

Amherst Historical Commission  
MEETING  
Thursday, June 18, 2009  
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall  
7:15 p.m.

Present: James Wald, Chair; Michael Hanke, Vice-Chair; Gai Carpenter, Clerk; Lyle Denit, Lynda Faye, Louis Greenbaum, Elizabeth Sharpe. Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning, Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner. Guests: Carol Gray, Sarah McKee, Chris Hoffmann, Patricia Holland, Bonnie Isman, Pat Vidil.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:25 p.m. There were no announcements

Minutes of May 12 were approved unanimously on a motion by Mr. Denit seconded by Mr. Hanke.

Mr. Wald opened the Demolition Delay Public Hearing on DDA2009-0007, 1270 South East Street at 7:25 p.m. The request to demolish an attached unfinished barn at the rear of a small c. 1800 wood frame colonial (Federal) residence was presented by Pat Vidil on behalf of the owner, Carolee Bengelsdorf. Vidil is a builder and would like to save the structure, but the space is needed to construct an addition to the house to accommodate a person who needs a first floor room. Members of the Commission held an interesting conversation with Ms. Vidil about the structure and offered a number of suggestions. She agreed that reuse of the space would be highly desirable. Ms. Carpenter moved to close the public hearing, Mr. Greenbaum seconded, passed.

The Commission proceeded to its formal evaluation of the criteria for finding a structure historically significant.

	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	
13.40		n	It is listed on, or is within an area listed on, the National Register of Historic Places, or is the subject of a pending application for listing on said National Register, or;
13.410	<b>Historical Importance</b>		The structure meets the criteria of historical importance if it:
13.4100	4		Has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the town of Amherst, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the nation, or;
13.4101		5	Is the site of an historic event, or;
13.4102		5	Is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society, or;
13.4103	1	4	Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.
13.411	<b>Architectural Importance</b>		The structure meets the criteria of architectural importance if it:
13.4110	4	1	Portrays the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style, or;
13.4111	2	3	Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, or;
13.4112		5	Is the work of an architect, master builder or craftsman whose individual work has influenced the development of the Town, or;
13.4113		5	Contains elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represents a significant innovation.
13.412	<b>Geographic</b>		The structure meets the criteria of geographic importance if:

Importance			
13.4120		5	The site is part of, or related to, a square, park, or other distinctive area, or;
13.4121		5	The structure, as to its unique location or its physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, village center, or the community as a whole.

Following this assessment, the commission engaged in further conversation with Ms. Vidil about the process for renovation/addition, etc. Mr. Denit suggested alternatives for design, and sentiment against imposing unnecessary delays on owner. Mr. Denit suggested that the commission would like to work something out. Ms. Vidil is interested in having the building inspector look at structure to see what alternatives might be permitted.

Ms. Carpenter moved that the Commission find the structure historically significant, Mr. Denit seconded, passed unanimously.

After some further Commission discussion and an attempt to draft a motion to allow the demolition, Mr. Denit moved: that the Commission find that while the barn is a significant structure, the proposed demolition would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage or resources of the community, and the demolition may proceed, based upon the following conditions:

- The building will be documented prior to and during demolition with photographs, drawings, and measurements.
- To the extent feasible, the building's materials will be reused on-site or off-site, but preferably on-site as part of a renovation in place.
- As much as possible, the exterior architectural appearance (form, roof slope, exterior cladding) and character of the structure will be preserved and continued in the proposed new eastern addition.

The Commission expressed a desire to continue to meet with the applicant to pursue options for appropriate renovation of this historic building. It was suggested that any archeological materials uncovered during excavation or construction be donated to the Amherst Historical Society if possible. Mr. Hanke seconded the motion and the vote was five in favor, none opposed, one abstaining.

The Jones Library Board of Trustees appeared at the meeting to present a memorandum requesting Commission support of an initiative to go to CPAC for funds to paint the library. JCPC has funding for project among its list of proposals to be approved by Town Meeting, but the Jones Trustees are looking for a way to use a series of budget moves to restore more funds to their operating budget. Mr. Wald reviewed the recurrent issue of routine maintenance versus preservation, noting that the library has not been painted since 1998, and reminded the meeting that CPA funds can explicitly *not* be used to substitute for normal sources of public funding. He further mentioned the eligibility of old section of the structure, but not the new. Ms. Isman stated that the estimate was based on information from Diversified Construction, which provided a series of estimates for work on the library.

The Commission held a lengthy conversation with the Jones Trustees about pros and cons of approaching CPAC for funding, the unfortunate timing of their request, and their attempted circumvention of normal and accepted processes. Commissioners expressed concerns about this eleventh hour effort to swap funding, despite Ms. Gray's assertion that Town Hall funding was also swapped with help from Town Counsel last year. The Trustees raised, as they have elsewhere, the spectre of losing state certification if the Town does not provide adequate funding, but Ms. Carpenter pointed out the straightforward requirements of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for an exemption from the municipal contribution standard. In the course of the conversation, the Commission also noted that Ms. Isman had met with them to present a series of Jones Library projects, and that two of them had been recommended

to CPAC and subsequently approved by Town Meeting. The conversation, already long and bloviating, became tense when the Commission began to attempt to craft a motion, and Mr. Wald called Ms. Gray out of order for suggesting how members of the Commission might vote.

It was ultimately moved by Mr. Hanke, and seconded by Ms. Sharpe that the commission state its support: In response to a request from the Jones Library trustees, it is the considered judgment of the Historical Commission that the proposed project is eligible and meritorious as a CPA historic preservation project. The vote was 3 in favor, 2 abstentions, and 1 recusal.

With time running out, Mr. Wald asked Mr. Tucker to quickly review other key items on the agenda.

The Commission agreed to follow up on the letter from Peter Petrisko of the Massachusetts Historical Commission on the nomination of the Aaron Warner house for National Register listing by asking for help in a local evaluation of the structure.

Mr. Tucker reported that staff would be preparing a new preservation grant request. The Main Street lots have been reappraised at \$135,000 each, and Mr. Guidera was talking about \$150,000.

Mr. Tucker will respond to the request from MCC for an extension until October to complete the West Cemetery restoration following a motion by Mr. Greenbaum, seconded by Ms. Sharpe, and passed unanimously.

Mr. Tucker reports the staff has a draft for consultants which bundles the approved and funded historic district nominations. He also noted that he needs to work with Mr. Hanke on the proposal(s) for signs. Staff also plans to bundle town tomb work for West Cemetery.

Next Meetings – July 16; August 13

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gai Carpenter, Clerk