

**Amherst Historical Commission**  
**February 25, 2008**  
**First 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, Cody Torn, Jessica Appleby, (Amherst Woman's Club) Jim Brassord (Amherst College), Kenneth Rosenthal, Jerry Guidera, Rus Wilson, John Edwards, Nancy Higgins, Mary Streeter

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7: 17p.m. and asked for announcements.

Mr. Tucker noted three additions to the agenda: under UMass buildings, Mr. Larson will not be attending, but a feasibility study of the silo has gone out; under old business, the North Amherst School block grant funds request—the project needs a variance to make the front entrance fully handicapped accessible, and the Block Grant Administrator would like Commission support; under new business, Mr. Tucker has received an additional demolition request for a 1916 barn on Stanley Street.

Mr. Wald asked for any amendments or corrections to the minutes of February 4, 2008. Mr. Greenbaum noted his recollection of Ms. Faye's having pointedly asked Mr. Tucker when the RFP for West Cemetery restorations would be issued and his having replied at end of the week; Ms. Faye asked that minutes also include reference to her request for appraisal of properties on Main Street before any action might be taken about their acquisition. Mr. Wald called for approval of the minutes as amended; six members voted in favor with Ms. Sharpe abstaining.

Mr. Wald and Mr. Tucker agreed to fill the time before the public hearing with a discussion of the North Amherst School request. Mr. Tucker explained the need for a variance and posed the question of whether the Historical Commission would authorize its chair to write a letter. Mr. Denit so moved, Ms. Faye seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Tucker distributed copies of a request for demolition of a 1916 barn on Stanley Street, and circulated a GIS view and photos along with miscellaneous maps from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The submission was made on February 7 and would therefore require hearing within another week or so. Ms. Sharpe said she needs to see the building; Mr. Denit would like to see the structure and learn more about it; Ms. Faye would like additional photographic records of the barn. Mr. Denit and Mr. Hanke will do more documentation. The structure is situated in the second group of buildings on the left when entering Stanley from Belchertown Road. Historical Commission members should report their opinions on the need to hold a hearing to Mr. Wald by Friday in order to post a legal ad for a March 10 hearing.

Mr. Wald opened the public hearing at 7:37 p.m. and announced his expectation that each DDA hearing would take about fifteen minutes. He reviewed the rules for hearing and participation and invited Mr. Brassord to talk about the DDA for the Tuttle Farm property. Mr. Brassord provided a review of background information for the public. The house was brought to the site ca.1940 by Minor Tuttle who acquired it from a cousin in Ware; he bequeathed it to the college which used it as a college residence until 15-16 years ago. The house has suffered from some neglect and lack of maintenance; when the last faculty member moved out, the college did not attempt to make it usable for future faculty, and its condition further deteriorated. The college has looked at rehabilitation and potential repurposing of buildings and concluded that the costs would be prohibitive. The property is now an attractive nuisance, and it has been the object of vandalism and of arson attempts.

Mr. Wald invited comments from Mr. Tucker, who noted the scope of the Historical Commission's decision would be about the building, not its potential destination. Ms. Sharpe raised a question

about the process of moving and she and other Commission members posed questions to Mr. Brassord about hazardous materials abatement and transfer of title. Mr. Greenbaum asked whether the college will support costs of moving; Mr. Brassord said that had not been agreed. Mr. Denit questioned him about the house being remodeled and why that was not a feasible option for the college. Mr. Brassord responded that institutional ownership imposes constraints on use of building and that their cost structures are higher than a private contractor's. Mr. Tucker reiterated his point. Ms. Carpenter commented on the Kuhn Riddle assessment of the house. Mr. Hanke framed a question/comment on Amherst College's record of maintaining structures, and of apparent demolition by neglect. Mr. Brassord offered reassurances on the changing attitudes of the college toward its facilities and pointed out that it is now investing heavily in its on- and off-campus properties. He pointed to structures previously presented as objects for renovation and repurposing off South Pleasant Street. Mr. Denit asked about the future of the Tuttle Farm site; Mr. Brassord responded with the recommendations made in the Kuhn Riddle report.

Mr. Wald invited public comment. Elizabeth Armstrong posed a question/comment to Mr. Brassord on his remark about having some oversight of the type and quality of restoration to be performed. Mr. Brassord said the best idea right now is that the house would be enhanced by renovation as is being done with Hills House and Chapin-Ward. Ms. Armstrong inquired if there were a performance bond. Mr. Brassord said no; Ms. Armstrong asked if this were a gentlemen's agreement, to which Mr. Brassord said yes.

Kenneth Rosenthal offered compliments to Amherst College and Hills House, LLC for the planned creation of a cluster of housing in the area. Rosenthal reminded the meeting of his previous remarks about the project planned earlier by Barry Roberts, the open space on Main Street, and his hopes that the new project will keep the open space.

Ms. Armstrong requested clarification of the destination of the Tuttle house; Mr. Tucker responded based on the map accompanying the demolition application. Mr. Hanke noted that Mr. Brassord has some control over the destination. Mr. Wald asked Mr. Brassord what his or Amherst College's role is in determining the fate of building; Mr. Brassord said he has not been tuned in to some of these concerns about the siting of the relocated structure. Mr. Tucker reiterated the scope of the Historical Commission's possible action and noted that it can only impose a one year delay on demolition, not any other conditions.

John Edwards, Main Street, advocated recycling the buildings and said he thinks this is a great idea. Mr. Rosenthal asked whether the hearing could be adjourned and resumed to allow more time for the parties to discuss options. Nancy Higgins, Main Street, noted the comment in a recent *Daily Hampshire Gazette* article that if the town didn't buy the lots on Main Street, the Amherst College houses could be moved to lots 1 and 2 instead of 3 and 4. Ms. Sharpe inquired when it would be time to have the discussion about the destinations. Mr. Tucker said the Historical Commission could have a policy discussion outside the public hearing. Mr. Hanke asked for a process recapitulation; Mr. Tucker replied with comments on hearing, closing or continuing hearing, and other possible actions.

