

Amherst Historical Commission Meeting, May 1, 2007
Town Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

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

Ms. MacMullen called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m. The minutes of the meeting of March 12 were presented; Mr. Hanke moved their approval, Ms. Sharpe seconded the motion and the minutes were approved with five votes in favor.

Ms. MacMullen announced that Cindy Dickinson will present the next history talk on May 17 and will be describing the Emily Dickinson's Amherst exhibit.

Ms. MacMullen presented the Historical Commission's final CPAC proposal for FY 08 (Town Meeting Article 26). Ms. MacMullen presented Massachusetts Historical Commission preservation restriction for Dickinson Museum to Mr. Tucker; he is checking with the acting town counsel on whether it fully satisfies town requirements.

The Commission agreed that the materials prepared for distribution at the public presentation of plans for the Bay Road/Route 116 intersection should be duplicated for distribution at Town Meeting to go with the warrant article on easements in that area.

Mr. Tucker said that the CPA articles were discussed at the Select Board meeting last night but members of the Board would like to hear directly from the Historical Commission. Some members of the Historical Commission will meet with Select Board before Town Meeting at 5:00 on Monday, May 7, at the Amherst Middle School. Given the extent of the Town Meeting warrant, the Commission is uncertain about when Article 26 might come up.

Ms. Faye reported on the Cemetery Improvements Committee. Mr. Hanke noted that one box for mural brochures has been installed in West Cemetery, and the second will be in tomorrow. The sign inviting people to help with painting is still there; Mr. Tucker says he has asked to have it removed. Ms. Faye said she and Mr. Tucker will be meeting on West Cemetery to assess where we are on various projects. Mr. Tucker noted that the Loesby event is scheduled this weekend to celebrate improvements in cemetery. The Commission discussed Mr. Loesby's proposed curbing installation; Mr. Hanke urged that Loesby not do curbing because it doesn't go with general lie of land; Ms. Faye agreed strongly with Mr. Hanke. Ms. MacMullen asked whether other Historical Commission members could check out the site and asked Mr. Tucker whether he could communicate the sense of the Historical Commission to Mr. Loesby. Ms. Faye was asked to think about and draft some guidelines on cemetery maintenance for the Amherst Department of Public Works.

Mr. Wald reported fresh from a meeting of the Comprehensive Planning Committee. The CPC has met with workgroups and found more agreement than perhaps anticipated. The consultants' scientific survey is to be distributed soon to about 1000 residents, with a series of values and preferences questions. There will probably not be another big public meeting this spring and it is likely that presentation of the survey results will occur in the fall. In the meantime, there will be more consultation with workgroup chairs, town staff, and others.

Mr. Denit reported that the 250th Anniversary Committee met last month and discussed the issue of budgets and specific requests from subcommittees; he observed that the committee is moving painfully slowly on pinning things down. The subcommittees on arts and literature and the parade are still working; plans call for a four-hour parade, and they are addressing vendor

protocols and other details including marketing. Mr. Denit said that Ms. Sharpe has been kind enough to pitch in on history committee, whose work she describes as a heavily iterative process. Ms. Sharpe has some ideas about publications for the 250th, which might also be Historical Commission ventures. Mr. Denit mentioned discussions of public arts possibilities for 250th and the continuing discussion of a town flag. Mr. Denit observed that some people really want to do something, while others are keen just to meet.

Perry Thompson's draft of a publication on the Central Business District is close to complete. Some other documents, with possible links to 250th anniversary planning, might be candidates for Commission publication.

The East Village Commons preservation and possible expansion will proceed in late May, when Ms. Sharpe has set aside time to visit the area with Bonnie Parsons of the PVPA, Jim Smith, and Fred Ludde. Next steps on the South Common should include a conversation with the Public Works Committee on traffic and green space.

The Commission agreed that the Aaron Warner House NHR nomination was ready for submission. Mr. Tucker and Ms. MacMullen are still searching for the Dana house documentation. Mr. Denit raised questions about the Darling and Thayer houses at the Bay Road/Route 116 intersection.

The Commission discussed the demolition delay process. Mr. Hanke reported the recent disappearance of a neighborhood outbuilding. The conversation touched on demolition and alteration issues as well as issues of commission process and the possible need for special meetings to meet the time constraints of public hearings. Ms. Faye and Mr. Tucker will work on the language of the article on demolition delay hearings to be sure it and Commission processes are in conformity.

Mr. Tucker said that he will continue to forward notices of conferences and events. Ms. MacMullen mentioned Joe Larson's notes on UMass buildings and suggested inviting Mr. Larson to attend the Commission's next meeting. Mr. Denit and Ms. Faye spoke about their concerns for the future and fate of barns and other outbuildings.

Ms. Faye mentioned the issues raised at the last meeting about the preparation of RFPs and hiring of consultants. Mr. Tucker reassured the Commission on the town's practice and "good business practice" and noted that competitive bids are not really required for work estimated to cost less than \$25,000.

Ms. Faye reiterated her desire to place a discussion about local historic districts on the Commission's agenda. Commission members will do some homework with material available at the Massachusetts Historical Commission website before the next meeting.

Next meetings are scheduled for June 5 and July 9 at 7:15.

Ms. Sharpe moved adjournment, the motion was seconded by Ms. Faye and the meeting concluded at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gai Carpenter, Clerk