

Amherst Historical Commission
September 24, 2007
First Floor Meeting Room
7:15 p.m.

Present: Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Lynda Faye, Louis Greenbaum, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald. **Absent:** Michael Hanke. **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning. **Guests:** Cody Torn, Nick Grabbe, Guilford Mooring, Peter Westover, Carlton Brose, ??

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m. Approval of the minutes of September 7 and September 17 was deferred. Mr. Tucker reported on submissions by Mr. Cherewati regarding the Kimball house. Cherewati is proposing to put three light poles in the historic preservation area, one at the street, one near the front of the house, and one adjacent to the Kimball house entrance path from the driveway. The proposal will need a recommendation from the Historical Commission at its next meeting. Mr. Tucker had talked with architect when the proposal surfaced and suggested something not too elegant would work. Mr. Tucker also reported that the Arts and Literature subcommittee of the 250th Anniversary Committee engaged local artist Joel Sendelbach to design something like stone benches on the site of the Amherst Academy. Mr. Sendelbach has suggested architectural steel-frame "ghost" structures like those used in Philadelphia be created to represent the Amherst Academy on a reduced (half) scale footprint, about 28 x 20 feet. Mr. Tucker says innumerable variations have been suggested on the original proposal. In response to a question from Ms. Sharpe Mr. Tucker noted that there have been suggestions for many years on possible construction in the parking lot area. The Historical Commission engaged in some additional discussion of design ideas for that area.

The Commission briefly addressed the question of an October meeting date. Either the 15th or 22nd had been proposed. The Commission agreed on October 22nd, although Ms. Carpenter and Mr. Tucker both suggested the Commission could use an extra meeting.

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Wald reopened the public hearing on DDA-2008-00002, 291 North Pleasant Street, the Chapin-Ward house relocation. He invited public comment but there was no response from those present. Mr. Tucker noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals gave permission last Thursday for the creation of a flag lot on the Henry Hills house lot, and the owner has indicated his desire to move the Chapin-Ward house to lot 2 of the Hills property. Mr. Wald suggested the issue was fairly simple: a demolition delay hearing allows the Historical Commission to think about effects of demolition, but in this case the issue is about removal of the house from Kendrick Park. Mr. Wald again invited public comment. Ms. Faye moved to close the public hearing, Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

The Commission moved to consideration of the criteria for designation of the Chapin-Ward as a significant structure under section 13.4.

13.40 No

13.41 Historical importance

13.4100 No

13.4101 No

13.4102 No

13.4103 Yes voted 4 yes, 2 abstentions

13.411 Architectural importance

13.4110 Yes

13.4111 Yes

13.4112 Yes

13.4113 No

13.412 Geographic importance

13.4120 No

13.4121 Voted 2 yes, 2 no, 1 abstention

Mr. Wald summarized the Historical Commission's findings on criteria concluding that the Chapin-Ward house is a significant structure. Mr. Wald read section 13.35 and 13.36 on the nature of findings and actions. Mr. Wald mentioned that he had talked with Mr. Roberts and Mr. Mooring about moving the building before winter and reminded the Historical Commission and guests that if the demolition (move) were delayed, the Town would likely not go out to bid again and would demolish the structure after the delay.

Ms. Faye moved "the Amherst Historical Commission finds that the Chapin-Ward house at 291 North Pleasant Street is a significant structure, having met the following criteria: 13.4103, 13.4110, 13.4111, and 13.4112, but that under the provisions of Section 13.35, demolition (relocation) of the Chapin-Ward house structure would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the Town. The Commission supports the relocation of the Chapin-Ward House to Lot 2 on the Henry Hills mansion property on Gray Street." Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Greenbaum engaged in a brief conversation with Mr. Mooring on an unrelated matter. Mr. Wald suggested to Mr. Mooring that the Historical Commission might have a future agenda that would involve discussion of the Henry Hills property. Mr. Mooring raised a question about the Thayer house and a potential application to demolish it. Mr. Greenbaum asked about the barn on the Chapin-Ward property, whether it would go with the house or be left behind. Mr. Mooring replied that he doesn't care whether it stays or goes.

