

MINUTES  
**Hamilton Historic District Commission / Historical Commission**  
March 7, 2019

Members Present: Edwin Howard, Chair, Jack Hauck, Kristen Weiss, Elizabeth Wheaton and Katherine Mittelbush.

Staff Present: Dorr Fox

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Ed Howard opened the meeting at 6:03 p.m. He stated that Stefanie Serafini has resigned effective April 1, 2019. He read her resignation letter.

**PRESENTATION ON TOWN HALL RENOVATION/RESTORATION**

Mr. Howard noted that he, Tim Olson and Dorr Fox had a preliminary meeting to discuss the proposed renovations to Town Hall.

Tim Olson, Director of the Hamilton DPW, noted that he was joined by the project's OPM, Lee Sollenberger. He explained that he is representing the Town Hall Building Committee, of which he is a member. He noted that the committee has been meeting for over a year. They hired LLB Architects from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, who has completed a space needs assessment for the building. The Committee is currently reviewing design schemes. They started with eight options. They have pared down the options to two options. One option would involve a small addition to the rear of the building. The other option would maintain the existing footprint of the building, however, it would require removal of the grand staircase.

Mr. Olson explained that when the Town Hall was constructed, it not only served as the Town Hall, but entertainment and social events were held in the building. However, now there are other buildings that have taken over this event purpose, such as the Community House. Town Hall functions only for government purposes. The Committee is looking to determine how the building can best serve the current and future needs.

He referred to the plans that had been distributed which showed the floor plans for the basement, first floor and second floor. The Committee is aware that the building is historic and that people would be concerned if there were modifications to the front or side facades of the building. Eventually there will be site plans, landscape plans and architectural renderings.

The Committee has selected a concept (Option 8) with the intention of developing more detailed plans. They have selected the option that removes the staircase. They decided that this was better than altering the exterior of the building. An addition to the building would cost more money, so they are trying to be mindful of that. The size of the addition would be approximately the area of the existing staircase. They are now talking with people to obtain reactions to this decision.

They have completed a site survey, a hazardous materials survey and a geophysical survey. These reports came back with positive results. They believe that they will be able to move forward with the project as long as they obtain community support. They plan to have a public presentation on March 27<sup>th</sup> to gain an understanding of community concerns. They also plan to go to Annual Town Meeting to request additional funds for the OPM and design services.

They are presently looking to obtain information from the Historic District Commission on several topics, such as the handicapped ramp, in their efforts to achieve community support.

Ed Howard stated that the Town Hall is the crown jewel of the Town. It is a spectacular building. He believes that there should be funds in the budget for landscaping. He believes that the wheelchair ramp visually detracts from the nineteenth century building. He inquired whether there would be an elevator in the building. Mr. Olson explained that there would be an elevator in the building.

Kristen Weiss noted that in the preferred option that it appears that the handicapped ramp will remain. Mr. Olson stated that because the ramp has been established, the Town must apply for a waiver to remove the ramp. Jack Hauck stated that the original agreement regarding the ramp was that it was only supposed to be there for six months and then be removed. An alternative to the ramp was intended to be explored, however, no alternative was implemented. Mr. Olson noted that the door in the rear of the building will remain to give access to the building. The Town is planning to apply for a waiver to remove the ramp and have the rear entrance provide ADA accessibility. However, the waiver may not be granted. Mr. Sollenberger stated that according to ADA requirements, people with disabilities should not be treated as second class citizens and forced to enter a building through the rear door. They should be able to enter the front door like everybody else. However, waivers can be granted for historic buildings. They do not know yet whether a waiver will be granted for Town Hall.

Elizabeth Wheaton inquired whether they would present the cost differentials for the two schemes. Mr. Olson stated that he would have these numbers by the meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Hauck stated that Town Counsel has stated that the rear parking lot is a public way and that the rear of the building is therefore visible from a public way.

Katherine Mittelbusher inquired about whether there would be elevation drawings showing changes to the exterior. Mr. Olson stated that the changes to the exterior would only be for ADA compliance. He noted that the second floor stage might be lowered to be consistent with the rest of the second floor.

