

Amherst Historical Commission  
Public Meeting  
Monday, August 23, 2010  
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall  
7:15 PM.

Present: James Wald, Chair; Gai Carpenter, Clerk; Lynda Faye, Anurag Sharma, Elizabeth Sharpe. Staff: Nathaniel Malloy, Associate Planner. Absent: Lyle Denit, Michael Hanke. Guests: Scott Merzbach, Tom Davies, Walter Wolnik

Mr. Wald called the meeting to order at 7:26 pm.

The minutes of June 1 and August 3, 2010 were presented. Ms. Carpenter moved approval, seconded by Mr. Sharma, approved unanimously.

Ms. Carpenter raised a question about Commission agendas and the accuracy of recurring rubrics. Mr. Wald and Mr. Malloy responded and the Commission agreed that to err on the side of inclusiveness was preferable to omitting topics.

The Commission opened the Demolition Delay Public Hearing — DDA2011-0003, 74 College Street, a request to demolish a ca. 1930 faux period wooden fence. Tom Davies appeared on behalf of Amherst College.

Mr. Wald introduced the demolition delay process and explained that the Commission's role is primarily to look at opportunities for the owner and the town to meet appropriate historic preservation objectives. Mr. Davies, Director of Design and Construction at Amherst College, presented information on the Clark House from the college's archives, including images from the era when it was Edward Hitchcock's house. The fence in question apparently dates from the era when Professor Clarke occupied the property; Clarke moved in 1926, and the fence is estimated to date from 1930, according to the demolition delay application and photographic evidence.

Mr. Malloy commented on the history of the house and fence, confirming the dating provided by Mr. Davies. Mr. Sharma asked whether there were any other fences on campus or college properties. Mr. Davies could think of none except the new one at the Emily Dickinson Museum and one at the President's house. Ms. Faye asked about the building's use. It currently provides academic offices and classrooms for two departments. Ms. Sharpe inquired about the Burleigh lithograph showing a fence; Mr. Davies explained that was one of many fences all around town to keep cattle out. Mr. Wald offered an explanation of the lithographic image from 1886, and the fact that it does some small manipulations of the actual images of buildings, and types of fences in use. Ms. Sharpe commented that she thinks it is a handsome fence and adds to the streetscape. Mr. Malloy asked whether there were any other plans for new landscaping; Mr. Davies said

no. Mr. Wald read an email letter from Mr. Hanke praising the fence and urging strongly that it be preserved. Ms. Faye voiced agreement with Ms. Sharpe that fence is a beautiful example and an important part of the streetscape, and that it provides an important visual link to the house. Mr. Malloy asked whether there were any plans for the house; Mr. Davies said no. Mr. Sharma asked about the college's internal discussion of the fence, and whether the college had attached any significance to its historic importance. Mr. Davies replied that the college sees it as a nuisance and wants to be rid of it. Ms. Carpenter moved to close the public hearing; Ms. Faye seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Commission moved to formal consideration of the criteria for determination of historic significance.

	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	
13.40		5	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	3	2	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	4	1	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	5		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 Importance</b>		The structure meets the criteria of geographic importance if:
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.

Ms. Faye moved to find the fence historically significant, Mr. Sharma seconded her motion, and it passed unanimously. The Commission engaged in a lengthy discussion of

options, including imposition of a demolition delay. Mr. Davies replied to several additional questions from the Commission about the fence. Ms. Sharpe asked how the physical facilities department makes this kind of decision. Mr. Davies replied that the fence makes a statement that isn't consistent with the rest of the campus; everything else is open, and fenceless. Mr. Malloy argued that the fence does integrate the house with the street and makes the connection between them. Mr. Wald questioned who decides; Mr. Davies replied that he is not absolutely sure. Mr. Malloy pointed out that the Commission could impose a delay with conditions that the applicant could satisfy in less than a year and move forward with removal. Mr. Sharma suggested the possibility of a delay unless X percent of the fence were preserved.

Ms. Faye moved to impose a demolition delay with conditions for removal of the fence: specifically, that the fence be removed in such a way that it could be reused elsewhere; and that the fence be photographed in detail in the context of the overall property; the motion was not seconded. Mr. Sharma said that the fence by itself wouldn't mean much.

Ms. Sharpe moved that the Commission impose a twelve-month demolition delay; Mr. Sharma seconded; Ms. Sharpe, Mr. Sharma, Mr. Wald in favor, Ms. Carpenter opposed, Ms. Faye abstaining.

Mr. Malloy updated the Commission on several ongoing projects. Bid specifications for restoration of West Cemetery ironwork are out for bids; Bonnie Parsons of the PVPC will work on the Hawthorne property after Labor Day and hopes to have a report to the Commission by September 10; Mr. Malloy is looking for an engineer to assess the Town Tomb.

Mr. Malloy spoke about the 235 East Pleasant Street (Hawthorne) property and a public hearing on uses of CDBG grant funds. Mr. Wolnik commented on the discussion of options at the Housing Partnership—Fair Housing Committee. The Committee's 3-2 vote in favor of appropriating \$85,000 for demolition at 235 East Pleasant was taken with the understanding that it would be conditional on Historical Commission agreement.

The Commission needs committee representatives; Mr. Hanke has volunteered to work with the Design Review Board, and Ms. Carpenter will serve on CPAC with Ms. Faye as backup.

A new demolition application has been received from the Town of Amherst for the house and barns at 235 East Pleasant Street; the Commission agreed to schedule a demolition delay hearing for September 21, by which time the report from Bonnie Parsons should be available. An emergency demolition request for a barn at 343 West Street will require a site visit including representatives of the Commission. Mr. Malloy will be in touch with members about scheduling the visit.

The Commission was asked to comment on the Housing Authority's plans to rehabilitate a property at 60 South East Street. Although the house is within the East Village Historic District it was not previously considered a contributing structure. Ms. Faye moved that the Commission support the Housing Authority's plans; Ms. Sharpe seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Next meetings: September 7, September 21 for hearing on 235 East Pleasant Street demolition request

Ms. Faye moved adjournment; Ms. Sharpe seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 10:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gai Carpenter, Clerk

**Documents distributed at the meeting—available at Town Hall:**

Agenda

Minutes of the meeting of June 1, 2010

Minutes of the meeting of August 3, 2010

Demolition Application Trustees of Amherst College, 74 College Street, with accompanying drawings and photographs (10 p.)

Pictures and drawings of 74 College Street property courtesy of Amherst College Archives (5 p.)

Email letter from Michael Hanke re: 74 College Street fence 8/20/2010

Additional photographs of 74 College Street property and fence ( 9 p.)

Copy of Standards for Designation as a Significant Structure

Demolition application, Town of Amherst, 235 East Pleasant Street house, with attached history of Hawthorne Farmstead, condition assessment report from Teagno Construction on the house and barns, pictures of house and barns (11 p.)

Demolition application, Town of Amherst, 235 East Pleasant Street, large barn (4 p.)

Demolition application, Town of Amherst, 235 East Pleasant Street, small barn (4 p.)

Demolition application, Ken Hoffman, 343 West Street, (emergency demolition request for partially collapsed barn) (7 p.)

GIS map of portion of East Village Historic District, Watson Farms, and list of contributing structures (2 p.)