Mr. Brose was invited to make a presentation on the intended publication of a treatise on Amherst farms in the 20th century. He is requesting funding from the Historical Commission to use CPA funds for the publication that will provide descriptions of farms up to 2009. The book will include currently working farms only, about 45 in number, and expects to devote about four pages to each. It will show how farms are surviving, and will include an overview of farms and statistics on farms and farm labor from 1658 to present. Mr. Brose and Mr. Westover believe the book will be important to the Town's 250th Anniversary. They cited its importance because there aren't books like this that describe farms and farmers, what they do and how they work; they expect it to be a model and to evoke interest in other farming towns. They assert that it gives a voice to farmers, and will provide the Town's Agricultural Commission with useful information while also supporting conservation and preservation. Mr. Brose distributed some material on the publication including prospectus pages. Mr. Wald and Ms. Faye asked about their possible sources of funding, and where else they have asked for funds. Mr. Westover cited the possibility of some grants and Mr. Brose provided a summary of budget estimates for the publication.

Ms. Faye asked about procedure and whether the Commission were just hearing a request; Mr. Tucker responded affirmatively. Mr. Brose responded to Mr. Greenbaum's question about pricing, saying that they expect to return something to the Historical Society. Mr. Greenbaum commented that this publication is an excellent idea, as Amherst is the town of the plow and the book. Mr. Tucker commented that a commitment of funds implies we expect something in return. Mr. Brose responded that the Historical Society would pass funds through and use receipts as way to create a sort of revolving fund. Mr. Wald commented on how the Historical Commission wound up "holding the bag" on the Kimball house; Mr. Denit raised a question about the historical aspect of these farms as opposed to current activity; Mr. Westover said they were mostly focused on the last fifty years although some go back a bit farther. Mr. Wald asked whether the book would present documentation or simply information, and Mr. Brose responded it would just present information. Mr. Denit returned to the question of contemporary versus historical information on farms, and how the proposed approach relates to the Historical Commission. Mr. Westover noted that conversations with these farmers go back quickly to their grandparents or earlier. Mr. Tucker commented on the value of documenting change in town over some relatively short period to show how much it has changed.

Mr. Brose and others remarked on this publication as a picture of an era that will soon be lost. Mr. Tucker commented on the Master Plan and issues of preserving farmland and farming as

economic activity. Mr. Brose noted CISA and the Farmers Market as evidence of the continuing interest in and importance of farms, Mr. Wald observed how often farming turned up in the CPC draft plan. Mr. Greenbaum asked whether the entrepreneurial farmers would be potential financial supporters of the project. At the conclusion of the discussion, Mr. Brose, Mr. Westover and Ms. ?? left the meeting.

Mr. Wald asked if the Commission were ready to go deeper into CPAC conversation. Before moving to that agenda, Mr. Tucker announced that there will be request forthcoming from the Amherst Woman's Club for assistance in restoration of the carriage house, and from the Unitarian Universalist Society for restoration of the Tiffany and La Farge windows.

Ms. Carpenter, Mr. Tucker, Mr. Wald, and Mr. Greenbaum exchanged remarks on the election of officers and issues of forthcoming meetings. There was agreement that we do need to have an election as soon as possible. Mr. Denit noted that one member of the Commission was absent, and that the Commission should give some notice to all members of the proposed election schedule.

Mr. Wald and Mr. Tucker returned to the subject of CPAC. Mr. Tucker talked the Commission through his budget projection figures and the Commission began its discussion of CPA fund distribution and Town Hall debt funding. Although the Commission had not yet received a formal proposal for a specific amount from the Select Board, members embarked on a full, frank, and energetic debate on CPA funds, purposes, priorities, allocations, targets and projections. They aired views on Historical Commission priorities and policies, and the possible relationship or conflict between creating ongoing obligations and pursuing the agendas defined by the Amherst Preservation Plan. Mr. Greenbaum was scheduled to attend a CPAC meeting on September 25 as the representative of the Historical Commission, and Mr. Wald had a meeting on September 27 with several Town officials to discuss the request for Historical Commission support for CPA funding of the Town Hall restoration work. The Commission reached no formal conclusion on its recommendation(s) for use of CPA funds for the Town Zhail project.

Ms. Sharpe moved adjournment, Ms. Faye seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Next meeting: October 22

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter, Clerk