

Amherst Historical Commission
MEETING
Monday, December 5, 2016
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m.

Members present: Meg Vickery, chair, Steve Bloom, Laura Lovett, Jan Marquardt, Ted Parker, Robert Romer, Jane Wald

Staff present: Jonathan Tucker

Others present

Guests: Carl Weber, Interim Director, Facilities and Grounds, Hampshire College. Tim Binzen, independent cultural resource management consultant; William Zimmer (JCA); Bruce Coldham, architect and member of the Board of the North Amherst Community Farm (NACF), others.

1. Demolition Delay Public Hearing

1095 West Street (hearing continued from Sept 12, Oct. 26, and Nov. 16)

Presentation by Carl Weber, Interim Director, Facilities and Grounds, Hampshire College.

Mr. Weber explained that the Ives property at 1095 West Street, sitting unoccupied for two years, has become a safety and liability issue for the College. The College has found no use for the deteriorating house and barn due to their condition and isolation from other College facilities, and has determined that rehabilitation of the structures for residential or office use would be prohibitively expensive. Upon removal of the buildings, the College is considering converting the roadside part of the property to open greenspace (park) adjacent to the bike and pedestrian paths, and to commemorate the buildings, their histories, and occupants with historical markers in the green space.

Mr. Weber presented a slide show of maps and photographs of the exterior and interior of the house and barn/shed/lean-to grouping.

Mr. Weber introduced Tim Binzen, an independent cultural resource management consultant whom the college had retained to assess the Ives' property's historical significance and potential for preservation. Mr. Binzen reported that the condition of the house is fair to poor, compromised by deterioration and riddled with asbestos. The framing does not consist of standard milled lumber, but rather of older timber elements apparently salvaged from uses prior to the house construction prior to 1833. Some hemlock rafters retain their log form and tree bark. Mr. Binzen asserted that the house and barn do not possess qualities of historical significance that would make it eligible for listing, as an individual property, on the National Register of Historic Places.

Several members of the Historical Commission expressed interest in finding a way to retain the barn since it is characteristic of the rural nature of this part of Amherst and such outbuildings are quickly disappearing. The estimate of \$94,000 to rehabilitate the barn suggests the possibility of adaptive re-use even if the house is removed. Mr. Tucker observed there is, in fact, historical social significance attached to those who occupied house. The value of the structure may be in the stories it tells, and in the social, cultural, and physical information revealed as it is gradually dismantled.

Ms. Lovett pointed out that Philip Ives was a highly-regarded geneticist who had a productive career while managing severe hearing loss. He left a detailed diary of all aspects of his life that provides a window on daily life on the Ives property. She recommends that, if Hampshire College dismantles the building(s), it should use that process to investigate and document Phil Ives' life and work. Other suggestions included retention of useful or valuable elements of the buildings such as the wide-plank floors. Mr. Weber confirmed that Hampshire College was committed to salvaging significant materials.

In conclusion, Mr. Weber stated that he is eager to continue the conversation about the disposition of the Ives house and barn, and that he has appreciated hearing views of Commission members about the importance of the barn as a structure that could be rehabilitated and the importance of documenting the dismantling of the house. He requested a further continuance to obtain more information.

Ms. Marquardt moved, Mr. Parker seconded, and the Commission voted unanimously 7-0-0 to continue the public hearing to Tuesday, January 10, 2017, at 7:00 pm

2. Demolition Delay

Preliminary Review: 133 Belchertown Road, Alpine Commons

Owner Mass Alpine Commons Ltd. Partnership submitted an application for a demolition permit for a burned-out apartment building, part of a small apartment complex built in 1973 on a former farm property. It is adjacent to a related historic house at 135 Belchertown Road.

Ms. Lovett moved, Mr. Parker seconded to hold a public hearing on the demolition request. The Commission voted 0-7-0 on the motion, deciding against holding a public hearing.

