

Amherst Historical Commission  
Meeting  
Tuesday, February 16, 2010  
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall  
7:15 p.m.

Present: James Wald, Chair; Gai Carpenter, Clerk; Lyle Denit, Louis Greenbaum, Elizabeth Sharpe.  
Absent: Michael Hanke, Vice-Chair. Staff: Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director; Nathaniel Malloy,  
Associate Planner. Guests: Mark Cappello, Lawrence Archey, Hampshire College.

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.; there were no announcements.  
Minutes of the January 14 meeting were presented for approval; Mr. Denit moved, Ms. Sharpe  
seconded, approved unanimously.

Hampshire College staff Larry Archey and Mark Cappello appeared to talk about the Aaron Warner House. Work on the National Historic Register nomination of the property has been on hold while the college has waited for a consultant's report on the structure. Mr. Cappello described the consultant's findings on the condition of the house and the estimated costs of restoring it for either residential or business use. Historical Commission members commented on the structure, its historic significance, and inquired about possible next steps. Ms. Sharpe asked whether there were pictures available, as she is one member of the Commission who has not visited the house; Mr. Cappello passed around the consultant's report with its photographs, but cautioned that the report is confidential, as he has not yet shared it with the college's trustees. Although both Mr. Cappello and Mr. Archey asserted that they had no desire to demolish the building, they indicated they were in a quandary about what to do with it given the college's limited resources.

Members of the Commission noted that the Warner house is not the only historic property owned by the college, and Mr. Greenbaum suggested that the college had resources in those buildings that would provide an excellent pedagogic opportunity. Mr. Wald noted that a member of the faculty is teaching a course this semester on the Hampshire houses. Commission members also noted the presence of several barns of various ages and styles associated with the houses. Mr. Wald asked whether the college might now be willing to have Mr. Flynt of Historic Deerfield visit the house to determine, as requested by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, whether its integrity has been compromised by alterations. Mr. Cappello mentioned that the college's consultant had also questioned the extent to which alterations may have diminished the historic integrity of the house. Mr. Cappello demurred on the question of a visit by Mr. Flynt, and possibly Abbott Lowell Cummings, again on the grounds that he had not presented the report to the college trustees or to all senior administrators. Mr. Cappello and Mr. Wald agreed to be in touch to pursue next steps as Mr. Cappello continues those internal processes.

In response to the request from the Community Preservation Act Committee, the Commission reconsidered its FY11 CPA project requests, and assigned first priority to the ongoing document preservation projects at the Jones Library's Special Collections and Town Clerk's Office and to the rehabilitation of the Amherst History Museum. The Commission agreed that the Jones Library roof was the second priority, and the North Amherst library improvements third.

In a review of ongoing CPA projects, Mr. Greenbaum moved to accept the MCC proposal for work on the Civil War tablets; Mr. Denit seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Mr. Tucker reported that Mr. Hanke indicated by email earlier in the day that he believes he will have the rest of the sign design by next week, allowing the RFP for that project to be issued.

Mr. Wald reported that the Local Historic District Study Committee is still discussing boundaries, and the possibility of adding a small area to the southeast of the existing Dickinson district, roughly from Dickinson to Seelye to College and including properties on Spring Street within that area.

Ms. Carpenter and Mr. Malloy spoke briefly about the inventory and online database project; Mr. Malloy will continue the conversation with the IT/GIS staff.

Mr. Tucker requested that the Commission move quickly to engage a landscape architect, get a proposal and conduct the public process for the African-American section of West Cemetery. So moved by Ms. Carpenter, seconded by Mr. Greenbaum, passed unanimously.

Mr. Tucker reported he had received an inquiry about a possible NHR nomination for Eastman-Goodall house on Belchertown Road. The Commission briefly discussed the house and its possible significance; Mr. Tucker will continue the conversation.

Mr. Tucker and Mr. Malloy reported that state funding is not available this year for preservation grants, so the effort to complete and expand the inventory of historic structures will have to be held for another year.

Mr. Wald and Joe Larson met last week with Jim Cahill at UMass and looked at the plans for Grinnell Arena. UMass hopes to make it a LEED certifiable facility, and Mr. Wald observed that they seemed to have a good plan.

There were no new demolition applications or follow-up on earlier ones.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 9.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gai Carpenter, Clerk