

Amherst Historical Commission Meeting, January 22, 2007
Second Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

Present: Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Michael Hanke, Edith MacMullen, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald; **Absent:** Lynda Faye; **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning; **Guest:** James Brassard

Ms. MacMullen called the meeting to order at 7:21 p.m. The minutes of the meeting of January 8 were reviewed; Ms. Sharpe moved approval of the minutes, Mr. Denit seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

Ms. MacMullen received a letter from Town Manager Larry Shaffer about moving at least two of the Civil War plaques back to Town Hall, perhaps to the Town Room. He has in mind the title plaque and list of the sacred dead; other panels list all who served. The Select Board had considered putting the plaques on the Gates Lot; this could still be a temporary arrangement. Members of the Commission agreed that it does seem as though they could come back where they started. Ms. Sharpe commented on the history of these kinds of memorials and made special note of Amherst's black soldiers, some of whom are buried in West Cemetery. Commission members made some suggestions on a possible rededication, publicity, any tie-in to 250th anniversary. They also discussed what sort of accompanying information should be posted, and who should do the reinstallation. Ms. MacMullen suggests asking Larry to meet with the Commission to discuss next steps at the February 12 meeting. Mr. Hanke spoke about interpretation of the plaques and what documentation could be done. Ms. Sharpe asked about and received an assignment to do some additional background research on the dedication of the plaques to see who paid for them and any other details.

The Commission continued its meeting with a presentation from James Brassard, director of facilities and planning at Amherst College regarding the Lord The Jeffrey Inn. Mr. Brassard is working with a committee on improvements to the The Jeff and its facilities and services. Estimates are that it would take about a \$5M project to rehabilitate and bring The Jeff up to code. Mr. Brassard suggests that the project must have other paybacks to make the rehabilitation worthwhile. Amherst College took the feasibility study to Newport Collaborative architects who specialize in hospitality facilities and approach projects with a preservation perspective. The project could be eligible for historic tax credits; Amherst College is working with Newport Collaborative to obtain Historic Register listing. Mr. Brassard implies that listing would have some implications for nature of rehabilitation. Amherst is also considering expansion of the inn; it has 48 rooms now, and on many weekends could serve larger numbers; expansion by twenty rooms would enhance the viability of facility. Expansion would be consistent with the current structure and indistinguishable from it.

The Lord Jeff dates from late 1920s when the Amherst Inn Corp, a group of alumni, created it. It was funded by the sale of shares to alums. The college, leaseholders and third parties have operated it. The only major renovation was in the 1970s, mainly to the kitchens and guest rooms. Mr. Tucker noted that the Inn dates from the same period as the Jones and Munson libraries. Mr. Brassard provided an overview of drawings, the current structure, and remodeling ideas. Plans may include razing one house east of The Jeff on Spring Street; there are two other houses between The Jeff and the Alumni parking lot. Plans could include a seasonal tented structure roughly between The Jeff and Alumni House. Plans also include potential retail space on Spring Street, parking space, function/banquet area, and a restaurant as separate experience from Inn, probably as a leasehold operation. Mr. Brassard presented more detail on interior and exterior plans; guest rooms and suites, roof lines, fenestration, etc. Mr. Hanke said he likes the design effort to turn structure toward street. Mr. Hanke and Mr. Denit both think it is a great idea to use this building. Ms. MacMullen previously expressed appreciation to Mr. Brassard for Amherst College's design efforts. Ms. Sharpe, Mr. Wald also indicated that they like it. Mr. Brassard is working with the Amherst DPW and others on joint project to deal with roads and drainage issues.

Commission members expressed some concern about the fate of the adjacent house. Mr. Brassard says it will be investigated; he doesn't have a lot of history on the house at present. Mr. Tucker raised a question about changing lot lines on the adjacent properties to make some of the planning easier, especially with regard to parking. Mr. Denit raised a question about traffic on Spring Street and access to the planned loading dock for trucks.

Ms. MacMullen asked what Mr. Brassard wants from the Commission. Amherst College is proceeding with Historic Register application and would like AHC endorsement. Ms. MacMullen will write letter of support as empowered as chair. Some discussion followed regarding how the opening of new The Jeff might be tied to 250th events. Mr. Brassard expects to meet with AHC again as plans proceed.

Mr. Tucker distributed some basic information on the Ebenezer Dickinson House which members of the Commission had visited on January 19.

After a brief conversation about a small structure off Middle Street on the property of the Hampshire College president's house, it was agreed that Mr. Denit would attempt to find out something about the history of the structure.

Mr. Wald reported on the CPAC meeting presentation of the AHC budget request. Ms. MacMullen and Mr. Wald sensed that our report was well received and seen as well prepared. CPAC is supportive of the North East Street initiative and clear on its having been voted by Town Meeting. Ms. MacMullen did sense some concern about our actual expenditures versus approved budgets. We still need a full report on budget and expenditures. We also need to prioritize the budget proposal. Mr. Tucker noted that the town Conservation director has been asked to get the chairs of AHC and ConCom together and to try for another joint meeting. The Joint Capital Planning Committee chair wants to look at CPA funds for repair of Town Hall masonry.

CPAC really needs some recommendation from AHC or ConCom, procedurally, to put in funding for 575 North East Street under either preservation or open space rubric. After some further discussion of ConCom and AHC budget priorities, the Commission agreed to try to schedule a joint meeting. Possible dates: Feb 5? Feb 8? Feb 12? Ms. MacMullen will try to talk with John Gerber tomorrow.

Mr. Tucker noted that he does have a spreadsheet on expenses and will send copies to the Commission.

The Commission devoted the rest of its meeting to a discussion of how to set priorities, whether to split some lines and increase some and decrease others. A line-by-line review of the proposal led to agreement to split priorities within some lines but to leave the total proposal for now. Specifically, negotiable changes from the initial proposal include:

Line Item	Original	1 st priority	2 nd priority
West Cemetery	\$5,000.	\$5,000.	
South Cemetery	\$70,000.	\$40,000.	\$30,000.
Archival Materials	\$20,000.	\$10,000.	\$10,000.
575 North East Street	\$30,000.	\$25,600.	
Interpretive signs	\$10,000.	\$10,000.	
Interpretive publications	\$5,000.	\$3,000.	\$2,000.
Historic Register Nominations – Bay Road	\$10,000.	\$10,000.	
Archaeological Site Surveys (Bay Road)	\$7,500.	\$7,500.	

MHC Survey and Planning grant match	\$20,000.	\$20,000.	
Historic preservation restrictions etc.	\$10,000.	\$10,000.	
Historic landscape acquisitions	\$15,600.	\$20,000.	
FY 08 Total Proposed	\$203,100.	\$161,100.	\$42,000.

The public meeting on Monday, January 29, is scheduled for 7:00 in the downstairs room of the Munson Library. February meeting dates other than the regular meeting on the 12th may be scheduled. March 12 will be the next regular meeting.

Ms. MacMullen and Mr. Denit meet with UMass staff tomorrow to discuss historic structures on the campus.

Mr. Wald moved adjournment, Mr. Hanke seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter
Clerk