

Amherst Historical Commission
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING
Tuesday, July 29, 2014
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:15 PM

Attendance:

Mike Hanke, Chair; Laura Lovett, Lynda Faye, Meg Vickery, Jim Wald (Select Board liaison); Nathaniel Malloy (staff)

Guests-Keith Hollingworth, Edith MacMullen, Ann Hollingworth, Janet Slocum, Janet Keller, Cinda Jones, Patricia Holland, Andy Steinberg (Select Board), Hilda and Louis Greenbaum, Melissa Perot, David Fichter (Muralist), Paola Di Stefano, Vince O'Connor

Announcements:

None

Minutes:

None

New Business:

- a. **113 Cows Road:** Cinda Jones presented a power point outlining the history of her barn and the site. This included plans for the development of the land to include Atkins Farm's market. She sees the 'past is a prologue'. The old cow barn is to be the new Atkins and various repairs and changes will be made to accommodate the market and make the building safe. Some of these include changing the windows, repair the foundation and add insulation. The project would retain the existing framing (including roof trusses), roofline (including gable ends), footprint, massing and overall character of the barn. However, there would be new windows in new locations, new siding, new roof, new entrance doors on the west and east ends, and parking will be along the front and sides. The new windows would be square two over two windows to match existing, but would be located under the eaves high on the wall to allow shelf space below on the interior. Also, the number of windows would be reduced and the pattern would be altered from the current layout. The gable end on the west side would become the main entrance to the store, with a new large barn door and transom windows above, and two individual entrance/exit doors on either side. On the north side on the wing, the door and large window would be replaced with square windows. The east side would be updated with a new large delivery door. The south side would be altered with fewer new windows high on the wall; it would not replicate the existing pattern that helps define the barn. The building site would be converted mostly to parking—parking on the north (between barn and Cows Road) and west sides for customers, with gravel parking to the south for employees. The Hobart Barn will be an Art Studio and she continues to look for creative ways to reuse the old buildings on the site, including the barn on Montague Road.

Lynda Faye praised the plan and its thoughtful re-use. She asked for enhanced screening of the parking. Cinda likes the idea of planting crabapple trees to tie in with the apple orchards of Atkins Farm. She also believes that her plans will transform a dusty working site into a green and welcoming district. Staff pointed out that the windows are a highly visible feature that will be moved with new sizes. Louis Greenbaum asked if the logo of the Mill District is the same as that of the rock crusher up at the Notch and Cinda Jones said she will look into that. Janet Keller praised the southern windows of the barn and thinks they should be kept even if they are non-functioning. Cinda countered that they will not be seen by the public very often. Pat Holland of 105 Montague Road expressed dismay that the Atkins delivery van will access the back of the new Atkins barn via Montague Road and mentioned that the roof of the barn would be a good spot for solar panels. Vince O'Connor of Summer St. added that the owner does not always pay for the solar panels. He also said that parking lots should be readily seen, not hidden behind screens, so as to attract visitors. Paola di Stefano encouraged more landscaping to make the site attractive.

Although this was not a public hearing, the commission agreed that that they would convey a few recommendations to the Planning Board regarding this project. Overall, the Commission supported the project because it creatively reuses an existing structure while maintaining much of the existing framing and character. The few recommendations are meant to help keep the existing architectural elements and allow Atkins to use the barn:

- Retain the existing pattern and location of windows (with new or reused windows) as they are a defining element of the barn, especially on the south side. Although the current design has an open floor plan with minimal free-standing shelves, the Commission asked whether this could be re-examined to help preserve the windows and allow natural light into the barn. If this cannot be accomplished, the Commission recommended that the existing windows remain on the exterior of the barn as an aesthetic, not functional element and that the new windows be placed in a more systematic pattern that reflects the existing locations.
 - Add more landscaping (trees, bushes) and green space in and around the parking lot as a visual buffer.
 - Screen the dumpsters and trash on the south side of the barn
- b. ***Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst:*** The Society asked questions of the commission about the signs and public access to view the restored Tiffany window. The commission would like to have a site visit. It was also noted that the landscaping on the site had not been completed according to the plans the Society had presented.
- c. ***Review of the Outbuilding Survey:*** postponed until next meeting.
- d. ***Carriage Shops Redevelopment and the Amherst History Mural:*** Mike announced that the developer will address the commission about possible plans for the mural and the site at a future meeting. The artist of the mural, David Fichter of Cambridge MA, raised concerns