3. New Business

a. FY18 Community Preservation Act (CPA) Historic Preservation—Private Project Proposals

1) 35 Triangle Street – Woman's Club – fire escapes and porch roof

Woman's Club withdrew their request for CPA funding due to the requirement for a preservation deed restriction

2) 742 Main Street – Jewish Community of Amherst, Steeple restoration

Mr. Zimmer reported that, at the suggestion of the Historical Commission, he had researched the possibility of accessing Massachusetts Preservation Projects Funds to defray some of the costs of steeple and belfry restoration and determined that such an application was not feasible for the current year. Requirements for MPPF funding hamper the JCA's eligibility. These include:

- The requirement to have 25% of total project costs and commitments for 50% of matching funds in hand at the time of application;
- The necessity of excluding the JCA's current architect from the public bid process;
- Lack of capacity to manage a detailed design development, preparation of construction documents, and bid process during Jewish High Holidays as required by the MPPF timeline.
- The odds against competing successfully for a meaningful grant given the constraints on funding for the grant program.

Commission members recognized these impediments and thanked Mr. Zimmer for his careful attention to investigating supplemental sources of project funding.

3) 1089 North Pleasant Street – North Amherst Community Farm – Study for Restoration/modernization of farmhouse and Barn

Following up on suggestions offered at the November 26 meeting of the Historical Commission, Mr. Coldham presented a revised proposal for CPA funds, which included study of the barn as well as the house. The addition of a feasibility study for barn rehabilitation does not increase the level of CPA funds requested by the North Amherst Community Farm (NACF).

Mr. Coldham described a new approach to rehabilitating the barn, which includes dismantling the structure, pouring a new foundation, reconstructing the framing, and re-sheathing the frame. Insertion of a deck to support a second floor will provide support for housing units for farm apprentices. He asserts that it will be possible to rehabilitate the barn as a durable, stable structure. NACF may return with a proposal for CPA funding on the order of \$100,000 for capital improvements to the barn in 2019 or 2020.

4) 664 Main Street – Ithmar Conkey House Restoration
No further information forthcoming from applicant.

b. FY18 Community Preservation Act (CPA) Historic Preservation – Public Project Proposals

1) North Common restoration/rehabilitation

This \$400,000 CPA proposal is a joint funding request of the Historical Commission and Leisure Services (LSSE). Mr. Tucker explained that the Amherst Historical Commission is presumed to be the town body with oversight of designs for the town's historic commons. New information suggests that the request may be reduced to \$360,000.

Members emphasized need for talented landscape architect sensitive to historic landscapes and able to generate creative designs for this open, recreational space. They asked for more information and dialogue with LSSE, which is the primary proponent of this project. Further discussion addressed the possibility of organizing a competition for designs for the North Common and that the Historical Commission could conduct the competition after CPA funding for the project is secured.

2) West Cemetery 1870 Headstone Restoration

Monument Conservation Collaborative has proposed a two-year schedule and a three-year schedule for repair and restoration of markers in the 1870 section of West Cemetery for consideration by the Historical Commission.

Discussion focused on concerns about risk of injury due to the perilous condition of some stones and liability for the Town. Various suggestions came forward about the most advantageous way to stage the work to maximize resources.

3) Jones Library Historic Structures Report. The production of such a report, documenting the historic significance of various elements of the library building and features, is time sensitive due to a parallel process for seeking funding for renovation from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

4) Hampshire County Courthouse

The Hampshire Council of Governments requests \$318,906 from the town of Amherst to reach a funding goal of \$1,333,000 from all municipalities in the county to restore and preserve the Hampshire County Courthouse.

Following presentation and discussion of all private and public proposals for CPA funding, the Historical Commission determined preliminary project priority for further discussion and referral to the Community Preservation Act Committee.

Public Projects

North Common Restoration	\$180,000
as the Historical Commission share of the total request of \$360,000, pending dialogue with LSSE	
West Cemetery 1870 Headstone Restoration	\$50,000
for stabilization of most hazardous markers	
Jones Library Historic Structures Report	\$35,000
Civil War Tablets	\$0
Use existing funds (\$40,000) to add to Finegold Alexander for tablet design in Jones	
Hampshire County Courthouse	\$0

Private Projects

JCA Steeple and belfry repair/restoration	\$200,000
NACF Farmhouse & Barn Historic Assessment	\$10,000
Conkey House	\$0

Preliminary total to be recommended \$475,000

4. Announcements

Mr. Tucker recommends to Commission members Max Page's book, *Why Preservation Matters*, for its discussion of the cultural value and social meaning of space, form, landscape, use, and structure to a community.

5. Next meeting

Tuesday, January 10, 7 pm.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Parker moved, Ms. Lovett seconded, voted unanimously 7-0-0 to adjourn at 9:35 pm.