

**Amherst Historical Commission**  
**November 26, 2007**  
**Town Room**  
**7:15 p.m.**

**Present:** Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Lynda Faye, Louis Greenbaum, Michael Hanke, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald. **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:22 p.m. Mr. Tucker mentioned Niels La Cour's departure from the Town Planning Department to work for UMass and commented on agenda preparation for this meeting and other impacts of staff reduction on the Planning Department. He hopes to replace all vacancies but noted there will be a period of transition and the possibility that he may be unavailable because of the many other commitments of his position. Mr. Tucker said some candidates have historic preservation credentials. Ms. Faye asked about reviewing applicants; Mr. Tucker said he would check on whether it would be okay to allow access to the files. Ms. Faye mentioned that the task force (Ms. Faye, Ms. Sharpe and Mr. Hanke) looking at staffing needs would rejoice if there were someone in the Planning Department who could support Historical Commission work.

The minutes of the meeting of October 22 were corrected to "Mr. Wald inquired . . . ." Ms. Faye moved and Mr. Denit seconded, approval of the minutes for October 22 and October 30; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wald noted that Mr. Greenbaum had asked whether representatives of the Amherst Woman's Club and the Unitarian Universalist Society would be coming to address their proposals. Mr. Greenbaum thinks they should come and "make a pitch." Ms. Faye mentioned the possibility of a screening process, Mr. Tucker recapped a previous conversation about establishing criteria for any CPA contributions to private organizations, and Mr. Greenbaum commented on the Preservation Plan mid-term objective of creating a revolving loan fund. Ms. Faye provided a brochure describing a loan fund from Worcester.

Mr. Wald suggested the Historical Commission talk about the proposals but that the conversation should start with criteria. Ms. Carpenter advocated talking about criteria to be able to send some message back to the UUS, AWC and farm publication proposers. Mr. Tucker and others exchanged comments on the visibility of CPA publicity, and members of the commission engaged in a conversation on the role of CPAC as the solicitor of proposals, after which the Historical Commission and others review proposals in their areas, and make recommendations to CPAC. Mr. Wald, Mr. Greenbaum and Ms. Faye had a brief spirited conversation on the inappropriateness of inviting applications for funding. Mr. Tucker and Mr. Greenbaum exchanged views on the UUS windows; Mr. Greenbaum commented on Hadley and the fact that they are planning to repair steeple of First Church with CPA funds. Mr. Tucker inquired whether Hadley were going to get a preservation restriction on the church; Mr. Greenbaum said he doesn't know.

Mr. Wald attempted to get the conversation back to general principles, inquiring how commitments to the Town Hall masonry project and reduced staffing affect program and mid-term plans Ms. Faye moved to discuss establishing criteria that the Historical Commission can apply consistently to evaluation of funding proposals, Ms. Sharpe seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Mr. Wald reviewed the stated CPAC criteria:

1. feasibility of the project;
2. urgency of the project;
3. population(s) to be served by the project;
4. acquisition or preservation of threatened resources;
5. possibility of multiple sources of funding;
6. cost;
7. funding available;
8. priorities set by requesting town committees or commissions

Mr. Tucker mentioned criteria like the legal status of an applicant, and the specific criteria used in evaluating demolition requests under chapter 13. Ms. Faye reported she had done some research on criteria established by other towns, like Belchertown and Northampton, and that they have usually stated only a few standards. Ms. Sharpe noted the need to make a distinction between not-for-profit organizations and private properties. Ms. Faye said she has checked on use of funds for private properties, and it is allowable; she also recommended deed restrictions on private properties if they were to receive funding.

Mr. Wald reminded the Commission of the current categories within CPA funding; capital, records preservation, etc. Ms. Faye asked what the Historical Commission / CPAC funded last year based on public requests. Ms. Carpenter, Mr. Greenbaum and Mr. Tucker exchanged comments on the UUS windows' importance; and Mr. Tucker mentioned the work the UUS has done in studying problem. Ms. Sharpe observed the combined advisory and coaching roles of Historical Commission. Mr. Tucker said there needed to be further exploration of the UUS proposal and the amount requested.

Mr. Wald made a further effort to get back to the discussion of criteria, and Mr. Denit said he thinks any debate about capital versus planning funds is moot since the Historical Commission supported funding the Town Hall masonry project. Mr. Wald responded with comments on capital funding, possible caps on total dollars, and the idea of letting public freely send it proposals. Mr. Tucker suggested that the Historical Commission needs to have reasons for saying yes or no; Mr. Denit reiterated earlier remarks by Ms. Sharpe on the desirability of spreading CPA historic preservation funding more evenly around town. Ms. Sharpe responded with speculation on how to package public requests along with Historical Commission priorities, and Mr. Hanke raised the issue of how to monitor funded projects. Mr. Tucker described how funds are disbursed for projects, and Mr. Hanke responded with remarks on the need to get through the backlog of Historical Commission project and concern for the additional workload of funding other projects.