about the loss of the mural and stated that he believes the Town created an easement for the permanent survival of the wall with the mural. He also noted that before the mural, the site was badly neglected. He also reminded the commission of the hard work involved in making the mural, the community involvement and the extensive research. He is willing to work with the Town to save the mural. Mike Hanke noted how impressed he was with the quality of the mural and reminded the members and the public that the developer appears open to ideas and suggestions. Edie MacMullen pointed out that it was a town-wide effort with funds and time doStaffd by volunteers. Staff said that the easement allows the Historical Commission the power to protect the mural in general terms. Vince O'Connor thought the Historical Commission should ask that a survey be done to clearly define the boundaries of the burial ground and to recommend an archeological dig before construction.

Mike reminded the public that in August or September the developers, and artist, will attend a public meeting to present plans for the mural.

- e. ***Cushman Retreat:*** Edie MacMullen began this discussion with a presentation of materials outlining the historic nature of Cushman Village and how the planned Retreat would destroy the small scale, residential nature of the area. Similarly, it would destroy what was once a bridle path through the woods from Flat Hills Road to Cushman. Staff said that at this stage in the development—the Retreat is seeking subdivision approval from the Planning Board—there is little jurisdiction for the commission to intervene. Staff said that during the site plan review process the commission would have the authority to make recommendations to the Planning Board regarding the impact of the Retreat to the Cushman Village Center. The Historical Commission could voice concerns about scale and massing which could be detrimental to the historical fabric of the area. Mike asked that we do as staff suggested and play an advisory role during the site plan review. Vince O'Connor asked that the Commission consider the site plan review in particular as he believes the project does not meet the standards for subdivisions and site plan reviews. Laura Lovett pointed out that currently the area is 88% single family housing and the move to 60% rental units changes the nature of the area dramatically. Mike said that the commission would listen to the neighbors' concerns and help convey those to the Planning Board. Ann Hollingworth voiced concern that Landmark Properties was not concerned with the historic nature of the landscape.
- f. ***CPA:*** Vince O'Connor addressed the Commission asking it to support an increase in the CPA surcharge to 3%. It will be a ballot question this fall. He also urged members to prepare testimony before the September meeting of the CPA as this is an opportunity to help direct funding. Staff mentioned that the CPA committee will hold a public hearing to learn about the community's priorities for funding and that the commission should be prepared for this and have priorities laid out in preparation. Laura Lovett urged the Commission to codify our goals and that we must be accountable for the projects we undertake.

Old Business:

- a. **North Amherst Common:** The Town did not submit a PARC grant but will continue to explore funding to improve the Common. The commission should take an active role in these discussions.
- b. **Preservation Awards:** These will be handed out in September or in the fall at the Select Board meeting
- c. **Webpage:** The commission discussed how to update its webpage, including adding links to other resources and listing current projects in town. Meg mentioned a link to MACRIS. Vince O'Connor asked for a list and links to the Historic Districts, National Register and Local Historic Districts as well as Nomination forms.
- d. **Review of Outbuilding Forms:** MHC will review these. Lynda and Laura both were impressed with the list and how thorough it was; the properties were well researched with good resources. The commission said that some of the photographs of the buildings could be better.
- e. **Membership:** The Commission needs to find new members. Laura mentioned Leah Richards or Bruce Laurie. Jim will ask Pat Holland, and Barry Levy. Laura will ask Ron Story.
- f. **UMass Chapel:** UMass has started the process to nominate the Chapel for listing on the National Register. They are also planting 8 new trees along the Alumni Walk along the Campus Pond.
- g. **Civil War Tablets:** Town staff is discussing plans with the Jones Library to determine if they could be displayed in the library, possibly the Woodbury Room. HAI Architects will do the renderings.
- h. **West Cemetery Projects:** Town staff said that the Commission would need to apply for a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals to install the identification and welcome signs for West Cemetery. Staff said that there may not be sufficient funds to fabricate and install four signs. The commission agreed to meet at the cemetery to determine exact location of the signs for the ZBA application.

Meeting adjourned at 10:47