

**Amherst Historical Commission
Meeting
Tuesday, February 10, 2009
Planning Department Office, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.**

Present: James Wald, Chair; Michael Hanke, Vice-chair; Louis Greenbaum, CPAC Representative; and Lyle Denit
Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning; Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. There were no meeting minutes to approve and no announcements.

North Amherst School

The Commission received updated drawings from Mr. Brown, the architect, detailing the front entrance and stoop. Mr. Hanke made a motion to accept the plan as drawn and Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of four in favor and zero opposed.

Community Preservation Act

Town Counsel provided an opinion describing their perspective on the definition of historic preservation as defined by the Community Preservation Act. Their opinion followed a narrow definition of preservation that relates to activities that directly (physically) restore a structure. According to their opinion, studies, signs, assessments and district nominations do not necessarily relate directly to the physical protection of a resource and depending on the specific project, may not be eligible for funding as historic preservation under the CPA.

Mr. Hanke made a motion for Mr. Wald, Chair, and Mr. Greenbaum, CPAC Representative, to work with Town staff to formalize a rebuttal to Town Counsel's opinion and research a definition of preservation. Mr. Denit seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of four in favor and zero opposed.

Mr. Wald recommended the Commission choose alternative CPA projects for FY 2010 if certain projects are not approved in light of Town Counsel opinion:

- 1) Landscape improvements in West Cemetery: rehabilitate knoll and African American section of cemetery, and create paths and sitting areas,
- 2) Perimeter plantings of West Cemetery, and
- 3) Rehabilitation of Dickinson Grave

West Cemetery Signs

Mr. Hanke agreed to work with Town staff to draft RFP with construction specifics and details.

Town Common Signs

The Farmer's Market Coalition has proposed to construct a sign on the Town Common to advertize the Farmer's Market, and has submitted drawings, with help from Town engineers, to the Town Manager and Design Review Board.

Mr. Hanke commented that it was dangerous to link the Town Common with only the Farmer's Market, or any one specific event or organization; it is the Town's common. The design and materials for the sign were also questioned due its size and placement. Mr. Hanke suggested that the Town examine a comprehensive approach to sign systems, especially for the Town Center.

Mr. Wald reiterated this point; the Town needs a consistent policy and system for installing signs. He said that the sign is not highly visible (from the street) in its proposed location.

Mr. Denit asked whether the sign would include historic narrative or any interpretive material, given that it would be installed on the Town Common. As a permanent sign, Mr. Denit noted that consideration should be given to the context and imagery used.

Mr. Greenbaum said he does not object to a sign on the Town Common, but that it at least needs to have a place to post interchangeable messages and events.

Local Historic District

Mr. Wald noted that he is having trouble finding volunteers for the Local Historic District Study Committee. He suggested that the Town make an announcement through the Select Board advertising for volunteers.

Norwottuck Rail Trail Expansion

The Department of Conservation and Stantec, a professional consulting firm specializing in planning, engineering, architecture, and environmental science, will be holding a public presentation on February 25, 2009 at the Bangs Center to inform citizens about the rail trail expansion project.

University of Massachusetts

Mr. Wald reported that UMass would be renovating Stockbridge Hall (Bowker Auditorium) and that he is still waiting for a time when he can meet with Mr. Larson to review the UMass property inventory report.

Meeting Times

The Commission discussed its meeting times as Mr. Wald is now a member of the Design Review Board as a representative of the Historical Commission. It was determined that the Commission would continue meeting on Tuesday evenings with Monday night as the alternate time.

Adjourn:

The Commission adjourned at 9:05