Mr. Howard stated that he is concerned about the tombstone for Mr. Whipple. While he is aware that Ray Whipple has stated that his relative is not buried there, he believes that an archaeological assessment may be needed. Mr. Hauck stated that

there are also six monuments on the site. Mr. Olson stated that they have surveyed the monuments and are aware of them.

Mr. Hauck inquired whether they have solved the rock shelf problem. This has created a water problem in the basement. Mr. Olson stated that a French Drain system was installed to resolve the problem. Mr. Hauck expressed concern that they would be clogged. Mr. Olson stated that as part of the project, they wish to ensure that the basement will be weather proof and water tight. They plan to use the basement for storage and archives.

Mr. Hauck inquired about the cupula, railing and weathervane. Mr. Olson stated that they plan to reinstall the cupula, railings and weathervane. He kept them when they were blown down in a storm and will reinstall them as part of this project.

Mr. Hauck inquired about the windows they plan to have. He noted that previously the Historic District Commission fought the installation of new windows in Town Hall. Mr. Olson stated that they believe that they can find historically appropriate windows. They have hired an architect with knowledge of historic preservation.

Mr. Howard stated that the Historic District Commission had been told that state of the art dehumidifiers should be located in the basement of Town Hall. Mr. Olson stated that they will have appropriate dehumidifiers since they plan to use the basement for storage and archives.

Mr. Hauck stated that it appears that they will have more space than previously. Mr. Olson stated that they will have a more effective use of space. Mr. Hauck inquired whether the energy advisor was involved with the project. Mr. Olson stated that he has invited Vicki Masone, the Town's energy advisor to participate in the project. Mr. Hauck noted that the second floor of Town Hall is not energy efficient. Mr. Olson concurred.

Ms. Mittelbusher inquired whether the interior elements of Town Hall that will be demolished will be documented. Mr. Olson stated that they have become well versed with the history of Town Hall, including Mr. Hauck's written history of the building. Mr. Hauck stated that most of the historic features of Town Hall have already been demolished. Ms. Wheaton noted that the grand staircase is still in place. However, it appears that it will not be there long.

Mr. Olson stated that the use of Town Hall has changed to accommodate the needs of the Town. It is no longer a performance and entertainment venue. It is a place where people conduct government business. They are giving people time to absorb that the grand staircase will be demolished and that there will be changes to the interior to the building.

Mr. Hauck noted that there will be a meeting room on the second floor. Mr. Olson stated that the Memorial Room does not meet the needs of a good meeting space. The second floor space will have state of the art equipment. Mr. Howard stated that a good sound system is needed.

Mr. Hauck noted that the small staircases will be eliminated. Mr. Olson stated that this is correct. Ms. Wheaton stated that the grand staircase is important and historical. She would like to see tradeoffs somewhere else. She stated that it is a community treasure. Mr. Olson stated that it will cost more to maintain the staircase. Ms. Wheaton stated that they should figure out how to cut costs in other places.

Ms. Mittelbush stated that it appears that Option 8 makes more use of the basement. Mr. Olson stated that they hope to make better use of the space. It will have an employee break room, facilities for the DPW staff, such as a locker room and showers, mechanicals for the building and the elevator and communications systems. The use of the basement has not been finalized.

Ms. Weiss acknowledged that she concurs that the changes in use of Town Hall should dictate the changes to the building, however, she believes all needs and concerns should be made to work. Mr. Olson stated that this is why he hired an architect with skills in historic preservation.

Mr. Olson inquired about the back parking lot being a public way, with the Commission having jurisdiction over the rear of the building. Mr. Hauck suggested he speak with Donna Brewer, Town Legal Counsel.

Mr. Olson stated that the public meeting on the Town Hall will be at 7:00 p.m. on March 27<sup>th</sup> at the Senior Center.

#### 690 BAY RD. – CERTIFICATE OF NON-APPLICABILITY

Mr. Fox stated that the applicant is planning to replace the windows in their house. According to Town records, the house was built in 1993. Therefore, it is not an historic house. He stated that he advised the applicant to submit an application for a Certificate of Non-Applicability.

Ms. Weiss stated that it is her understanding that the applicant is replacing vinyl with new vinyl windows. She wanted to confirm that they were not replacing wood windows with vinyl windows. Joe Najjar, the applicant's representative, stated that the new windows will be made of Fibrex, which is not vinyl. They are wood fiber.

