

Amherst Historical Commission Meeting, July 16, 2007
Second Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

Present: Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Louis Greenbaum, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald. Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning. Absent: Lynda Faye, Michael Hanke. Guests: Nick Grabbe, Jonathan Lane, Pat Lutz, Director, Amherst History Museum.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m. The minutes of the Commission's June 19, 2007 meeting were presented; Mr. Denit moved their approval, and Ms. Sharpe seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Members of the Commission introduced themselves and welcomed Mr. Greenbaum as the recently appointed member.

Mr. Tucker and Mr. Wald reported that the Zoning Subcommittee of the Planning Board is considering several changes that might be presented to the fall Town Meeting. One would include several changes on South East Street south of the College Street intersection. A joint meeting of the Zoning Subcommittee and the Town/Commercial Relations Committee is scheduled for July 18.

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Wald opened the Demolition Delay Public Hearing on application DDA2007-0016, 1550 West Street—Lane rock crushing mill. Jonathan Lane presented background information on the demolition request. The mill has not been used or maintained for about 10 years and he suggested its time has come. The machinery would be removed, exterior wood would be scrapped, and steel recycled. At least one crusher is of interest to its original manufacturer; this 1936 Newhouse is not compatible with a 1924 model that the Lane Company still uses.

Mr. Tucker asked whether a history of the mill might be available from the company. Mr. Lane said no; the company does not even have drawings of parts of the mill. Mr. Greenbaum questioned whether the Cows were owners of site and/or structure. Mr. Tucker quoted from Cinda Jones' letter asserting that the family were previous owners. Mr. Wald requested Commission members' questions. Mr. Denit commented on the mill and his attempts to do some research on the site. He spoke about the impact of the mill on the landscape, and his tour of the site, and noted the lack of written documentation. Mr. Lane said that was not surprising since it has been a family business for so long (since the 1930s). Mr. Denit said he also could not find any records on ownership of the land.

Ms. Sharpe asked whether anyone at the Lane Company could talk about the history of the site, and what records of the property might survive it. Mr. Greenbaum asked what business records the Lane Company has. Mr. Lane responded that there are business records, old photos, postcards, and that George {surname? other identification} at the mill has some material. Mr. Greenbaum said those records are important and Mr. Tucker echoed his sentiments on the importance of records.

Mr. Denit raised a question about the relationship of Lane Construction and the John S. Lane Company; Mr. Lane responded that both were founded by the grandfather of the Lane family. Mr. Denit quoted at some length from the J. S. Lane web site on the history of production from the mill and the early construction of a road in Amherst. Mr. Denit asked if the Lanes considered any other options for the property, e.g., leaving a part to serve as an interpreted site appropriately secured. Mr. Lane replied that they have not considered any alternatives, and the place really is in bad shape. It is now not safe; part of a roof has blown off and had to be resecured. Mr. Denit posed more questions about the structure and what pieces of the 1912 image might still be there. —

Mr. Tucker returned to Mr. Denit's question about whether there is anything that could be preserved and possibly interpreted. Mr. Lane said that he is not sure there is anything that could be kept. Mr. Denit noted that some of the beams are enormous. Ms. Sharpe raised a question about any interesting artifacts; Mr. Lane said there were only screens or crushers. Mr. Wald raised a question about the timing of demolition and how urgent it is to move forward, and Mr. Greenbaum asked about the missing roof sections. Mr. Lane explained that the gaps are only where sections blew off last year.

Mr. Wald opened the hearing to comments from the public. Sonya Sofield asked Mr. Lane whether anyone has proposed doing anything to preserve the structure and said she sees it as a landmark. Ms. Lutz raised questions about the property and the possibility of a survey of the site. Mr. Tucker noted that the first real use of the land was as a path, then a road and trolley track, and that there is not likely anything of archaeological interest. Ms. Lutz asked some additional questions about artifacts and Mr. Lane replied that only the three-foot crusher would be of interest.

Mr. Tucker asked about any traces of the mill staff and commented on industrial history and documentation. Mr. Wald reiterated that that was his point about how quickly demolition would occur. Mr. Greenbaum thinks the idea of a model or diorama should be considered. Lila Rountree observed that she came with a sense that there is little chance that structure could be saved. Ms. Sofield questioned whether the site could be secured and the structure left. Mr. Wald commented about any thought of keeping anything to which Mr. Lane replied "we're in the rock crushing business, not the museum business."

Mr. Tucker inquired whether Lane & Co would entertain any proposals for preservation, and Mr. Denit made a remark to Mr. Lane about whether he were using the issue of a portion of the roof blowing off as a catalyst for demolition. Mr. Denit also raised a concern about time as issue in deciding what to do. Mr. Lane reiterated his earlier statements on safety issues. Mr. Tucker returned to the question of documentation and Mr. Wald commented again on the possibility of a display. Mr. Tucker noted that the trolley line is a potential part of a regional bikeway.

Mr. Wald reminded the Commission and public that the Demolition Delay Hearing procedure calls for either closing the hearing or agreeing to continue it. Mr. Greenbaum questioned whether the Lane Company would consider putting up something to memorialize the mill and Ms. Sharpe and Mr. Greenbaum exchanged views about placing a picture sign on the site. Mr. Tucker returned to the issue of essentially negotiating something with the Lane Company. Ms. Sofield asked about the possibility of the state taking over some part of site and Mr. Lane said the company has no desire to lose any land.

