

Amherst Historical Commission
MEETING
Thursday, July 16, 2009
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

Present: James Wald, Chair; Gai Carpenter, Clerk; Louis Greenbaum, Elizabeth Sharpe. Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning, Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner. Absent: Lyle Denit, Michael Hanke. Guests: Nancy Kaminski, Peter Kaslauskas.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m. There were no announcements.

Ms. Sharpe moved approval of the minutes of June 18, Ms. Carpenter seconded, approved.

Demolition Delay Public Hearing

7:20 PM DDA2010-00001, 117 Summer Street - Request to demolish a small c. 1910-1950 vernacular wooded barn. Nancy Kaminski appeared representing her mother, Katherine Kaminski, the owner. The building was used as a garage and now for storage. It was found to be infested with powder post beetles, and exterminators have treated the building repeatedly. Beetles reappeared in 2007, and they were sprayed again, and reappeared again in 2008 and 2009.

The Commission discussed the structure, which Mr. Tucker said appears to be twentieth century, observing that its siding may make it look older than it is. Mr. Wald explained the delay hearing process and purpose in some detail. There were no public comments. Ms. Carpenter moved, and Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion to close the public hearing; passed.

The Commission reviewed the criteria for historically significant structures:

	Y	N	
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	Historical Importance		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		4	Is the site of an historic event, or;
13.4102		4	Is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society, or;
13.4103		4	Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.
13.411	Architectural Importance		The structure meets the criteria of architectural importance if it:
13.4110		4	Portrays the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style, or;
13.4111		4	Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, or;
13.4112		4	Is the work of an architect, master builder or craftsman

			whose individual work has influenced the development of the Town, or;
13.4113		4	Contains elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represents a significant innovation.
13.412	Geographic Importance		The structure meets the criteria of geographic importance if:
13.4120		4	The site is part of, or related to, a square, park, or other distinctive area, or;
13.4121		4	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.

Ms. Carpenter moved that the Commission finds this structure not to be of historic significance, and further authorizes the Building Commissioner to issue the demolition permit; seconded by Mr. Greenbaum and passed unanimously.

Mr. Tucker noted that the Design Review Board could not attend this Historical Commission meeting, but has invited the Commission to its own meeting on July 27 at 6:30 p.m., prior to the special town meeting.

The Commission reviewed the Public Works Department's conceptual plans for redesign of the Spring Street parking lot and portions of the Town Common. Following a lengthy discussion which raised as many questions as it answered, the Commission agreed that it should support the general idea of redesign of the Spring Street parking lot and adjacent spaces in Town Common, but not any design specifics beyond the proposed traffic calming and expansion of the pedestrian way on Spring Street. Members noted the essentially urban character of the design and voiced the need to be consistent with the distinctive, if evolving, character of the Common as a reminder of the rural and agricultural history of the town. Mr. Tucker shared photos and maps of generations of the Common as it has been modified and reconfigured. The Commission reiterated its opposition to creation of signs to promote any particular users or events in the Common, and to support the idea of a comprehensive design rather than partial solutions. The question of a performance space drew comment, too, and evoked the suggestion that performers be consulted about the appropriate location for and design of a performance structure.

Ms. Sharpe asked about the deadline for CPA proposals, Mr. Tucker responded that last year the intake process began in the summer and continued into the fall.

Mr. Wald and Mr. Tucker commented on continuing commentary about the Jones Library and CPA projects in local media.

To prioritize CPA-funded activities in FY 2010, Mr. Tucker recommended and the Commission agreed that staff priorities of the first order should be to pursue 1) signs; 2) National Historic Register nominations; 3) cemetery work including Town Tomb, ironwork, landscape. The next group of projects would include restoration of the Civil War tablets. The Commission requested that staff continue to develop the list of project

priorities. Mr. Wald and Mr. Tucker also observed that funding for archival preservation and for the Jones Library's HVAC system and roof repair study would be spent by the recipients.

MCC has submitted an invoice for \$12,300 for restoration of another 37 grave markers in West Cemetery. They have also asked to slightly relocate one stone that was knocked down by a vehicle. Ms. Sharpe moved approval of the invoice and the relocation, Mr. Greenbaum seconded, approved.

Ms. Carpenter will work with Mr. Malloy to determine how the inventory of historic properties can be linked to the assessors' records on the town's web site, and to attempt to create a system that would allow residents to update information about their properties. This project will also be tied to the expansion of the inventory to include barns and other detached structures and outbuildings.

The Local Historic District Study Committee has met twice; Mr. Malloy reported on their conversations and shared some information on what other communities have done. Study Committee may make some field trips, and continue to investigate what a local district really regulates. Mr. Tucker noted that Chris Skelly of the Massachusetts Historical Commission says that communities can push the local historic district concept as far as they want.

Continuing the NHR nomination process for the Aaron Warner House, Mr. Tucker will ask Mr. Denit to contact local authorities on early Pioneer Valley houses; while Mr. Denit is away, Ms. Carpenter will attempt to contact William Flynt at Historic Deerfield to further evaluate the structure.

Mr. Malloy reported that the application for a preservation grant for the Main Street/Gray Street lots has been filed.

Mr. Wald reported on correspondence with Joe Larson of Preserve UMass suggesting that the Historical Commission chair write to UMass and request that it engage in early consultations on building projects with the Commission, using the positive example of Amherst College's appearances before the Commission. Mr. Larson asked that PUMA be copied on the correspondence. Mr. Wald reports that there are also plans for a new teaching building at UMass south of the library and student union, which would intrude on the remainder of the Olmstead greenway adjacent to the pond.

Ms. Sharpe asked that the Historical Commission engage with the Amherst Historical Society in plans for an historic buildings tour scheduled for October 24. She suggested that Historical Commission members could help to 1) select sites, 2) write short descriptions and 3) provide on-site interpretation.

Mr. Tucker reported that an historic property currently for sale in the East Village Common area might lead to another demolition delay hearing.

Next Meeting - August 13, 2009

The Commission adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gai Carpenter, Clerk