

Amherst Historical Commission
PUBLIC MEETING
Wednesday, August 2, 2016
Lower Level Meeting Room, Bangs Community Center
7:00 p.m.

Members present: Steve Bloom, Laura Lovett, Jan Marquardt, Ted Parker, Robert Romer, Meg Vickery (Chair)

Members absent: Jane Wald

Staff present: Senior Planner Jonathan Tucker

Others present: Barbara Ford, Hilda Greenbaum, Louis Greenbaum, Sarah McKee, Patricia Holland

Ms. Vickery opened the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

Ms. Lovett agreed to take minutes.

1. **Announcements** - There were none.
2. **Minutes** – None were ready for review and approval.
3. **Demolition Delay** – Preliminary Review.

Mr. Tucker reported that Hampshire College had indicated it would be filing demolition applications for some buildings in the near future.

4. New Business

- a. West Cemetery – Headstone Restorations Phase II (1870 Section)

Mr. Tucker reported that two consultants, Monument Conservation Collaborative and Daedelus, Inc., had expressed interest in providing cost estimates. MCC had already visited the cemetery and had provided estimates that included multi-year options. Mr. Parker said that the project could be done in a single year. Ms. Lovett, speaking to her experience on the Community Preservation Act Committee, said that the cost was a lot for the community to absorb in a single year.

- b. Other Items Not Anticipated

- 1) Jones Library – It was noted that the Commission had been receiving inquiries from citizens wanting it to weigh in on the schematic grant design process underway.

Ms. Vickery said that she would prefer a separate meeting for any discussion of the library project. There was no demolition delay application in front of the Commission, so it needed to be careful about not taking evidence in advance of the permit process.

Sarah McKee announced that the Save Our Library group was nominating the library to Preservation Massachusetts for Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources status. She distributed an accompanying handout.

Ms. Vickery said that because the Historical Commission would have a permitting role in any library expansion, she did not want to receive a presentation outside of a public hearing. Mr. Parker agreed, saying there should be no presentation tonight.

Ms. Greenbaum inquired whether audience members could ask questions about the project. Mr. Parker said that he was very uncomfortable hearing evidence with regard to the library project without a full public hearing as the setting.

Ms. Greenbaum asked if the Historical Commission would track down the following information: a) the status of historic preservation restrictions associated with past CPA appropriations for the library, b) how much of the building those restrictions covered, and c) whether those restrictions extended to the interior of the building. It was her contention that the schematic plans would “pretty much remove” historic aspects of the interior of the library.

Ms. Vickery said she looked forward to a meeting where those issues could be discussed.

Mr. Parker said that the Commission needed to remain impartial with respect to the Preservation Massachusetts application.

- 2) Mill River Bridge letter – A letter with regard to the Mill River bridge replacement project was reviewed. Mr. Tucker reviewed some of the recommendations of the Puffers Pond 2020 plan with respect to the bridge and subsequent traffic flow.
- 3) Amherst Cinema PV array – A letter from the Amherst Cinema was reviewed, requesting that the Historical Commission write a letter of support to MHC regarding the low impacts of the roof-mounted PV array. Ms. Marquardt reported that the Design Review Board had looked at the project and the panels were very low, and not visible from any adjacent area except South Prospect Street, where very little of them protruded visibly above the parapet. The item was scheduled for an upcoming agenda.

5. Old Business

- a. Thompson Memorial stone – Mr. Romer presented revised designs for the stone historic interpretative sign. There was consensus that if the proposed changes were made, the layout works. The Commission authorized Mr. Romer and Mr. Tucker to carry the project forward and make design decisions.
- b. Writers Walk Signs – Ms. Marquardt presented a revised version of the Norton Juster sign, which was reviewed and approved. There was a consensus to move forward with the designs. For residences, an additional sign would be placed on the front of the plinths that read “Private

Residence: Do Not Disturb.” For reasons of cost, the Commission generally approved substituting polished concrete for granite for the sign plinths, but asked to see samples of each.

- c. Amherst Preservation Plan – A revised version of the Preservation Actions section of the Plan was reviewed and short-range, mid-range, and long-range actions discussed.
 - 1) CPA Projects – North Common. Mr. Tucker reported that Town Meeting had authorized the use of \$90,000 in CPA funds to support the project. There was discussion of design.
 - 2) Alternative Historic Preservation funding – A conversation with the Town Assessor was recommended with respect to how assessment or other Town taxation and fees could be adjusted for historic properties. Mr. Parker volunteered to approach the Assessor about this.
 - 3) Regulatory Actions – More discussion was needed.

The Historical Commission asked to be sent copies of several documents: the most current Downtown Wayfinding sign images, the East Common report, information on the Civil War tablets, the most recent CPAC draft Plan language, and links to the story of the rescue of Angeline Palmer.

The Commission asked that additional historic preservation consultants be sought with respect to assessments of 12 Hallock Street and 236 North Pleasant Street.

Ms. Marquardt asked if the Preservation Award program could be put on a future agenda.

Mr. Parker said that he was working on revisions to the demolition delay regulations. Mr. Tucker said they might be able to be brought to the 2017 Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. Vickery asked that a revised version of the Actions be brought to the next meeting along with the CPAC Plan language.

6. Next Meetings - The next meeting was set for August 31, 2016.

7. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jonathan Tucker, Senior Planner