Mr. Greenbaum spoke again about the proposals already received and Ms. Faye asked about the proportion of funds that could go to other organizations leading to more debate about the possibility of fixed versus proportional allocation. Mr. Greenbaum shared the current CPAC budget summary from their last meeting, which shows expenses without attribution to CPAC component programs. Mr. Tucker and Mr. Wald commented on the CPAC accounting and its lack of meaning for current and forthcoming Historical Commission requests.

Mr. Tucker spoke about the Town budget and the planning assumption that ten percent of it should be capital and wondered whether this formulation could apply also to the Historical Commission and/or CPAC in terms of private capital projects. Mr. Wald responded to Mr. Hanke on the Historical Commission's unspent appropriations and the possible public perception impacts of funding third-party projects. Ms. Sharpe and Mr. Wald stressed the need to move forward and possibility of another task force or some other mechanism to draft criteria. Ms. Sharpe, Ms. Faye and Mr. Denit will work as a task force on criteria.

Ms. Sharpe and Ms. Faye reported on the work of their task force (with Mr. Hanke) to define needs for staff support for the Historical Commission and speculated briefly on the possibility of a non-profit "Preserve Amherst" or other mechanisms for doing some work that the Town cannot.

Ms. Faye moved that a member of the Historical Commission get list of consultants from the Massachusetts Historical Commission and distribute the RFP for West Cemetery headstone restoration to them, Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion. In discussion of the motion, members were reminded that bidders should examine the cemetery and detail total number of stones to be repaired. Ms. Sharpe called the question and the motion passed unanimously.

In brief Committee reports Mr. Tucker reminded Mr. Hanke of the need to set a meeting with a sign company regarding West Cemetery; Ms. Faye suggested a sign maker from Worcester. Mr. Tucker reported on work at the cemetery, and that some cleanup has been done on the mural.

Mr. Greenbaum reported from CPAC that the recommendation from the Historical Commission on appropriations for Town Hall went swimmingly and the article also went smoothly in Town Meeting.

Mr. Wald reported on CPC and said that the report will go back to the consultants about December 18, and CPC hopes to get the final version back from the consultants in January. He noted that there were few changes or comments on parts relevant to Historical Commission.

Mr. Denit reported on the 250th anniversary committee. A logo has been designed for banners or other uses, and he shared a copy of the rendering. He also raised the question of whether the mural image can be used; Mr. Tucker said that the image is the property of the Historical Commission which would have discretion in its use.

Mr. Wald mentioned that Tobias Baskin is interested in moving forward with an outlying residential nomination on his house.

Mr. Tucker commented on Town Meeting articles on the East Commons and recounted some of the Town Meeting discussion of zoning issues.

Ms. Sharpe and Ms. Faye reported on their meeting with Tom Cahill at UMass. They said it was clearly a political effort to get the Historical Commission members on UMass side. Ms. Faye noted that Cahill said UMass would engage in a survey of the campus and Andrea Gilmore of Boston did a review of agricultural areas and concluded that the stucco barn couldn't be saved. The conversation turned to mitigation and the possibility of saving the Queen Anne barn. Commission members discussed further possible actions with Joe Larson of Preserve UMass and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Members strongly asserted the need to support Preserve UMass and deal with the obvious agenda on Cahill's side. Ms. Faye supported Mr. Wald's going ahead with the previously promised letter as a strong statement of Historical Commission support, but suggested that he write to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and copy Cahill. Ms. Sharpe said she has a collection of material from UMass including Gilmore's report, their research on the barns, and a statement of work for the campus survey.

Mr. Wald said he had talked with Jim Brassord and there are three things he would like to bring to the Historical Commission: plans for the Lord Jeffrey Inn, the Spring Street zoning and the fate of the house next to the Lord Jeff; the Tuthill Farm on South East street; and two houses close to campus that Amherst would like to rehabilitate.

Ms. Faye reminded the Commission that members have promised a discussion on local historic districts, and Mr. Hanke noted that signs are also supposed to be an agenda item.

Next meetings: December 11, 7:30 pm; January 14; 7:30 pm

Ms. Sharpe moved appointment of Ms. Faye to the Design Review Board; Mr. Hanke seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Sharpe moved adjournment at 10:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter, Clerk