Mr. Lane asked a question about process and timing; Mr. Wald and Ms. Carpenter responded to describe how it the process might be designed to get things documented. Mr. Lane said that he is pretty busy, and Mr. Tucker responded that the Commission would have to take the lead in arranging research, including such things as George's memories, a video of a tour of the mill, and other possible ways of recording history. Ms. Sharpe commented eloquently on the disappearing industrial history of Amherst.

Ms. Sharpe moved to close the discussion; Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion; and the Commission voted 5-0 to close the public hearing at 8:45 p.m.

The Commission then moved to review the criteria of Section 13.4. Item 13.40 — no.

13.410		13.411		13.412	
13.4100	yes	13.4110	no	13.4120	yes
13.4101	no	13.4111	no	13.4121	yes
13.4102	no	13.4112	no		
13.4103	yes	13.4113	no		

Discussion of criterion 13.4102 raised the question about a Cowls family connection.

Mr. Wald observed that in light of the above review, it appeared that the Historical Commission had found the mill to be a significant structure. Mr. Denit questioned what the Commission might do to discuss alternatives to simple demolition. Mr. Tucker suggested the Commission could vote to allow demolition conditional on the successful negotiation of options.

The Commission discussed appropriate conditions and considered whether Jay Stryker and his cohorts could be involved in documentation of the site with photos, measurements, and a detailed physical description. The Commission further enumerated an oral history, a video of a tour of the mill and any

other video or photographic evidence; members suggested that some display, ranging from a sign or marker to a model or diorama would be desirable, and speculated on whether the industrial museum members might create a model or diorama.

Referring to Section 13.5 for specific wording of the motion, Mr. Denit moved that the Commission determine that the structure under review is significant, but that the proposed demolition would not be detrimental if the Commission's conditions are met. Ms. Sharpe seconded the motion, which passed 5-0. [Please attach the final version of the detailed conditions as agreed by the Commission.]

In old business, the Commission returned to the Bay Road intersection realignment; Mr. Tucker reported that he is waiting for Pauline Lannon to return from vacation to request access to the 1830 Thayer House.

In a final review of the 2007 Annual Town Meeting the Commission agreed to continue discussion with South Amherst residents about the cemetery by doing a survey and continuing on other elements of the Amherst Preservation Plan/

In committee reports Mr. Tucker reported on behalf of the Cemetery Improvements Committee that Michael Hanke is working on sign design for the West Cemetery, and that lights for the mural will be powered off North Pleasant Street when the street improvements are done.

Mr. Tucker noted that the Community Preservation Act Committee needs a new Historical Commission member since Ms. MacMullen's term ended. Mr. Greenbaum volunteered to serve. Ms. Sharpe raised a question about CPAC process, and Mr. Tucker explained how the Committee builds its proposals for Town Meeting. Ms. Carpenter moved Mr. Greenbaum's nomination to CPAC; Mr. Denit seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

Mr. Wald reported that the Comprehensive Planning Committee has not been meeting recently, but its survey is out and the response rate is strong.

Mr. Denit reported that the 250th Anniversary Committee met last month. Its history subcommittee met today, and is still discussing publications. The Amherst Historical Society is not particularly interested in reprinting *Essays in Amherst History*. The Committee did agree on twelve themes for year—one per month—and is about to issue invitations to participate. They are still thinking about a possible fundraiser. Mr. Tucker said he really wants to see someone expand on Jim Smith's story of the rescue of Angeline Palmer.

Ms. Carpenter noted that Jean and Perry Thompson have provided a draft of some material on structures in the Central Business District. Mr. Greenbaum asked about the Historical Commission's budget for publications, and about Paul Norton's earlier work being reprinted. Ms. Carpenter and Mr. Tucker explained that the publications were expected to be a series of guides, but that there were no plans to reprint Mr. Norton's earlier work.

Ms. Sharpe reported that the Commission's consultant is working on the East Village Common survey.

Mr. Tucker reported that the National Register nomination of the Aaron Warner House isolated outlying residence has gone to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and that they have requested that one additional form be completed.

In new business, the Commission reviewed a Demolition Application for DDA2008-00001, 57 North Pleasant Street, to demolish a rear shed addition at Delano's. Mr. Denit moved not to hold a public hearing, Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion, and it passed 5-0.

In other business, the Commission considered the issue of historic property alterations posed by a new Amherst History Museum sign. The Museum has already had two large granite pieces done and was unaware of the need to get permissions. The signs are too large according to regulation and the Town is concerned about sightlines. The Zoning Board is to make a visit to the site this week. Ms. Lutz presented plans for the location of the signs, and described the planned relocation of the sidewalk

creating a possible planting area for trees back from street. The Commission and Ms. Lutz held a lengthy discussion; Commission members had no objections to the proposed placement of the signs, and agreed there was no need to formally endorse the plan.

The Commission noted items for its next meetings; on August 13 an election of officers and discussion of CPA funds for capital projects; on August 27, a conversation with Chris Skelly on creating local historic districts.

Ms. Sharpe moved adjournment; Mr. Denit seconded the motion, and the Commission adjourned at 10:32 p.m.

Next Meetings – Monday, August 13 and Monday, August 27

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter, Clerk