

Amherst Historical Commission
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING
Monday, November 23, 2015
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.

Attendance

Meg Vickery, Jane Wald, Laura Lovett, Steve Bloom, Bob Romer, Jan Marquardt

Guests: Nate Malloy (staff), Jonathan Tucker (staff), Larry Kelley, Carol Gray, Tom Davies (Amherst College), Olivia Mausel (Holyoke Historical Commission)

Announcements

None

Review and Approve Minutes

Moved to accept minutes of October 19, 2015 by Wald, seconded by Bloom. Voted 5-0-1 to approve as submitted.

New Business

Update on status of delay for 'Little Red Schoolhouse'

[Wald stated for record she is employee of Amherst College and Romer that he put three sons through LRS.]

Gray gave an update on preservation efforts after 6 months of demolition delay. Still working on resolution of Little Red Schoolhouse situation with research and outreach, needs full 12 months. Website and other methods are getting word out to Amherst community. Discussed types of research and outreach. Asking for Historical Commission to join with them to help preserve the building per examples she brought from other municipalities. Made the case that they need help against Amherst College and wants the commission to join in the process. Wants a meeting with the president of Amherst College and would like the commission to attend.

Holyoke representative also made supportive case. She calls it the McKim, Mead, and White site.

The commission asked Ms. Gray direct questions about new location and fundraising. Gray is still focused on getting Amherst College to reuse the building on campus since off site locations have not worked out. Still wants to access endowment funds for moving costs. Gray has not made any progress with new location or independent funds for move, only with garnering community support. Has decided to focus entirely on an agreement with Amherst College to save building. No longer looking for another location or separate funding. Proposed meeting

with president to move on back road to part of campus where the Tuttle House used to be situated.

Meg reminded Gray and the commission that Amherst College does a great deal toward historic preservation on their campus.

Davies responded for Amherst College. Felt they had done their due diligence and though the College appreciates the building, the costs relative to the benefits was untenable. The College has met with Gray's group for six months, brought documentation (presented to CPA) showing the realistic moving needs and costs that make it impossible to relocate the schoolhouse. Ideally would like to save this historic building, as they have others (with preservation award), and do not take issue lightly. However, costs are simply too high to warrant preservation in this case.

Wald asked explanation of divergence in two estimates for moving between \$150,000 (Gray) and \$1 million (Amherst College) as well as a specific plan and schedule for preservation usage. Answer was difference in the work proposed—strictly moving the building and re-siting at a new location with foundation and utilities. There is no plan or schedule.

The commission may discuss at a future meeting to decide about any course of action it would take.

FY2017 CPA call for proposals

Discuss supporting request for C. Thompson headstone in West Cemetery

Bob Romer presented a proposal to mark Thompson family member Christopher's place in West Cemetery, near his son's grave with a marked stone. Quote for granite from Dorsey Memorials to match son's with text listing his military record for \$2470 installed within the Thompson plot. A marble stone, matching the existing stone material, was quoted over \$5,000. Discussion about importance of black Civil War (Union) soldier in town's history and about listing the date stone would be erected (2016). Romer asked if the commission would be willing to sponsor this proposal that would then be ranked among all the proposals when reviewed. The commission recommended a budget of \$5,000 to be sure to cover all costs, which could include additional text to explain the historical significance of Mr. Thompson and his family. Any unused funds would be given back to the CPA. The commission voted unanimously (6-0) to support the proposal.

Review Historic Preservation Summary for CPA Plan

Draft reviewed and modified two months ago will be sent around to new members and responses should be sent to both Nate and Laura.

Demolition Delay

294 Potwine Lane—Garage/Barn

Generally agreed there was no problem for demolition; no reason for delay because of condition of barn. The commission voted unanimously (6-0) to not hold a hearing and allow demolition

Update on 332 West Street

Staff noted that the CPA money is still there. There is a new owner who owns properties about six properties in Amherst, Hadley and Northampton. It is not known if he will try to preserve the barn and has not yet been approached by the Town. Information about the CPA funds and barn was given to the realtor by town staff. Commission will write letter to new owner about our efforts to preserve it and may ask for an agreement to simply conserve for the time being. There was a brief discussion of creating separate parcel for the barn that the Town might pursue. Meg will draft letter.

Review possible changes to demolition bylaw

Bloom brought an article from Southampton as example a demolition delay bylaw with an automatic threshold trigger for a hearing for historic structures. The commission discussed making contact with the community to learn more about its application.

Tucker presented a proposed demolition bylaw with revisions of many of the current issues resolved. Commission discussed the fine amounts and penalty against further building permits. Discussion of length of demolition delay—perhaps make it 12-18 months rather than current 12 and proposed 18. Plan to review materials before next meeting for further discussion, moving forward in order to get into spring 2016 Town Meeting.

Old Business

West Cemetery signs

Commission will need to consider separating interpretative signs and management signs in order to install signs in phases.

Next Meeting

December 14.