

*Amherst Historical Commission  
PUBLIC MEETING  
Thursday, September 8, 2011  
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall*

Present: Anurag Sharma, Lynda Faye, Mike Hanke, Elizabeth Sharpe, Robert Brainin. Staff: Nate Malloy, Associate Planner

Michael Hanke called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The commission welcomed Robert Brainin to his first meeting.

**Announcements**

None

**Minutes**

Minutes of June 28, 2011 were approved as submitted. Referring to the final paragraph, Lynda reminded Nate to Public Works, Select Board, Planning Director and Town Manager regarding a Town-wide policy clarifying procedures and public notification for DPW work that may affect the Town's historic resources, i.e. the Town Commons.

**New Business**

Civil War Tablets:

Commission discussed the desire to display the recently restored Civil War tablets for the public during the September 18 ceremony honoring the African American Civil War veterans. The consensus was that displaying them at the Ruxton storage facility was the most feasible option due to their weight (approximately 600-700 lbs apiece) and fragility, and because the Town does not have another space that accommodate the tablets. The Commission supports this proposal and making large-scale photographs of the tablets available at West Cemetery.

Betty will follow up with Jim Wald who has asked Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of DPW about visitors coming to Ruxton to see the tablets—DPW manages Ruxton and will need to verify the logistics and approve of the plan for visitors. Betty and Mike will also talk with DPW about arranging the tablets in Ruxton, setting them at an angle, and uncrating them. It will be important to carefully remove the crates so as not to damage the tablets. Betty will follow up with Nate regarding the photos for September.

Amherst College Science Center:

Will plan to ask Jim Brassord and other representatives of Amherst College to attend an October or November meeting to describe the plans for the new Science Center.

Membership: Terms and Officers

Ms. Faye volunteered to be the Commission's representative to the Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC).

The Commission voted 4-0 in favor of Mr. Hanke as Commission chair. There will be no vice-chair.

Anurag Sharma will be clerk.

## CPA Projects

The Commission discussed hiring an independent consultant to manage the CPA funded workload—which activities are priorities and which could be combined. Nate has it on his list to send the RFP out for bid for the West Cemetery signs and the Writers Walk signs. The template for the Writers Walk signs has been reviewed but the text and photos have not been produced. The Commission could not decide who would write the narratives or select which photographs to use for the signs. Mr. Hanke will suggest names of sign fabricators who should be sent the RFP.

The Commission reviewed the Hampshire Council of Governments request for Amherst to contribute CPA funds for the preservation of the Hampshire County courthouse. The commission voted unanimously to **not** recommend funding for the restoration of the Hampshire County Courthouse. The Commission acknowledged that the structure is a landmark in Northampton and is historically significant, such that it meets the eligibility requirements of the CPA. However, the Commission agreed that providing funding for a regional project, one in another community, was outside their jurisdiction, especially when there a number of unknowns about the project—its legality, entity responsible for managing the funds, procedure for Amherst Historical Commission to review work before payment, type of deed restriction that would be recorded, total project cost, project phases, etc. The Commission also expressed concern that this could set a precedent for other regional projects expecting funding, which could jeopardize important CPA projects here in Amherst. It was also noted that the “significant deterioration” of the Courthouse was likely the result of years without a proper maintenance schedule; perhaps an avoidable situation had the owners been more active in the routine care of the building.

## Demolition Delay Applications

Jim Wald and Nate met with Cinda Jones and the Shelburne Falls Trolley Museum as a final effort to find a party interested in preserving the trolley barn. The Museum did not indicate an interest in the barn due to its size and construction method. Ms. Jones said that she would try to adaptively reuse as many pieces of the barn as she could when the property is redeveloped.

## Old Business

The Local Historic District Study Committee (LHDSC) did not meet over the summer but will be meeting soon. The intent is to finalize the process and have an article prepared for the Annual Town Meeting in the spring of 2012. The Commission urged that the Committee consider limiting the district to the existing Dickinson NHR district so that it corresponds more directly with the viewshed seen by the public and visitors as they travel along Main Street; this might help make it successful at Town Meeting. The idea is that the district could be enlarged at a later time.

## Next Meetings

October 4. Tentatively Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>

November 1. Tentatively Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>

Meeting adjourned at 9:27 pm.