

Amherst Historical Commission
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING
Thursday, March 20, 2014
2nd Floor Conference Room/Library, Town Hall
7:15 p.m.

Attendance

Attended by Meg Vickery, Mike Hanke, Matt Cornell, Laura Lovett, Lynda Faye, and Nathaniel Malloy.

Minutes-approve minutes

Minutes were approved unanimously, with edits.

New Business

Review CPA proposals

The Commission discussed the percentage of CPA money available to the Commission this year, including debt service. Mike thinks there will be a trend towards more recreation allocations in the future.

i. Sweetser park fountain

Staff reported that the CPAC thought \$15K a little high for a feasibility study and specifications, but he talked to a contractor who said it was reasonable. Lynda suggested sending a memo to DPW asking for more information before recommending it. She also shared that there appears to be a process problem in which others do not come before the Commission and instead propose directly to the CPAC. Meg suggested DPW bringing this application before us for the next round.

ii. West Street Barn

Staff gave the update that the CPAC recommended it. Mike said the committee appreciated the owner attending a meeting during the review process.

Prioritize Outbuildings for Grant

Staff said there are 110 properties in the spreadsheet and on maps. The consultant narrowed those down from ~200 with help from the commission chair, staff, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Mike suggested that downtown get the priority, which is the project's original focus. Staff thought they could do about 100, so downtown is probably feasible. Some properties have multiple buildings, but not many. Staff also said MHC requires re-creating forms, which the Commission agreed would add a lot more work and may not be fair to the consultant. Laura asked whether the Dickinson Historic District is already being inventoried, to which Staff said no. Staff said a letter or notice online will be going out to the owners.

Use of West Cemetery Mural for Trolley Barn

Staff said Cinda Jones would like to use images of portions of the cemetery mural to help advertise her North Amherst Trolley Barn, and she needs the Commission's approval since the mural the commission owns the copyright. Mike and Staff

outlined issues, including the artist's opinion. Mike summarized the history of the demolished namesake barn, including architectural flaws, which the Commission discussed. Lynda said it was a loss of a valuable building, and she would first like to know how images from the mural would be used. She suggested the Commission deny permission. Matt suggested asking the owner to paint another mural for the new building. The Commission decided to ask Ms. Jones to appear before the Commission to show what she has in mind and bring sample brochures, signs, etc.

UMass projects-demolition of Montague House

The Commission discussed the House's history. Lynda suggested writing a letter to Preserve UMass and MHC to the effect that the Commission is distressed by the trend it sees the University following: ignoring its preservation reports and building inventory forms when it wants to make way for a new project. Examples include the little horse barn/stable, the trolley station, Montague House, their landscape plan, etc. More generally the Commission is concerned about the University's longer-term pattern of disregarding historical assets on campus, which the Commission thinks threatens the campus's historic fabric. Matt asked whether it's possible for the Commission to comment publically on this trend.

Review PVPC Work

Staff summarized the project to date. The Commission discussed various property choices, with Lynda suggesting the consultant include the map's green Pelham Road area to MHC, which would extend the East Village National Register District.

PARC grant application-Town Common-April 1st Forum

Staff summarized the project's status, history, and possible Commission role (e.g., interpreting historic impact and balancing funding). The Commission discussed its role and possible uses of the space, thinking about its context in the historic downtown and its connection to rest of the Common to the south. Mike said the North Common should be a space that's safe and comfortable - like Sweetser Park - and agrees the Commission should play a role.

Civil War Tablets to Library

Staff summarized the commission's attempts to find a suitable place inside and outside Town Hall to install the tablets. Now there is a possibility installing and displaying the tablets at the Jones Library, but the discussions are very preliminary and the board and friends of the library have yet to voice an opinion. The Commission will keep abreast of the proposal and will be ready to write a letter of support if necessary.

Demolition of Carriage Shops and future of West Cemetery Mural

Mike described his meeting with the current and potential future owners, and specifically the discussion of how to deal with the Cemetery mural, which would likely be demolished. A related issue is the town's ownership of an easement. Possibilities discussed included recreating the mural on one facade of the new building or creating an interior interpretive space or external historical rail along

the alley. Lynda asked about the review process and said the Commission should think about an architectural response to the space. This would be more proactive than in the past. Laura asked about shading issues and negative impact on plant growth.

CPAC update

Discussed above.

Demolition delay applications

i. Application to demolish garage at 180 College Street

The Commission discussed the application, with Lynda wondering about the value of holding a public hearing to simply highlight the loss. Meg suggested writing a letter to the owner asking him to reconsider. Lynda suggested writing a letter to the owner saying to delay the demolition until the outbuilding survey can be done. Staff suggested the Commission visit the site, which was agreed upon.

Other items not anticipated

Demolition delay application: 29 Pelham Road

The Commission decided to not delay demolition as it was a small partial demolition of a box window to prepare for a larger enclosed porch addition.

South College at Umass

Staff shared the information that the University plans a large expansion and renovation of South College, one of the older structures on campus. The commission asked that the University submit more informative documentation so that it can evaluate the work and its impact on the structure and surrounding structures. The Commission could then ask for a meeting with Umass and PUMA.

Old Business

West Cemetery Projects

Staff said that an RFP for the signs will go out in April, as will one for the tomb.

Preservation awards

The Commission decided to give the residential award to Jerry Guidera's property on Gray Street. Mike showed award graphics and frame, which was very warmly received. The Commission hopes to schedule the presentation award in June.