

Amherst Historical Commission
December 11 2007
Town Planning Office
7:30 p.m.

Present: Gai Carpenter, Lyle Denit, Lynda Faye, Louis Greenbaum, Michael Hanke, Elizabeth Sharpe, James Wald. **Staff:** Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning. **Visitors:** Nan Wiegiersma, Lee Pershyn, Betsy Loughran; Linda Callahan (Unitarian Universalist Society); Jim Brassard, Amherst College.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m., and called for announcements. Mr. Greenbaum said he had an item to announce later. Mr. Denit moved approval of the minutes of November 26; Ms. Faye seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Wald asserted that the main order of business would be to discuss CPA funds. He noted the Historical Commission's ongoing review of prior practice on funding private and/or capital projects. He stated that the Historical Commission wants to be sure it continues to develop policies, complimented the Unitarian Universalist Society on the thoroughness of their proposal, and promised to keep the Society apprised of the progress of their proposal.

Ms. Loughran commented on CPAC activities in Belchertown, noting that they have made grants to local churches and private individuals. She cited the stained glass windows in the Clapp Library as a Belchertown project. Mr. Greenbaum and Ms. Loughran exchanged comments on the Belchertown projects. She mentioned the legality of allocating CPA funds to private organizations and individuals. Mr. Wald invited Mr. Tucker to talk about how the Historical Commission came to its policies on planning and capital projects; Mr. Tucker commented on the maintenance question and the emergency provision, and noted that the Town Hall masonry project had been the subject of repeated requests. Mr. Tucker provided additional history of CPA funding, and summarized the responsibilities of the Historical Commission.

After further conversation about Belchertown and its historic preservation restrictions on properties receiving funding, Ms. Wiegiersma provided a summary of the Unitarian Universalist Society proposal and priorities. Part of the Tiffany window really needs attention; the angel is starting to fall and so it is their top priority. After remarks from several attendees on Tiffany and La Farge as artists and comments on the emergency nature of the repairs, Ms. Wiegiersma noted the initial repair estimate was high; if the UUS manages the project the price could drop to \$120,000 instead of more than \$200,000. She noted that the UUS has been trying to get a match large enough to go after larger grants, and that most grants require a fifty per cent match. Ms. Faye disclosed that she had worked with the UUS, but does not have any opportunity for personal gain from the proposed project.

Mr. Wald asked whether the Unitarian Universalist Society would go after smaller grants to build toward the match. Ms. Loughran said she would be glad to do additional grant proposals; Ms. Callahan said she thinks that support from the Historical Commission could be really important to their effort. Ms. Faye and Ms. Wiegiersma exchanged comments on the possibility of recommending CPA funding over two years. Mr. Greenbaum said he doubted that the funds the Historical Commission might have from CPAC would allow major grants to any organization and suggested that the requests would have to be on a smaller scale. He asked if the UUS could make an application for the Tiffany window. Ms. Wiegiersma explained the scope of the UUS's revised request; comprising a total of \$120,000., specifically for the Tiffany window. The UUS needs \$60,000 as a match; they have raised \$20,000 and therefore are looking for \$40,000, which could be \$20,000 a year for two years.

Ms. Wiegiersma noted that the Unitarian Universalist Society has already repaired three small windows. Mr. Hanke said he had worked with Nigel Johnson, who has submitted a quotation for

work on the Tiffany window, and described him as "first rate." He also expressed concern about the possible challenges of backlighting the window; Ms. Wiegiersma responded that existing lights produce the desired effect and that the UUS "just need[s] a timer." Mr. Hanke and Mr. Denit commented on making the windows more visible to the public. Ms. Wiegiersma spoke about tours and other events that bring people to the building. Mr. Tucker asked a question about safety glazing; Ms. Wiegiersma cited the plans and quotation for that protection. Mr. Denit, Ms. Wiegiersma and Ms. Loughran exchanged information on the finances of the Amherst Unitarian Universalist Society. Mr. Tucker spoke about the history of the windows, and commented on "storytelling" and how to contextualize the windows in Amherst's local history. Ms. Wiegiersma spoke about the Frothingham tragedy and Mr. Frothingham's eventually being able to afford to make the memorial. Mr. Tucker returned to the importance of contexts for retelling the story of the window.

Ms. Faye commended the Unitarian Universalist Society representatives on the work they have done to date. Mr. Greenbaum said he would need firm figures on the work; Ms. Carpenter pointed out that the letter from Nigel Johnson is a quotation. Ms. Pershyn raised a question about what would happen if the windows were moved; Mr. Tucker and Ms. Faye replied that preservation restrictions would attach to the building with the windows intact. Mr. Tucker offered some speculation on the Unitarian Universalist Society moving to another place as community of faith and finding some other use for the present structure. After some further discussion of the structure, its interior, exterior, and windows, the representatives of the UUS departed with thanks from the Commission for their thorough presentation.

