

Amherst Historical Commission Meeting, June 19, 2007
Town Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

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

Ms. MacMullen called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m., and began by reporting that she had received a response to her letter supporting the Lord Jeffrey Inn renovations from the National Register Director of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Betsy Friedberg.

Ms. MacMullen reported on Town Meeting and the loss of the \$40,000 proposal for the South Cemetery fence. Mr. Wald described the various questions raised by Town Meeting members and noted that the Select Board is clearly looking for Community Preservation Act funding for Town Hall repairs. Town Meeting did approve funding the Town Hall repairs through a bond issue, and want Community Preservation Act to pay for the debt service, according to Mr. Weiss, Chair of the Selectboard. Mr. Tucker suggested that the Commission should do a survey of the South Cemetery and then perhaps go back to CPAC and Town Meeting. Ms. MacMullen reported her observations on the dynamics of the Town Meeting conversation. Mr. Hanke asked why the repointing of Town Hall was not done when the interior was repaired. Mr. Tucker responded that the cost was "prohibitive" then, so the town put part of the project off and noted that this was typical triage of high price tag projects

The Commission discussed the policies it has previously articulated regarding Community Preservation Act and capital projects. Ms. Carpenter raised a question about Community Preservation Act funds available; Mr. Tucker replied that they are approaching \$600,000. Ms. Faye urged the Historical Commission to spend its allocated funds as expeditiously as possible.

Minutes of the June 5, 2007 meeting were presented; Ms. Faye moved their approval, Mr. Hanke seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

The Commission moved to the consideration of two Demolition Delay Applications.

1. DDA2007-0014, 158 Flat Hills Road — barn —

Commission agreed that it was acceptable to allow this structure to be disassembled and moved, but noted that the removal of any such structure leads to the larger discussion of outbuildings and barns.

Ms. Faye suggested that the Historical Commission could talk with Barn Again about these issues; Barn Again is an organization specifically devoted to the preservation of historic barns in Massachusetts.

Ms. Faye moved that the Commission review and explore further its policy requiring details on structures when demolition permits are requested to include drawings, photos, measurements, materials, archival photos, and historical records if available; Ms. Steele seconded the motion. Mr. Tucker said he believes that under Article 13 the Commission could formulate rules and regulations. Mr. Hanke and Mr. Denit raised questions about what it would cost or require to develop such documentation. Ms. Sharpe asked about studies of barns in Hampshire County; Ms. Faye suggested that members of commission could do some of this work. Ms. MacMullen observed that whoever is doing dismantling would have this information for the structure under discussion.

Ms. MacMullen called for a vote on the motion. Mr. Denit indicated he still had some reservations and inquired whether the intent was to create a firm new policy, or to initiate a review of existing policy and practice; he doesn't want the Commission want to place undue burdens on owners. Mr. Hanke indicated he shares some of Mr. Denit's concerns. Ms. MacMullen suggested that the

current motion just puts further work in progress. The vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. DDA2007-0016, 1550 West Street — rock crushing mill —
Some of the Historical Commission members think the mill is iconic. Mr. Hanke said this the demolition request poses a real problem. Ms. Sharpe expressed her opinion that the Commission should hold a public hearing. Ms. Faye and others noted that we are asking them to accept some serious liability if the building is left there. She and others discussed the possibility of historic markers, museum exhibits or other ways of memorializing the structure if it is demolished. Mr. Hanke moved to hold public meeting, Ms. Sharpe seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Ms. Sharpe wondered if there was any possibility that an industrial archaeologist could look at the mill. Ms. MacMullen asked if Ms. Sharpe could investigate whether there might be someone who could do such a study.

3. Other — The Commission briefly considered an emergency demolition request for a 1970s structure and took no action.

In other business, Ms. MacMullen noted that the Massachusetts Historical Commission has sent another letter to Joseph Larson and Preserve UMass saying that UMass will have to document all its historic buildings. Ms. MacMullen asked Mr. Denit and Ms. Faye for the documents they have been working on regarding UMass structures, and said she will write to James Cahill, Director of Facilities and Campus Planning at UMass when she gets them.

Mr. Wald noted that UMass is part of the Amherst Preservations Plan and that the plan includes a reference to a UMass historic district; see p. 37 of plan for details. Members noted the Danvers demolition delay discussion described in an email forwarded by Mr. Tucker.

Mr. Tucker will contact Guilford Mooring regarding a visit to the Thayer House at the intersection of Bay Road and Route 116.

Ms. MacMullen said she is troubled by the Dickinson Museum money situation; Mr. Tucker will try to get that resolved. Mr. Tucker says the town counsel is swamped by other things, and commented on the practice of attempting to get something *i.e.*, a preservation restriction, for public funds.

Ms. MacMullen raised some other follow-up questions on West Cemetery. Do we need to update the brochure? Ms. Carpenter and Mr. Tucker indicated that the new edition created last fall should suffice. Jean Thompson would still like to review and edit the donor sign.

Ms. MacMullen asked Ms. Faye if she would care to talk about local historic districts; Ms. Faye suggested we invite Chris Skelly, Director of Local Government Programs for the Massachusetts Historical Commission to come out and talk with the Commission.

Ms. MacMullen suggested the Commission move to two meetings a month in the fall, one for general business and one for focused discussion and, if necessary, demolition delay hearing decisions.

Mr. Tucker provided a follow-up report on planned remodeling at 575 North East Street. The windows would be wood and vinyl clad. Members of the Commission agreed that choice would be appropriate, and agreed to suggest that the roof color be red or grey.

Ms. MacMullen noted that this would be her last meeting as her term ends at the end of the month. Mr. Denit moved to commend Ms. MacMullen for her exemplary service, and to convey congratulations, thanks, and commendation for her good humor and sound judgment. Mr. Hanke seconded the motion; the motion passed by a vote of 6-0 with Ms. MacMullen abstaining.

Mr. Wald mentioned a project to create plaques and markers for the Massachusetts Center for the Book and his hope that some students might be available to work on the project.

Members of the Commission briefly discussed the possibility of a party to thank Ms. MacMullen, and the question of succession of officers of the Commission. Further discussion was deferred until the next meeting.

Next meetings are scheduled for July 16, August 13 and 27.

Ms. MacMullen politely encouraged a motion to adjourn; Ms. Faye moved adjournment, seconded by Mr. Denit. The Commission adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter
Clerk