

**Amherst Historical Commission**  
**March 10, 2008**  
**First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**  
**7:15 p.m.**

**Present:** Gai Carpenter, Lynda Faye, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald. **Absent:** Lyle Denit, Louis Greenbaum, Michael Hanke **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning. **Visitors:** Jerry Guidera, Rus Wilson, Nancy Higgins, Joseph Larson.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m.; Ms. Faye moved approval of the minutes of March 25, Ms. Sharpe second the motion, and it passed unanimously; Ms. Faye the moved approval of the minutes of the executive session of March 25; Ms. Sharpe seconded; and the motion passed.

Mr. Tucker presented a revised draft budget based on the conversation at the CPAC meeting. The budget now includes the possibility of an Urban Self-Help Grant to assist in acquiring property from Hills House LLC. This alternative would involve 30 percent local and 70 percent state funding. Ms. Sharpe asked if there were any other projects that would compete with this. Mr. Tucker said that two other proposals are being considered but neither is likely to be ready for this round of applications. The Town share has to be approved up front, and would have to go to Town Meeting if CPAC gave its approval. Ms. Sharpe asked who initiated this idea; Mr. Tucker said staff. Mr. Wald noted that we've only known about the Hills House LLC proposal for about two weeks. Ms. Sharpe praised the draft proposal. Ms. Faye raised a question about the nature of the "park," and Ms. Sharpe questioned how the Amherst Women's Club would feel about having the public using a park adjacent to its property. Mr. Tucker commented on the history of Sweetser park and the Hills properties. Ms. Faye and Mr. Tucker noted that the proposal was about buying the view and control of land.

Mr. Tucker noted that this is a sort of all-or-nothing approach; if the grant isn't received, when could the Historical Commission go back to town with another recommendation. Mr. Guidera and Mr. Wilson said they can't predict what might happen in a year. Ms. Higgins speculated on what could happen in a year's time if the houses haven't sold. Mr. Guidera said that the longer they wait the harder it becomes for them. Mr. Tucker reminded the meeting of the original budget of \$270,000 and the CPAC reaction. Mr. Wald wondered what alternative there might be to the grant-or-nothing approach. Mr. Tucker commented on the history of the whole situation and suggested what Mr. Greenbaum would say if he were present. He noted the phantasm of extortion that gets raised around various land issues. Mr. Wald asked whether the Commission might put \$200,000 in budget to cover one lot no matter what, with the idea that a grant would allow reimbursement.

Ms. Sharpe made a suggestion on presenting the budget by listing the \$200,000 and noting that would be reduced to \$125,000 if a grant were received. Mr. Wald commented an issue raised by a CPAC member on the roofing materials chosen for the carriage house roof at the Amherst Women's Club; they are using shingles designed to look like slate.

The Commission continued discussion of the CPA budget proposal, and agreed to add \$75,000 to the total, for a new total of \$328,650. Mr. Tucker asked for a final line-by-line review of the CPAC budget proposal, and the Commission had some further conversation about process and mechanisms, dealings with Town Meeting and with CPAC. Ms. Sharpe moved approval of the revised budget with a line item of \$200,000 for the Hills properties, and incorporating a note on the anticipated savings if a grant is received. Ms. Faye seconded the motion and it passed. In discussion of priorities, the Commission agreed that archival preservation would be priority 2, and all other items priority 1. Mr. Tucker noted that CPAC might well make its own decisions on priorities, particularly regarding the Hills property.

Ms. Carpenter asked the Commission about a press release she had prepared, and whether it should be released; the members agreed. She also asked Mr. Tucker for clarification on the RFP for cemetery restoration; he said that it had indeed been sent out as previously indicated.

Mr. Larson of Preserve UMass discussed his recent work with the Commission. He spoke about recent correspondence; the issue of the fence alongside construction site; and the proximity of Grinnell arena. Mr. Larson has contacted the state Historical Commission UMass doesn't want to deal with offsite mitigation; Mr. Larson wants the whole area to be considered as integrated site. The emphasis is on the issue of cost of mitigation (see Para 6 of the UMass response to the draft MOA). Mr. Larson noted that UMass wants to document only the cow barn (see stipulations #1); the Massachusetts Historical Commission had said the documentation should include the horse barn, Blasdell and Grinnell. Mr. Larson wants the Massachusetts Historical Commission to say that mitigation should be for the whole site and noted that he has heard that some maintenance is being done on historic buildings. Ms. Sharpe raised the issue of when to deal with mitigation: should it wait until after survey? Is there a danger that UMass could wind up sidestepping agricultural sites and apply some mitigation elsewhere?

