

Amherst Historical Commission
MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING
Tuesday, October 9, 2012
Lower Meeting Room, Bangs Community Center
7:15 p.m.

Present: Michael Hanke, chair; Lynda Faye, Matthew Cornell; Meg Vickery; and Nathaniel Malloy, town liaison. A number of Amherst residents were also present.

Announcements: Nate Malloy informed the Commission that the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has put out its survey and planning grant applications. Amherst could apply to this for additional inventorying and would use \$20,000 CPA allocation for a match. Lynda Faye recommended we apply for funds to inventory the Bay Road corridor.

There were no minutes to approve.

- 1) **Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst.** Several members of the Society were at the meeting to request CPA funding for the restoration of the Tiffany stained glass window on the west side of the sanctuary facing North Pleasant Street. The society discussed this same project with the Commission about five years ago but did not apply for CPA funds. They pointed out that the window is a treasure from a significant designer's studio and that, when restored, it would be well lit from within, enhancing the streetscape in the heart of Amherst. The Society has set aside \$20,000 in funds for its removal and repair. However, the estimates they've received suggest that they will need an additional \$94,000 for its repair. Michael Henke and Nate Malloy pointed out that if the Commission recommended CPAC funding, some deed restrictions would be required that may inhibit the Society from changing the west side of the sanctuary, or demolishing the structure in the future. Chair of the Commission noted that the church itself is a significant structure and is worthy of preservation. It was also pointed out that use of CPA funds also requires public access, typically written in the form of an easement that would also encumber the property. The commission agreed to consider their request, while the Society gets another estimate for restoration and decides among its members if they are willing to accept the deed restrictions.
- 2) **290 Lincoln Avenue Appeal:** Area residents attended the meeting to protest the Commission's decision to deny a demolition delay for the barn on the property of 290 Lincoln, and to question the subjective nature of the criteria in the demolition delay bylaw, and to say that they had new information about the property that they would not disclose but wait until the appeal. Chair, Michael Henke reiterated that the barn itself did not justify a delay and stressed the importance of a Local Historic District in the area of Lincoln and Sunset in order to protect these streetscapes. Mr. Hanke said that there was sufficient information presented at the public hearing to determine that the barn was not historically significant. Both he and Nate outlined the procedures in place, noting that the issue will come before the Zoning Board of Appeals who will have the power to send it back to the Historical Commission to reconsider. There is a danger of course, that the owner of the property will tear the barn down before the appeal goes through, though he risks

being fined for this.

- 3) **North Amherst Local Historic District:** Residents of North Amherst attended the meeting and asked that the industrial and residential history of the area merits the designation of a Local Historic District. Residents are worried that new development would ruin the historic fabric of the area with demolition of older structures and that proposed zoning changes would also alter the existing character. Louie Greenbaum spoke at length about this heritage. Lynda Faye motioned that the Commission agree to request a Local Historic District Study Committee for North Amherst, and that this recommendation be sent to the Select Board. The study committee would then determine the district boundaries through their own research and assessment.
- 4) **235 East Pleasant Street, Hawthorne Farm:** The Town proposed to use federal CDBG funds to mitigate hazardous materials and demolish the house and barn on the Hawthorne property. This triggered review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), who wrote to the Town to say that the house could be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. MHC requested that the Town complete a Form B inventory form and provide a more detailed history of the owners and property maps. One material salvage company, Board & Beam, has been to look at the house and barn and was interested in salvaging floorboards, some roof timbers, doors from the house and possibly some paneling from the barn. There may be 2 or 3 more such companies interested. Resident Vince O'Connor said that some funds to purchase the property came from the State or Federal level and that this means the money cannot be used for demolition. He has spoken with neighbors who would be willing to work with the existing structure to convert it into 1 or 2 affordable housing units. He asked that the Historical Commission think about this option.
- 5) **North Common:** The town is applying for a \$530,000 PARC grant to rehabilitate the North Common area. The question surrounding this money is whether the project is seen as historic preservation or as recreational use. The Historical Commission and the LSSE would use CPA funds to pay for the project and would be co-holders of deed restrictions and maintenance requirements. For such a large sum, it was agreed that the Commission needs to determine if that is feasible. Lynda Faye objected to the fact that the Commission has seen very little in terms of plans and believes the Commission needs more time to study this request. The other members agreed to discuss this at the October 16 meeting.
- 6) **Barn on Tyler Street:** Amherst College, the owners of a barn on Tyler Street put in a request for demolition of a barn at 37 Tyler Place. Nate asked if the Commission wants to hold a public hearing on this application. The Commission decided to arrange a site visit to better evaluate the barn.

An extra meeting was scheduled by the Commission for October 16 at 6 pm in order to work on the remaining items on the agenda.

Lynda Faye moved that the meeting be adjourned at 9:28. It was seconded by Meg Vickery and the meeting was adjourned.