

Amherst Historical Commission
MEETING
Thursday, August 13, 2009
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

Present: James Wald, Chair; Michael Hanke, Vice-Chair; Gai Carpenter, Clerk; Lyle Denit, Louis Greenbaum, Elizabeth Sharpe. Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Director of Planning, Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m. Mr. Wald announced that Lynda Faye has decided she is not interested in filling the vacancy on the AHC, so the search for a new member continues.

The revised minutes of July 16, 2009 were presented for approval. Ms. Sharpe raised a question about the schedule for submission of CPA proposals, and requested a rewording. The minutes were approved on a motion by Ms. Sharpe, seconded by Mr. Greenbaum.

Mr. Greenbaum noted that he has served for two years on the Community Preservation Act Committee, and wonders whether he should step aside and allow someone else an opportunity to represent the Historical Commission. Mr. Wald noted that other new people will be joining CPAC when it recommences its work this fall. Mr. Greenbaum recapitulated his experience with CPAC and also mentioned his experience with the Jones Library's Board of Trustees. Mr. Wald suggested that the Commission table the conversation for the present and encouraged Mr. Greenbaum to continue his service.

Mr. Tucker reported on the current CPA Projects and presented the bundled draft RFPs for signs and nominations for National Historic Register Districts. Mr. Tucker also drew the Commission's attention to the handout suggesting the contents of each of the bundles. Ms. Sharpe asked whether the signs should only be for things that are there, or whether there should also be markers for sites and structures that no longer exist. There was some discussion of the sites and locations suggested in Mr. Tucker's document, and agreement that this list was preliminary and could be further revised and refined. Mr. Wald and Ms. Sharpe suggested additions to the "Writers' Walk" list. Although there was further discussion of the signs projects, and there were some additional suggestions and questions, no final decisions will be made immediately.

Mr. Tucker expects that the RFPs should go out early in September, so that the review and contract award processes would be carried on through the fall. The Commission agreed that the RFP for signs should have first priority, and Mr. Wald asked about the possible timeline for the actual work on the West Cemetery projects, and whether much of it could be done in the winter. Mr. Wald and Mr. Tucker discussed the components of the West Cemetery bundle, and Mr. Greenbaum asked about the status of the Civil War tablets project.

Mr. Tucker reported that the grant application for acquisition of the Main/Gray Street properties has been submitted. He also indicated that Mr. Guidera's asking price for the lots has fluctuated, and that he is now citing a higher figure than before, but he does know that the town can pay no more than the appraised value of the property, which still stands at \$135,000 per lot. The Commission discussed the Gray Street properties and the status of the individual houses that are being reconstructed.

The Commission also discussed the general form of the draft RFPs, and members agreed to work with staff on additional review of the drafts' form and substance.

Ms. Carpenter reported that she is pursuing press contacts (Phyllis Lehrer, Scott Merzbach, Noah Hoffenberg) to report on the Commission's work. There was a short exchange on developing online resources to include citizen submission forms for information to update and augment the historic properties inventory.

Mr. Malloy reported on the steady progress of the Local Historic District Study Committee.

MCC has submitted another invoice for repairs to thirty-nine more West Cemetery headstones. They have also asked to be allowed to include billing for the documentation with each segment of the work. Ms. Sharpe moved: that the Commission approve the current invoice and agree to allow the inclusion of documentation charges, subject to withholding \$5,000 from the final payment until the Commission can inspect both the work and the documentation. Mr. Denit seconded, and the motion passed.

The Commission discussed the latest developments in the NHR nomination of the Aaron Warner House, and agreed that Mr. Wald should send a note to Hampshire College regarding the status of the process and the importance of the Commission's being allowed to visit the house with Bill Flynt.

Mr. Malloy reported that funding applications have been filed for the Hills lots and inventory, and the Town awaits further developments. He also reported that the intern from the Massachusetts Historical Commission who had been expected to photograph outbuildings to add to the inventory didn't come because of budget constraints.

There was no significant news on UMass buildings although the Wysocki Barn will be demolished. The MOA addresses the issue of ongoing consultation between UMass and the Commission.

Ms. Sharpe reported that the Amherst Historical Society has concluded it can't do the historic sites tour planned for this fall, but might try for spring.

Mr. Tucker distributed drawings of the property redesign for 84 Cottage Street, previously the subject of a demolition application; although the plans do not preserve the structure in its present appearance, the core structure will be used in the remodeling.

Mr. Tucker noted Town Manager's memorandum to the Select Board outlining his goals for the year and his emphasis on historic preservation activities.

Next Meetings: September 3 (if needed), September 17, 2009

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gai Carpenter, Clerk