

Amherst Historical Commission
Public Hearing And Meeting
Thursday, July 8, 2010
Glass Room, Bangs Community Center
7:15 p.m.

Present: Jim Wald, Chair; Michael Hanke, Vice-Chair; Gai Carpenter, Clerk; Lyle Denit, Louis Greenbaum, Anurag Sharma, Elizabeth Sharpe. Staff: Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner Guest: Sarah LaCour Absent: Lynda Faye

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:23 p.m. and presented a description and overview of the demolition delay hearing process. Minutes from May or June meetings were not available yet.

Mr. Malloy pointed out the information on the contest to create an Amherst flag.

At 7:30 p.m. Mr. Wald opened the Demolition Delay Public Hearing DDA2010-00010 30 Cows Road, a request to demolish a c.1850 vernacular timber frame storage barn. The hearing was continued from June 1, 2010 and rescheduled from July 6, 2010.

Ms. LaCour summarized the history of the barn, noting it is not a timber frame structure, but rather "cobbled together" from bits and pieces. After serving as a car barn it was used for onion storage and most recently for Cows lumber storage. She also said that this is the most decrepit of several Cows' structures. Mr. Malloy attempted to research the structure through Wistariahurst but got no useful information. Mr. Malloy also contacted a number of consultants and has shared their comments with members of the Commission. He observed that there may be no other wooden car barns in the Commonwealth. Mr. Malloy also talked with Bonnie Weeks, the town building inspector, and she did not think that the structure was in imminent danger of collapse.

Mr. Greenbaum noted that Cinda Jones had argued for demolition of structure because it is in danger of collapse; Mr. Greenbaum disagrees, and noted that Mr. Denit and Mr. Hanke had investigated interior of the barn. Mr. Greenbaum commented on the significance of the Jones and Cows families and their history in Amherst. He urged the preservation of this possibly unique resource, and reviewed again some of the historic role of the Jones family in supplying material for the railroad system in the town.

Mr. Denit commented on the concept of the triage of the barns that Cows owns. Although barn preservationists would say that anything can be saved for a price, Mr. Denit hopes that the discussion of this barn could be part of broader

discussion of the barns in the area. He noted that the framing seems mostly sound, and although the roof has been somewhat compromised the roof framing seems basically intact. Mr. Denit would like to see whether barn could be preserved and would be interested to see how it could be integrated into the economic planning for the area.

Mr. Hanke also saw it as an interesting structure; he said that foundation is mostly sound, as is the frame, and that the initial framing decision on roof was the essential mistake, not taking account of the weight of the slates. He suggested that there are ways to preserve it without righting the building and straightening the roof.

Ms. Sharpe agreed with others about the importance of the structure, its role in reaching the farm community and connecting it to urban areas. She said the barn could be important in reconstructing the history of North Amherst. Mr. Denit further commented on the economic history of the area, and how the rail system reflects a moment in the region's growth. Mr. Sharma questioned how long Cowls has been thinking about requesting demolition for the barn. Ms. LaCour replied they've thought about it for a long time, and went on to point out that this barn currently produces no revenue, and further that it stands in the riverfront protection area, which limits what, can be done with it.

Mr. Greenbaum commented on the economic and liability issues raised by Cowls, and noted that all private property owners are responsible for their properties' safety. Ms. Carpenter asked about the riverfront protection area restriction. Mr. Hanke questioned Jim Smith's letter, and whether he was looking at the same barn. Mr. Sharma said he appreciated the economic issue for the owner, but also saw that the worst case for the owner would be a one year delay, while the worst case for the town would be the permanent loss of the structure.

Ms. Carpenter moved to close hearing, Mr. Hanke second, passed unanimously. The Commission moved to the formal determination of the historic significance of the structure.

	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	y		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		n	Is the site of an historic event, or;
13.4102	6	1	Is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society, or;
13.4103	y		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	3	3 1 abst	Portrays the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style, or;
13.4111	4	2	Embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type, or;
13.4112	1	6	Is the work of an architect, master builder or craftsman whose individual work has influenced the development of the Town, or;
13.4113		n	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		6 1 abst	The site is part of, or related to, a square, park, or other distinctive area, or;
13.4121	6	1 abst	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.

Mr. Denit moved delay, Mr. Greenbaum seconded, voted unanimously. In concluding conversation with Ms. LaCour, the Commission emphasized its desire and willingness to work with Cowls to find alternative uses for the barn.

Mr. Malloy reported that there were no new developments on the Civil War tablets, but they will be going into the Bunker.

Mr. Hanke still creeping forward with the final design specifications for signs; he has the Writers' Walk but still needs to do Historic District. Designs for the cemetery are done except for the smallest informational sign.

Mr. Malloy reported that the Historic District Study Committee held a public forum in June attended by about 30 people; survey was mailed today to all property owners in the potential district. The Committee is looking over potential regulations.

Mr. Malloy reported the possibility of some security lighting at the West Cemetery gates, possibly with motion detection. Mr. Denit moved to ask town staff to proceed with the

proposal for that lighting, with the understanding that the plan will be brought back to the Commission for approval, Mr. Hanke seconded, passed unanimously.

Mr. Malloy requested that the Commission authorize use of CPA funds to evaluate the Hawthorne House prior to any further action by the town, so moved by Ms. Sharpe, seconded by Mr. Greenbaum, passed unanimously.

Mr. Malloy reported on his continuing work with Martha Lyon. Mr. Denit moved to authorize use of CPA funds to engage her to do an RFP for the West Cemetery ironwork; Mr. Greenbaum seconded the motion, passed unanimously.

The Commission discussed Open Meeting Law issues about lists of documents distributed, avoiding email discussion of any kind, keeping minutes that summarize discussions, and posting meetings two full business days ahead.

Mr. Wald suggested deferring the rest of agenda-discussion of officers and membership for full attendance, and FY2011 planning for a more general discussion.

Next Meetings - August 3, September

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Gai Carpenter, Clerk

Documentation distributed at the meeting:

Agenda

Amherst Flag Contest announcement (copy of .pdf from Town web site)

Demolition application, 30 Cows Road, with attached documentation (10 pages)

Additional color images of 30 Cows Road (6 pages)

Copy of letter, James Avery Smith to Cinda Jones, 25 May 2010

Copy of email exchange between Bonnie Parsons (PVPC) and Nathaniel Malloy, June 29, July 7, 2010

Copy of email exchange between Galen Semprebon, CT Trolley Museum, and Nathaniel Malloy, June 14, July 8, 2010

Copy of email exchange between David Holdredge, barn restorer, and Nathaniel Malloy, June 11, June 14, 2010

Copy of email exchange between Jack Sobon, architect, and Nathaniel Malloy, June 22, June 23, 2010

Copy of email exchange between "mcnorlander" on behalf of Joel McCarty, TTRAG/Timber Framers Guild, and Nathaniel Malloy, June 22, June 25, 2010

Aerial view of Hawthorne Property, from Amherst GIS viewer

Copy of Town Clerk's memo headed *New Open Meeting Law*, distributed June 28, 2010