

**Amherst Historical Commission
PUBLIC MEETING
January 10, 2012,
Glass Room, Bangs Community Center
7:30 p.m.**

Historical Commission Attendance: Mike Hanke (Chair), Lynda Faye, Elizabeth Sharpe, Matt Cornell

Others in Attendance: Nathaniel Malloy, Staff Liaison; Design Review Board members Janet Winston, Chair, Jonathan Salvon, Derek Noble and Michael Hanke were present. Also present were Jim Wald, Select Board liaison, Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner; Jim Brassord (Amherst College)

Joint Meeting with the Design Review Board

Review of design concepts for a new flag for the Town of Amherst and joint recommendation of preferred flag design to the Select Board

Mr. Cornell commented that the plow on some of the designs resembled a guitar. Mr. Hanke stated that flags were usually seen from far away and that they are typically very graphic. Ms. Faye expressed a preference for the symbols of the book and sheaves of wheat. Mr. Malloy stated that the book and sheaves of wheat were universal symbols for learning and agriculture and that the design of flag #10 showed balance and symmetry. Mr. Cornell expressed a preference for the colors of flag #10. Board members noted that the colors chosen for the flag should avoid a reference to a particular college or university, but they noted that maroon is one of the colors of the Amherst High School.

Board and Commission members asked that the date “1759” be added to the flag design, but they will leave the placement up to the artist, Mr. Moser. Members noted that the date can be a secondary element and that the image of the date can be small, not dominant in the flag design and possibly black in color.

Members asked that Mr. Moser prepare a final flag design, including the date “1759”. They asked that he submit the actual color numbers (from a Pantone or PMS color system) for the black, green, maroon and yellow represented on flag # 10 so members could see the real colors. They asked that Mr. Moser submit a “hard copy” proof of the flag design so that the colors could be clearly seen, noting that electronic copies can distort the color. Mr. Wald offered to communicate the Board’s and Commission’s requests to Mr. Moser and members gratefully accepted Mr. Wald’s offer.

Amherst College Capital Projects

Mr. Brassord from Amherst College presented preliminary plans for a number campus projects: renovation of Seligman House (residence hall); 79 South Pleasant Street; and the new science center.

The Seligman House is currently unoccupied but has historical character; brick and slate roof Neo-Georgian design built in the 1920’s that has a sense of place. The College, following their 2001 Residential Master Plan, would like to increase on-campus housing to match the increased enrollment. The plan would be to renovate the existing structure and demolish the sunroom on the southern end. A new addition running east-west would be constructed that could house about 30 beds, would be accessible and would match the existing architecture and design of the Seligman House. The massing, rooflines, window pattern, etc. would match the existing structure. The College has chosen Shepley

Bulfinch Architects from Boston, MA.

79 South Pleasant Street was acquired by the College in 2008 because of its location to campus and the downtown (it is located across from the Town Common). The College would like to move administration to the building, the five-college program, and human resources. The rear additions would be demolished and a new attached structure would be constructed. The site would also be cleared of many of the trees and shrubs lining the southern property bound and the entrance plaza facing the Common would be redesigned. The original structure would be restored (the portico on the south would be removed).

The new addition would use modern material—concrete block, larger open windows, flat roof and a glass atrium connecting it with the existing structure. This new addition would be visible from the south and would also protrude beyond the façade of the existing building so that it would be visible from the Town Common. Parking would be in the rear of the building. The architecture and design would not replicate the existing structure, but would be a new aesthetic.

The new science center would replace the existing Merrill Science Center, and would bring a new vision to science labs and inter-disciplinary studies. In preparation for construction, two of the four dorms of the quad near the train tracks would be demolished. The Little Red Schoolhouse is in this quad, but would not be demolished; the program has been asked to leave for safety concerns and the building would be protected from equipment.

The design of the science center is of geomorphic green building that is integrated into the topography and hillside. The five-story structure would have a large light-filled central atrium that would also maximize passive heating/cooling, it will multiple levels of outdoor decks and walkways, and it will have shared labs/classrooms. The College is not pursuing LEED certification but is designing this building to be both energy efficient and a model of new learning. The project will not be completed until 2016.

Community Preservation Act

The Historical Commission and the CPA Committee did not recommend funding the Hampshire Council of Government's (HCOG) request to rehabilitate their building (old courthouse) in Northampton. HCOG was asking a disproportionate amount from Amherst without any assurance of project oversight, permanent preservation or public benefit to Amherst.

The CPA Committee was not excited to recommend additional funding for restoration of the Dickinson Fence because so many of the historic preservation CPA projects remain incomplete or are not even started. The Commission said that it has had success in West Cemetery, in part because it has followed the West Cemetery Preservation Plan. The Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend the additional funds to the CPA Committee.

The Amherst Historical Society is requesting funds for roof repairs and for establishing an historic database. The Commission discussed the eligibility of the database and found that like the archival of Town records and of records at the Jones Library, this project would photography and document the thousands of artifacts housed by the Society. These artifacts help tell the history of the community. The Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend this project to the CPA Committee.

The Commission discussed the proposal for funds to move the Little Red Schoolhouse and

recommended that the project proponents withdraw their proposals because the owner, Amherst College, does not support the project and there are no matching funds or a realistic plan to make this a viable project.

Outstanding CPA Projects

- ~ West Cemetery Lighting—Commission chair will reach out to lighting contractors to get a current estimate and preliminary specifications for lighting the mural
- ~ Cemetery signs—the design is complete; the Commission needs to find qualified manufacturers/fabricators to make the signs.
- ~ Town Tomb—Town staff is discussion with a structural engineer to determine cost estimates for the project.

Amherst College Project

The Commission discussed the 79 South Pleasant Street project presented by Amherst College. Commission members agreed to draft a memorandum that would elaborate concerns about the design of the new addition: its roof line, building footprint extending beyond the original church, the material choice, the large windows without mullions or grill pattern and other design elements that appear to be incongruous with existing historic structure.