

Amherst Historical Commission
MEETING
Monday, July 14, 2008
Planning Department Office, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

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

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:23 p.m., and asked for any announcements. The minutes of May 27 and June 3 were presented for review, Mr. Denit moved approval of the May 27 minutes, with a second from Ms. Sharpe; the motion passed unanimously; the minutes of June 3 were also approved unanimously on a motion from Ms. Sharpe seconded by Mr. Denit.

Mr. Tucker provided an update on the Hills lots; noting that members of the Kestrel Trust may be willing to serve as an agent for the collection of funds to augment the town appropriation for acquisition of the lots. Mr. Guidera is on vacation, so once the grant application is filed with the state, Mr. Tucker said everyone might just have to wait to see whether Messrs. Guidera and Wilson have had any additional thoughts about the price of the lots. Mr. Hanke commented on the ongoing work on the Chapin-Ward house in its new site. Ms. Sharpe asked when Mr. Tucker might hear about the grant proposal; he replied sometime in the fall.

In a series of committee reports, Mr. Tucker noted that the West Cemetery contract has been awarded to MCC, and they have been on site taking additional measurements and otherwise getting ready to do the work. Meanwhile, the Public Works Department is progressing with Pleasant Street work, which will eventually reach the cemetery entrance. Mr. Wald asked about the status of lighting; Mr. Tucker replied that the plans are in place and wiring will be brought in.

Mr. Wald noted that the Amherst Woman's Club had a question about the historic preservation restriction that accompanies the award of Community Preservation Act funds. Mr. Wald has explained that it is required as part of receiving CPA funding. Mr. Tucker has also talked with their lawyer, Joan Golowich, and she seems relatively unconcerned about the provision.

Mr. Tucker began a discussion of the Civil War plaques with a review of their history. The current discussion, said Mr. Tucker, involves the idea of building a kind of platform against a wall and leaning the plaques against the wall. Mr. Hanke and Ms. Sharpe commented on the possibility of displaying them; Mr. Hanke had some particular suggestions on outdoor display possibilities. The Commission engaged in a vigorous discussion of possibilities and earlier ideas for a veterans' memorial in Amherst. Mr. Greenbaum wondered whether Town Manager Shaffer's proposal is getting ahead of things; Ms. Sharpe reviewed earlier the Historical Commission involvement and enthusiasm for the tablets and their possible restoration and display. A spirited discussion followed about options for engaging appropriate conservators. Ms. Sharpe moved that the Historical Commission accept the proposal for treatment as adequate with the proviso that we add two items: request the conservators' recommendations for display indoors or outdoors, as well as for long-term storage, and that they return the plaques in containers suitable for storage; Mr. Hanke seconded the motion; the vote was unanimous in favor.

The Comprehensive Planning Committee is continuing to tinker with the final report, and Mr. Wald expects it to be done in the fall.

Mr. Denit offered brief comments on current work of the 250th Anniversary Committee. Ms. Sharpe is working on her "Amherst A-Z" book. She expects it to be 80-100 pages, with lots of pictures, is enlisting help from several

people in editing, design, etc., and hopes to bring it to the Historical Commission soon for comment. The Public Outreach Committee needs to work on press coverage of current initiatives, and perhaps some informational/educational handouts.

Mr. Wald described a course he will be teaching and its use of local history materials in Jones Library. Mr. Hanke commented on the large-scale public art displayed at Amherst College, and how similar displays might be used to say something about townspeople for the 250th anniversary.

Mr. Wald mentioned that Joe Larson has sent a sharp response to UMBA regarding the proposed MoA. UMass is now working on the Old Chapel, and Mr. Larson thinks the consultants who have been hired to survey historical buildings on the campus are respectable.

The Historical Commission agreed not to take action on the demolition application for a 1980s greenhouse addition at 24 Smith Street.

Commission membership will continue unchanged; Ms. Carpenter, Mr. Denit, and Mr. Wald have re-enlisted and been reappointed by the Town Manager and approved by the Select Board.

Summer Schedule

Next Meetings -

August 11 and backup 25

September 8 backup 22

Future agenda items should include Local Historic Districts and signs.

Mr. Hanke urged members to look at the stockade fence on the corner of Lessey Street; the newly constructed infill between Grace Church and the Rectory; and the Hazard Dakin House. His observations led to continued discussion about possible demolition by neglect and limits on the power and influence of the Historical Commission.

Mr. Hanke moved adjournment at 9:29; Mr. Denit seconded, and the Commission dispersed in an orderly and comely fashion.

Respectfully submitted,

Gai Carpenter, Clerk