Ms. Sharpe asked if Mr. Larson could go back and talk with the Massachusetts Historical Commission; Mr. Larson said yes. Mr. Larson says that if Mr. Cahill would do an estimate on preserving the silo, they could look at that cost as a percentage of the total new construction project cost. Mr. Tucker recalled the penalty and compensation components of the 575 North East Street agreement with the state. Ms. Sharpe asked where the money would be paid; Mr. Larson said on the silos. Mr. Wald noted that Mr. Denit got some suggestions on architects or others who could do some assessment of silos. Mr. Tucker conjectured about demolition permits and about costs that might have been included in a site preparation estimate, and what part of preparation might have been demolition costs. His speculation led to the question of whether the budget for the UMass project is a public document.

The Commission and Mr. Larson continued the discussion of the silos, costs, the parties and players. Mr. Larson asked the Historical Commission about his draft letter, and whether the Commission has any reservations or problems with draft. He noted that UMass tried to exclude the Historical Commission and PUMA from discussions with the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Mr. Larson suggested that the Historical Commission should ask to continue to be a full part of the conversation. Mr. Wald asked for further review of what a letter from the Historical Commission should say: the Commission agreed that it should address the silos, and present the Commission's reaction to the building authority's re-draft of MOA. Mr. Larson commented on Mr. Denit's presentation on the silos.

Ms. Sharpe asked whether the Historical Commission would write a letter in support of Mr. Larson and PUMA. Mr. Wald and Mr. Larson agreed that should be done, and that the letter should also react to the UMBA redraft of the MOA and respond to the letter from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Mr. Larson offered some remarks on Pelham preservation and some consultants who possibly help them. Mr. Wald commented on plans the Historical Commission has discussed, and the need to move forward on local historic district with idea of getting something to Town Meeting in the fall. Ms. Faye commented on the local historic district process and on zoning and overlay districts.

In old business, the Commission reviewed the status of the cemetery restoration RFP. Mr. Tucker reported that two responses have already been received. Ms. Faye and Mr. Tucker discussed the cemetery improvements agenda including lighting, landscaping, signs, etc. Ms. Faye posed a question about the proposed RFP for an engineering assessment of the town tomb(s) and asked whether the north and south cemeteries might be included. Ms. Faye said she doesn't think that we need as much exquisite detail as in the RFP for the headstone

restoration; she also asked about the due date for RFP responses; Mr. Tucker replied that it is April 25

Mr. Wald observed that the Comprehensive Planning Committee's report might actually be released later in the week.

Mr. Wald and Mr. Tucker commented on the suggestion for a bus shelter adjacent to the Jones Library. Mr. Wald noted that there isn't universal enthusiasm for the "spirit structure" proposal, but he and others will continue to offer support.

Ms. Sharpe and Ms. Faye again raised the important issue of local historic districts; Ms. Sharpe would like to have Chris Skelly of the Massachusetts Historical Commission come to discuss local districts and other opportunities. Mr. Tucker suggested doing that in June:

Ms. Carpenter exchanged some comments with Mr. Tucker about the Commission's process for reviewing on demolition permits and possible demolition delay hearings referring to the recent instance of the Stanley Street barn.

Ms. Faye asked that the agenda for the next meeting include local preservation awards and historic marker plaques.

Ms. Carpenter inquired about the status of the National Historic Register nominations, and agreed to follow up on Dana House and to contact Sonia Sofield for replacement paperwork.

Mr. Tucker described renovation plans for the town Planning Department's offices.

Mr. Greenbaum joined the meeting, and asked a question about the status of the search and hiring of replacement staff in the Planning Department.

Next meetings are scheduled for March 24, April 7, and April 21.

Ms. Sharpe moved and Ms. Faye seconded adjournment; the meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter, Clerk