms. Faye and others raised a series of considerations about what is and isn't intended within the CPA act. Comments from Mr. O'Connor on preservation and affordable housing encouraged Ms. Carpenter to expound on barns and the possible convergence of housing, preservation, and energy conservation opportunities. Despite Ms. Faye's objections to funding publications, Ms. Sharpe advocated interpretation, and the opportunity for educational/interpretative publications.

Mr. Wald asked for a series of straw polls to determine whether the Commission were reaching consensus on key aspects of criteria, standards and policies. In broad summary, the Commission agreed that yes, it supports capital projects; yes, it supports public education (*i.e.*, publications, except for Ms. Faye). Does the Commission limit its possible contributions to private projects, or deal with them on an *ad hoc* basis as they arise? Mr. O'Connor raised thoughtful issues about the possible overlap between housing and preservation. It appears that the Commission would like to be *ad hoc*, but may not be able to. Mr. O'Connor commented on CPAC, what might be available for the Historical Commission initiatives, and the fact that housing and open space preservation may have more outside sources of support than historic preservation.

Ms. Faye moved adoption of the Belchertown criteria for applications for CPAC funding; Mr. Hanke seconded the motion. Ms. Sharpe raised a question about the reference to public education; others suggested that paragraph 7 of the Belchertown criteria might cover those. Mr. Tucker made some editorial suggestions to make the language of the criteria better fit Amherst. As amended, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. O'Connor commented on the Amherst Woman's Club proposal. Mr. Wald requested another straw poll on the proposals the Historical Commission has received and members responded: Farms publication maybe; UUS windows yes, the Amherst Woman's Club yes.

In new business the Commission noted Mr. Brassord's letter about Amherst College plans. The bundle of material on UMass issues led to some discussion. Mr. Wald noted that the Massachusetts Historical Commission has invited the Amherst Historical Commission to send representatives to participate in a hearing in Boston next Tuesday to review the mitigation proposal. Mr. Denit suggested addition of a proposal to save the silo of the stucco barn to the mitigation proposal.

Mr. O'Connor noted that the Conservation Commission and CPAC meeting schedules would allow the Historical Commission's proposals to reach CPAC before conservation items.

Mr. Denit moved adjournment and being seconded by Ms. Faye the meeting adjourned at 9:51p.m.

Next meeting: January 14, 7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter  
Clerk