Mr. Hanke commented on the Hills property and its importance and argued that the Hills property is not enhanced by the Chapin-Ward addition and the potential addition of the Amherst College houses to the lot. Mr. Tucker responded, "we are where we are." Cody Torn commented favorably on the intentions of the developers and their plans for the Hills House. Mr. Denit moved and Ms. Faye seconded a motion to close the public hearing; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wald opened the second DDA hearing on 23 Spring Street, the ca. 1830 Potwin House. Brassord commented on Amherst College's plans to improve and expand the Lord Jeff, and indicated that eastward expansion would engage the Potwin house. The structure has fallen into disrepair and has not been used for seven or eight year. Amherst's plan is similar to the Tuttle House: to relocate the house to Gray street. The house was built about 1830 and was occupied

by a Mr. Kimberly and stood on the common. Chauncey Lessey moved it onto the new Spring Street and sold it to the Potvin family. Mr. Tucker said that local historian Ed Wilfert has determined that a number of houses in the area have been moved either from other areas or within the neighborhood.

Mr. Hanke asked the developers how much of the interiors of the buildings they expect to save. Mr. Wilson said they expect to gut them. Ms. Faye commented on an experience when she worked for the town; Amherst College had come to the town to talk about demolishing 23 Spring and expanding the Lord Jeff then.

Ms. Armstrong asked a question about the Historical Commission's control versus Amherst College and the developers, and inquired whether Mr. Brassord would consider negotiation with the developers. Mr. Brassord replied he was hearing comments from the public and would be willing to talk with developers. Mr. Wald asked Mr. Guidera whether he would like to comment; Guidera said he was prepared to make a full presentation but was now less inclined to do so. He did reiterate that the first plan was to move houses to lots 1 and 2 and they were persuaded to move them to lots 3 and 4, but that is not a necessary commitment. Ms. Carpenter commented on the issue of town purchase of lots 1 and 2; Mr. Denit observed that the lack of comment from the Commission on this issue had partly to do with the Commission's having had prior discussions about these houses and plans.

Mr. Denit moved to close the public hearing, Mr. Hanke seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Mr. Wald moved to evaluation of the properties according to Article 13 criteria. Mr. Tucker offered more observations on process and Ms. Faye advocated choosing the most efficient way to get through criteria—to hold hearings on both houses simultaneously, and then make determinations on each following the hearings.

The Commission proceeded with a review of Section 13.4 criteria of historical significance for both DDA2008-00005, 415 South East Street and DDA2008-00006, 23 Spring Street.

	415 South East Street	23 Spring Street
13.4100	4 no, 3 yes	Yes
13.4101	No	No
13.4102	No	No
13.4103	4 no, 3 yes	5 yes, 1 no
13.4110	No	No
13.4111	No	Yes
13.4112	No	No
13.4113	No	No
13.4120	No	2 no, 3 yes
13.4121	3 yes, 4 no	4 yes, 3 no

Ms. Faye moved that the former Tuttle house was not a *significant structure* under the criteria set forth in Section 13.4, and so the proposed relocation and demolition could proceed as proposed; Mr. Denit seconded her motion, and the vote was unanimous in favor. Ms. Faye moved that Potvin house was a *significant structure* under the criteria set forth in Section 13.4, but that the proposed demolition would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the Town, and that the proposed demolition and relocation of the building to lot 4 on Gray Street could proceed as proposed; Mr. Denit seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Sharpe moved that the Commission recommend that the Tuttle Farm structure be moved to lot 3 of the Hills property; Ms. Faye seconded the motion, which also passed unanimously. Having concluded the public hearing, Mr. Wald declared a short break, with the Historical Commission to reconvene in Executive Session.

Mr. Greenbaum recused himself and left the meeting. Mr. Wald reviewed the sequence of adjourning the open session, convening an executive session to discuss the acquisition of property, and later reconvening in public session at the conclusion of the executive session. Mr. Denit moved that the Commission convene in Executive Session, Mr. Hanke seconded the motion; in a roll call, the votes were: Ms. Sharpe: yes; Ms. Faye: yes; Mr. Denit: yes; Ms. Carpenter: yes; Mr. Hanke: yes; Mr. Wald: yes. The Commission entered Executive Session.

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Following the Executive Session, the Commission resumed its adjourned meeting. Ms. Carpenter moved to include \$270,000 in the CPA budget request for FY09, as documented in Mr. Tucker's revised draft budget; Mr. Hanke seconded the motion. In discussion, Ms. Sharpe commented on the value of the landscape, and expressed her interest in hearing from Town Meeting how people feel about this property. Mr. Wald called the question; the vote was five yes, with Ms. Faye abstaining.

Mr. Greenbaum rejoined the meeting and made some comments on the conflict of interest issue that demanded his recusal. The Commission considered what other items should or shouldn't be on the CPA list for the next evening's meeting. With some adjustments, the total request came to \$378,650. Ms. Streeter asked the Commission members their opinions on raising the Town's CPA surcharge. Mr. Wald pointed out that the Commission had refrained from commenting during the last effort to increase the percentage of the CPA surcharge, but he asked that it be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Mr. Tucker discussed the process and protocol for the CPAC meeting, and Mr. Greenbaum's and Mr. Wald's roles in presenting the Historical Commission's recommendations.

Next meeting - March 10 or March 17.

Ms. Sharpe moved adjournment; Mr. Hanke seconded; meeting adjourned at 10:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter,  
Clerk