

Amherst Historical Commission
January 14, 2008
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:30 p.m.

Present: Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Lynda Faye, Louis Greenbaum, Michael Hanke, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald. **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning. **Visitors:** Roy Rosenblatt, Community Development Block Grant manager, Vince O'Connor

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. Ms. Sharpe moved and Ms. Faye seconded a motion to approve the minutes of January 9; the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Wald asked members of the commission and Mr. Rosenblatt to introduce themselves, and invited Mr. Rosenblatt to present his request to the commission.

Roy Rosenblatt provided a brief history of the North Amherst School, which houses the Survival Center and HeadStart program. He explained a possible application for funding for restoration of the site recapitulating the history of the school and a review of the building's condition. He seeks a letter of support from the Historical Commission. Conditions of the grant would require at least five years additional use for services supporting low-income individuals. The town currently has a long term leases with the tenants. The school is a contributing structure in a National Historic Register district. Ms. Faye observed that there didn't seem to be anything about interior changes. Mr. Tucker said there was no design yet, just the application needs for mini-development block grant and pointed out that the building is already accessible. Mr. Hanke suggested that the cost estimate was high, and Mr. Rosenblatt replied that they simply had Teagno draw up some figures to work from. Ms. Sharpe asked when the block grant is likely to be received; Mr. Rosenblatt said in June, and there would be some processes and permitting after that. He then hopes for architects work by February 2009, work to start in June, and to finish in about four months.

Mr. Wald thanked Mr. Rosenblatt, and the commission moved on to its primary business, the FY2009 budget. Mr. Tucker presented draft Historical Commission/CPA criteria based on discussion at the previous meeting. Ms. Faye began the discussion by questioning the use of "shall" in the first sentence, leading to lengthy exchanges on language. Mr. Greenbaum expressed concern about the meeting agenda and the necessary CPA conversation.

Mr. Tucker reviewed the draft FY 09 budget that he had distributed. Ms. Faye asked about an item for a barn/outbuilding inventory. After some discussion, there appeared to be consensus that that item might be integrated with the Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning matching grant to complete the inventory of historic structures in Amherst.

The commission returned to discussion of the Amherst Woman's Club, Unitarian Universalist Society, and farm publication requests. Mr. O'Connor asked a question about roofing materials for the carriage house, and whether they might use slate, shingle or simulated slate. Mr. Hanke, Ms. Faye and Ms. Sharpe engaged in a conversation about the meaning and application of a preservation restriction on the property. Mr. O'Connor offered some suggestions on what the Historical Commission might say to the Amherst Woman's Club, and what CPAC might do in the future if there were an additional request for support from the Amherst Woman's Club.

Mr. Wald requested a motion on the proposal; Ms. Faye moved to approve the proposal from the Amherst Woman's Club, Mr. Hanke seconded the motion; which passed by a vote of 6 to 0, with Ms. Sharpe abstaining. Ms. Faye pointed out that the Historical Commission doesn't craft a preservation restriction; the Woman's Club has to do that. Some discussion followed on the scope of a restriction and whether it would apply to the carriage house only or the whole property. This proposal is only for the carriage house, so a restriction would only be on that structure. The commission noted the possible use of existing funds for a structure survey, after which the Club could come back to the Historical Commission to fund additional preservation work.

The Unitarian Universalist Society windows proposal had previously been discussed at some length. Ms. Carpenter moved and Mr. Denit seconded a motion to support a commitment of \$40,000 to the Unitarian Universalist Society for repairs to the Tiffany window. In ensuing discussion, Ms. Sharpe questioned Mr. Hanke about his reluctance to support the motion. He replied that his concerns extended to the building and whether the Unitarian Universalist Society might want to move, but conceded that with a preservation restriction his questions should be answered. The motion passed unanimously.

The Amherst farms publication had also been discussed at earlier meetings. Ms. Faye moved that the Historical Commission not support the publication proposal; Mr. Denit seconded the motion. Further discussion raised a number of pros and cons. Ms. Sharpe provided a good description of what the book could offer, but others were less enthusiastic about it as history, and noted that a revised proposal had not been received. Mr. Denit called the question; four members were in favor of the motion, one opposed, one abstained, and one recused herself (Ms. Sharpe).

The commission held some further discussion of possible FY09 budget inclusions and exclusions including items for signs, publications, and historic register nominations. Although deliberations on final recommendations were incomplete, there seemed to be sufficient agreement on some key items to give Mr. Greenbaum a preliminary outline for the scheduled CPAC meeting.

Mr. Denit called attention to the proposed UMass mitigation agreement and the meeting scheduled to discuss the University's building plans.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 4, at 7:15 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter, Clerk