

MINUTES
Hamilton Historic District Commission
November 2, 2017

Members Present: Tom Catalano, Chair, Stefanie Serafini, Edwin Howard, Jack Hauck and George Connolly.

Staff Present: Dorr Fox

Tom Catalano opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

MINUTES

Jack Hauck made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 12, 2017 meeting. Ed Howard seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE: 587 BAY ROAD – SOLAR PANELS

Mr. Catalano explained the background for the determination that the solar panels needed to be reviewed by the Historic District Commission. When Jeff Allsopp presented the concept of placing solar panels on the roof of his building, he told him that the project needed Historic District Commission review. Mr. Catalano noted that he and Dorr Fox had researched whether solar panels needed to come before a historic district commission. This research resulted in the finding that whether to review solar panels is at the discretion of each individual historic district commission.

Mr. Allsopp explained his project and showed a photograph of a barn that had solar panels on its roof. He stated that his solar panels would be the same as the panels in the photo. He is using the same company and is putting similar panels on his roof. He is trying to get panels that are monochromatic. They would be all black. He noted that they would be located on the south side of the building facing the DPW yard. He decided not to scribe the panels around the cupola.

Stefanie Serafini inquired about the roofing material. Mr. Allsopp stated that it is made from asphalt architectural shingles. Therefore, there would be black solar panels on a black roof.

Mr. Catalano stated that he believes that it would be visually more successful if the solar panels covered the entire roof. Therefore, it would not look like panels on composition. He believes that the proposal is not the optimum way to have solar panels in an historic district.

Mr. Hauck stated that if the Commission approves the project, the approval needs to be carefully worded since it will set a precedent.

Mr. Allsopp stated that they had researched manufacturers and he believes that it is virtually impossible to cover the entire roof with solar panels. Mr. Catalano stated that there are alternatives that would cover the entire roof. He suggested that Mr. Allsopp use solar roof panels that will be produced by Tesla Solar Panels in the near future. They will be introduced in 2018. He noted that he is in line to be the first to have these panels in the region. They have not yet released how the technology will work. Mr. Catalano noted that he does not believe that Mr. Allsopp's proposal is the most successful application of solar panels in an historic district.

Mr. Howard expressed his concern about solar panels being unattractive and whether they would fit into an historic district. At this point he is opposed to having solar panels in the historic district. He does not believe that they fit into the historic architectural character of the district.

Mr. Hauck stated that he believes that they will see several future applications for solar panels. He believes that if the proposal is approved, they need to be careful and specific about the wording since it will be a precedent. He believes that if they open the door to allowing solar panels in the district, they will see additional applications. He noted that Mr. Allsopp will save money with the panels. Mr. Allsopp noted that in addition to saving money, he is in favor of green technology.

Mr. Howard noted that other historic districts allow anything in places that are not visible. Mr. Catalano stated that there are many things that they do not know about the solar panels. He noted that the plans do not have dimensions on them. He believes that the application does not have enough information to make a decision. He concurred that this would be a precedent making decision and they do need to be careful.

Mr. Catalano stated that he believes that the solar panels should cover the roof edge to edge. Mr. Allsopp inquired whether the Commission would approve the panels unless they covered the roof edge to edge. Mr. Catalano stated he would like to have more information.

Mr. Hauck inquired whether there has been any research into what other historic districts permit in relation to solar panels. Mr. Fox noted that the Old King's Highway Historic District Commission has permitted them in Dennis. Mr. Catalano noted that while he spends a lot of time on the Cape, he has not seen them. Mr. Hauck requested that Mr. Fox research this topic. Mr. Fox stated he will contact other people in the historic preservation field regarding the topic. He noted that Chris Skelly of the Massachusetts Historical Commission has given presentations on this topic. Mr. Catalano noted that Historic New England does not allow solar panels on the historic houses they have easements on. Mr. Fox noted that the houses with solar panels within the Dennis district are new construction and not historic structures. Ms. Serafini noted that perhaps they could only allow solar panels on newly constructed buildings.

Mr. Allsopp stated that his building is not visible to the public. Mr. Hauck noted that the driveway around Town Hall is a public way where the building can be viewed. George Connelly questioned how the Commission would handle a request for solar panels on a building on Bay Road. Mr. Catalano stated that they could have different standards for new buildings versus historic buildings.

Mr. Howard stated that if the panels covered the entire roof and there was an edge treatment, he would consider the plans carefully. Mr. Catalano concurred that this is the most important issue.

Mr. Hauck made a motion that they continue the discussion on the application until Mr. Allsopp returns with additional information. Mr. Connolly seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Allsopp inquired whether Mr. Catalano thought the panels would look better if they were scribed around the cupola. Mr. Catalano stated that they would. He noted that the new Tesla panels he is referring to are actually the roof shingles. There was further discussion about solar panels.

The Commission decided to meet on Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 6:30 p.m. to further discuss the project.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Fox noted that Ray Whipple, Chair of the Hamilton Historical Society, is proposing that the Liberty Road Markers in Patton Park be reproduced in a synthetic material, with the intention of moving the existing markers indoors to preserve them. The new markers would replace them in the park. They are applying for a grant to complete this work and are hoping to obtain the support of the Historical Commission. He noted that there are covers for them that are installed in the winter, however, they need further protection. He is obtaining an estimate for the cost from Skylight Studios in Woburn. Mr. Hauck noted that with the grant, the Town would not have any cost.

Mr. Catalano stated that he would hate to see a plastic reproduction. Ms. Serafini concurred. Mr. Catalano suggested that they be reproduced as a cast stone monument. Mr. Fox stated that he would look into cast stone.

Mr. Fox and Mr. Catalano noted that the restoration of the cannon wheels from Patton Park has been completed.

Mr. Fox discussed that they may wish to go to the Planning Board to discuss the demolition delay bylaw. Mr. Catalano agreed that they could go to the Planning Board and then go to the Board of Selectmen. They will go to the Planning Board in November or December. Mr. Catalano stated that he would attend the meetings. He noted that the majority of Towns in Massachusetts have a demo delay bylaw.

Mr. Hauck stated that the Commission should note that they are both the historical commission and the historic district commission. It was decided to change the website to acknowledge this.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.