Mr. Wald invited Mr. Brassard to talk about Amherst College projects. Mr. Brassard began with the Tuttle farm. Minor Tuttle moved the 1840s house to the site on Southeast Street in the 1930s; the move was not related to construction of the Quabbin reservoir. The house was used as a summer place and retreat, and was bequeathed to Amherst College in 1955 and used as faculty residence. Professor Copeland, the last resident, died about fifteen years ago and since then the property has fallen into disrepair, and has now become an attractive nuisance. It has been vandalized and there have been arson attempts at the house. Amherst College has considered restoration, but the roughly 6,000 square feet of space make the cost of rehabilitation very high—close to two million dollars, and Amherst College has no particular use for the place. Mr. Brassard says it comes down to demolition or relocation. Kuhn Riddle Architects did an assessment of property, and reported that much of the structure is not original. Mr. Greenbaum asked whether Amherst College just wants to be rid of the house. Mr. Brassard responded with the options and preferences Amherst College has considered, including returning the land to a park-like property. Mr. Greenbaum asked whether Amherst College could furnish a lot to relocate the house. Mr. Brassard responded that Amherst College would prefer that a developer have its own lot. Mr. Tucker and others shared comments on the house, pieces of the house, possible uses of parts and other options. Mr. Greenbaum asked Mr. Brassard what Amherst is doing about the Hazard Dakin property.

Mr. Wald suggested moving to the next Amherst College item. Mr. Brassard presented a map of properties west of South Pleasant Street on Hitchcock Road. The Smith House is currently home to some Amherst College advancement staff; Scott House on South Pleasant, and Charles Morgan House on Snell Street have been suggested as additional space for offices. Mr. Brassard and the Commission engaged in an energetic conversation about the plans, especially for the Scott house, its interior, ell, and other elements. Mr. Wald stated the Historical Commission's appreciation of Amherst College's sensitivity to issues of preservation and contrasted that attitude to the University's. Ms. Faye and Ms. Sharpe commented on what the formal process is with Amherst College; it is described as a courtesy call and "heads up" on planned projects. Ms. Faye and Ms. Sharpe commented emphatically on the question of interior preservation of Charles Morgan House and urged Amherst College to keep critical elements intact and in place. Members of the Commission made several suggestions about remodeling and repair or removal/relocation of the structure.

Mr. Brassard then turned to the Spring Street project. Planning for the Lord Jeffrey Inn has progressed; Amherst College Trustees reviewed plans in October, and now have a budget, size, and program elements. Mr. Brassard said he would be coming back to the Historical Commission with the project. He is dealing now with the vexing issue eastward extension of the inn and keeping floor levels as well as issues regarding adjacent houses and their possible relocation. Mr. Tucker recapped again the history of the Spring Street houses and their likely relocation.

Mr. Wald and others thanked Mr. Brassard for his presentation. Mr. Wald, noting the advancing hour, suggested triage of the remaining agenda.

Ms. Faye posed a question to Mr. Tucker on the RFP for the West Cemetery headstone restoration work; he replied that it has been sent to the Town comptroller and returned to Mr. Tucker with some suggested changes and questions. Ms. Faye and Mr. Tucker hope to get it out next week and will meet on Monday to finalize the document.

Mr. Greenbaum announced that he had gotten hold of Fred Oakley who was thrilled to hear that we were about to go out to bid on the headstone restoration and was sure that we would receive several bids. He also reported that he has heard that Barry Roberts has sold the Hills House to another developer.

Ms. Sharpe noted that Amherst Woman's Club didn't come to this meeting because of the weather, and that Sheila Rainford is planning to submit a formal proposal for the farm booklet for CPA funds. While the Amherst Historical Society will appear as the publisher of the book, Sheila and the farm publication group is soliciting funding for its assembly and printing. Ms. Faye commented on CPA funding and asserted strong opposition to publishing someone's individual research; Ms. Carpenter reviewed what the publications program is and was.

Mr. Tucker restated the existing budget categories and their relationship to the Preservation Plan. Mr. Greenbaum charged the Historical Commission with a lack of consistency in its priorities and policies. Mr. Wald firmly restated the Historical Commission's agreement that it needs to develop policy and guidelines on possible grants to private organizations or individuals. Mr. Wald inquired whether the Commission might need two meetings in January to further the discussion, and reminded members that we had distributed project list with idea that it could be used to review priorities. Mr. Hanke commented on the project backlog and staffing issues. Mr. Wald and Ms. Faye followed with remarks on funding and the need to develop and move on RFPs. Mr. Greenbaum expressed concern for possible CPAC reactions to Historical Commission projects as contrasted with other potential demands on funds. Ms. Sharpe noted that there isn't any money for 250th celebration and they're likely to be looking for CPAC support.

Ms. Sharpe moved adjournment at 10:02, Mr. Denit seconded her motion. Mr. Hanke made brief concluding remarks on the Hills House, Mr. Greenbaum responded, and the Historical Commission departed at 10:15 p.m.

Next meetings January 9 7:15 pm
 January 14 7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Gai Carpenter, Clerk