

Amherst Historical Commission  
Minutes of Meeting June 28, 2011

Present: James Wald, chair, Lyle Denit, Michael Hanke, Anurag Sharma, Elizabeth Sharpe, Nathaniel Malloy, staff liaison. Absent: Lynda Faye.

Meeting opened at 7:25pm in first floor meeting room of Town Hall.

Town staff announced that the Lord Jeffrey Inn has been nominated by Amherst College for the National Historic Register.

The bid from DeAngelis Iron Work to restore the Dickinson plot fence was approximately \$75,000.00, about three times above the available funds. Since they were the only bidder, there was discussion of how to proceed.

There have been some complaints from the public about the height of grass in some places in West Cemetery. Mr. Malloy has since installed five signs around the 1730's knoll to explain that the grass is a landscape restoration project. Longer grass at the African American section was due to miscommunication between Town departments. It was noted that continued education with the public as well as Town staff would be helpful.

A recent article in the Gazette featured Mr. Robert Romer's desire to get more recognition for the African American Civil War veterans buried in West Cemetery. The Commission is interested in helping with this, including the possibility of viewing the Civil War Tablets in storage at Ruxton.

Discussion about the Amherst College wooden fence on College St. The demolition delay will expire on or about August 22, with no plans by the College (or interested private individuals) to repurpose or restore it. At least two property owners have at times expressed interest in the fence. The Commission will notify them and Amherst College that if an agreement can be reached on a new use for the fence before the expiration date, then the Commission will lift the delay early.

The Town is searching for a qualified consultant to implement and manage the completion of the eight bundled CPA projects. PVPC is a possibility.

The RFP for the West Cemetery signs is almost complete. Mr. Malloy and Mr. Hanke will see to it. Mr. Hanke expressed concern about whether the available funds are sufficient to the job. After review it was concluded that they are.

There was discussion about the future of the Town's Civil War tablets. They are currently restored/stabilized and in storage at Ruxton. After long consideration it was determined that the interior of Town Hall is not suitable for displaying them because of the limited space, possible structural deficiencies, and some of the more probable locations are not accessible (ie. stairwell). Since there is still interest to publicly display the tablets, the Commission, Town Manager, and Town staff will consider other places, including an

exterior (outside) display. This would be a big project, entailing engineering to protect them from the elements and vandalism. This year is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Civil War, but nothing is currently planned in town to mark it. Mr. Denit suggested the Emancipation Proclamation anniversary in 2013 as a possible target date to re-dedicate tablets.

Mr. Malloy brought to our attention that according to a more recent reading of the town bylaws, we are required to hold a public hearing on every application for demolition. If, due to some problem of scheduling, a meeting was impossible within the 35 day required period, then the demolition request would be constructively granted.

Mr. Jonathan Goldman has reapplied to demolish a small barn at 158 Flat Hills Road. The last time he applied, the Commission allowed demolition since he had someone to dismantle and reuse the barn. That fell through. The Commission reaffirmed the former finding, allowing demolition, and encouraging the re-use or re-cycling of materials.

This meeting is the last before the end of the terms of Chair James Wald (3 terms served) and member Lyle Denit (2 terms). This and the recent passing of Gai Carpenter reduces the Commission to just 4 of its 7-member complement. Mr. Malloy spoke to the importance of filling these openings, and electing new officers who will devote the necessary time.

Thomas Webb and Janet McGowan of 706 South East St. have agreed to have their home nominated to the National Historic Register.

Mr. Denit reiterated the need for Commission to follow up with DPW and Select Board on clarifying procedures for DPW work that may affect town historic resources, as in the recent paving of green space at the South Common. While DPW's ability to "get things done" is important and commendable, the protection of historic resources must not be sacrificed without due process.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00pm.