

Amherst Historical Commission
PUBLIC MEETING
Tuesday, November 20, 2012
Town Room, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

Present: Michael Hanke, chair; Lynda Faye, Matthew Cornell and Meg Vickery. New Members; Laura Lovett and Judith Moran. Jim Wald of the Select Board. Nathaniel Malloy, town liaison

Announcements: Nate reported that the Town submitted a letter of intent to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) for a grant to inventory outbuildings of the town. MHC will review and let the Town know if it can submit a full application.

Minutes: the Minutes from the September meeting were approved as submitted.

New Business:

New Members were welcomed and introduced.

Appearance:

Lincoln-Sunset Local Historic District Exploratory Committee: Members from the Lincoln-Sunset Local Historic District exploratory committee, represented by Jennifer Taub and Paige Wilder presented their concerns of the neighborhood and their goals for local historic district. They submitted background information and a proposal for the Sunset-Lincoln Historic District. Nate described the process of organizing such a District. The Historical Commission's role is to decide whether or not to recommend appointment of a study committee by the Select Board. The study committee decides the boundaries of the district, looks into the significance of properties, and other research, but can use research provided by the public. Nate pointed out that such a study committee has recently been formed for North Amherst and that it can be a lengthy process from appointment of study committee until a district is approved by Town Meeting.

Jennifer Taub pointed out that more than half the homes in this proposed district are on the National Register and the area is cited in the Amherst Preservation Plan as an area of significance. It was an ethnically mixed residential area. They would like to see McClure Street included as it has several Bill Gass homes. Taub stressed the social and architectural significance of these neighborhoods. Lynda Faye praised the presentation but pointed out that the proposed district included multiple National Register Districts because they each have their own defining characteristics; MHC may not agree that this is one local historic district. Michael Hanke recommended that when this issue is reviewed by the Select Board that the exploratory committee pack the room with supporters. Laura Lovette pointed out that UMass is also concerned with keeping Amherst a nice college town, and could be a resource when this moves forward. Paige Wilder said they are working with UMass to keep family-friendly neighborhoods. Lynda stressed that a LHD focuses on the architectural and historical significance of an area and they should make that a strong part of their argument, and to keep in mind that there are two very different national

register districts included in their proposed LHD. Nate reminded the commission that the Dickinson District was also an economically mixed area. Lynda moved that we accept the proposal, Meg seconded it and it passed unanimously. The Commission agreed that the North Amherst study committee would be a first priority as it had already been recommended to the Select Board, and that the recommendation to the Select Board would wait until the North Amherst process underway (a study committee formed and holding meetings).

Amherst Media: Jim Lescault of Amherst Media presented his case for CPAC funds to be given to Amherst Media to digitize years of old Town recordings and make them accessible to the public via the internet. CPAC funds would be spent digitizing and archiving this part of our local history. Amherst Media has received assistance from an archivist who is prioritizing their inventory and will provide cost estimates for the project. Lynda wanted to be sure there would be public benefit and Jim assured her that the project would be widely publicized as a piece of local history.

First Congregational Church: Nate introduced the sign project by the Church to the Commission. The Church wants a new and larger sign along Main Street that requires a special permit due to its size. The ZBA asked the Historical Commission to comment on the proposed sign. Ralph Faulkingham represented the church and presented the proposed sign. He said the church wants a sign representative of who the Church is and what it embodies—something bold to grab attention and invite the public. The church building itself, although visible, does not represent the philosophy of the church. Commission members raised objections over the style of font used in the sign, the color and size of the posts, the signs colors, and its shape and size. The Commission recommended that the Church contact a professional designer to revise the layout.

CPA Proposals:

- i.** Unitarian Universalist Society and funds for the Tiffany window: The Commission realizes this is a threatened resource but the society is hesitant to accept a preservation restriction on the property.
- ii.** Amherst Media: Would like funds to pay for equipment and labor to digitize Town recordings.
- iii.** Amherst Historical Society: Philip Shaver requested funds for organizing the collection, including rolling shelving, storage boxes and ultra-violet coating on the windows, and paying a consultant curator to supervise this as well as money to conserve Emily Dickinson's dress and funds for processing the papers and materials of Mabel Loomis Todd. Nate warned there might be funding limits, and Mike wondered about storing some materials in the Amherst College bunker.
- iv.** Town of Amherst PARC Grant: Town Meeting approved CPA funding for a PARC Grant for restoration of the North Common. David Ziomek, Director of Conservation and Development for the Town said that the division of CPA between historic preservation and recreation would be resolved at a later time and that the Historical Commission will have input in the design review process.

Demolition Delay Application: Staff presented the demolition request for 179 Northampton Road. Lynda requested that the house be documented with photographs before demolition and a file be created with additional information on the history of the house. The Commission agreed to demolition and

recommended to the ZBA that they and the Design Review Board review plans for the new construction in order to help preserve the neighborhood. It was discussed that this might serve as a model for new student housing.

Old Business:

West Cemetery:

- i. Mural Lighting: Nate reported that the electrician can install modest motion sensor lighting for \$1,700.00 for security. The remainder of the funds could be used to light the new signs. Meg moved to accept the proposed lighting and Matt seconded it. The Commission voted unanimously to move forward with this plan.
- ii. Town Tomb: An engineer has looked at the tomb and reported that the base stones are plumb and intact and the interior is dry; the fascia has moved and shifted. His recommended improvements of proper drainage and resetting the stones would come within the budget and should go out to bid in the Spring.
- iii. Sign: There will be identifying signs at the entrances and two interpretive signs. These were designed in 2008-09 and the drawings were finished in 2010. Mike said he had some minor changes but that everything is ready to be included a Request for Quotes
- iv. The Emily Dickinson fence is also ready to go out to bid again.

The Meeting was adjourned at 9:50