Ms. Weiss stated that if the house originally had wood windows and the proposal was to replace them with vinyl windows, it would be very different than replacing vinyl windows with new vinyl windows. The proposal is to replace the materials with like materials. If anything, it appears that they are improving the windows.

Mr. Najjar showed the Commission the type of window that will replace the windows in the house. Mr. Hauck inquired whether the windows were the same six over six design as the current windows. Mr. Najjar confirmed that they were. Anthony LaMonaco, the home owner, stated that the look of the window will not change.

Mr. Hauck made a motion to approve the Certificate of Non-Applicability. Ms. Weiss seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. There was a short discussion on the process following the meeting. Ms. Wheaton questioned whether there was an appeal period. Mr. Fox will look into this. Mr. Howard signed the written decision.

#### MAPC CONFERENCE

Mr. Howard stated that he received notice that MAPC was cosponsoring a workshop on Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup> on historic preservation plans for cities and towns. He is unable to attend, however another Commission member may wish to. He also recommended a magazine as a resource for historic preservation.

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Mr. Hauck made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 20, 2018 meeting, with several amendments pointed out by Ms. Wheaton. Ms. Mittelbusher seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

#### HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP

Mr. Hauck explained that the map of the Historic District is on-line. He explained that the street numbers are not on the map. Mr. Fox also noted that new lot lines, representing subdivisions that were created after the approval of the district, were also not on the map.

#### NEW MEMBER ON THE COMMISSION

Mr. Howard explained that the Board of Selectmen had appointed a new member to the Historic District/Historical Commission. Her name is Olivia Hyde and she is the representative for district.

#### CREATE TOWN-WIDE HISTORIC PROPERTY INVENTORY

Mr. Fox stated that they have a list of properties that contain structures that were constructed prior to 1945 that was compiled for the demolition delay bylaw. Ms. Weiss stated that there is a good inventory for the structures in Asbury Grove, including structures that are historically maintained and those that have been altered. Asbury Grove is well documented because it is on the National Register.

Mr. Hauck stated that he thought Mr. Fox was going to look into whether he could find someone who would do the inventory for free or a reduced cost. Mr. Fox stated that he thought that conversation related to creating the guidelines. He noted that there is currently \$15,000 in the upcoming budget earmarked for the project. He looked into whether CPA funds could be used for the inventory, however town counsel has stated that this is an inappropriate use of the funds. Mr. Hauck stated he would look into how Topsfield created their inventory. Ms. Mittelbusher stated that in some communities the Historical Society sponsors the inventory. Mr. Hauck noted that the Hamilton Historical Society is currently in flux while they move to

new offices. Ms. Weiss stated that she did inventories while in grad school, however, she was paid for it. She also noted that if the project is completed by students, they would need to have a professor supervise the project. There were questions related to the compensation of students completing the project. Mr. Fox stated that the Hamilton Finance Director was not allowing the Town to hire unpaid interns. Mr. Hauck inquired whether Ms. Weiss could look into programs where students could complete the inventory. Ms. Weiss stated that the issue is having someone that could supervise the students. She does not have the time to do this. However, if the person doing the inventory is a paid consultant, the Commission could just supervise the project. She stated that if they had a budget for the project, they could tell the people that are doing the inventory that this is the amount of money we have, this is the project, and see how much they can accomplish.

Mr. Fox noted that he had told Mr. Hauck that he would investigate the survey and planning grants program at the Massachusetts Historical Commission. He has not done this yet, however, he will look into the program. Ms. Weiss stated that if the funding did become available for the project that she knows people who can actually complete the work or work with students who can complete the work.

#### COMPILE RULINGS OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Mr. Hauck noted that the Town records are not very good. Mr. Fox stated that he will be trying to recreate files from the Town Clerk's records. He would create files for each address. Ms. Wheaton inquired how far back the complete records go. Mr. Fox stated that they go back four years. Mr. Hauck stated that the old Town Reports have a listing of what was approved.

Mr. Howard stated he was hoping that they could have a record of the substantive issues that they had previously ruled on. Mr. Fox noted that they will be working on guidelines. Hopefully, the funding for these guidelines will be approved at Town Meeting as part of the Planning Department budget.

#### PHOTO FILE

Mr. Hauck stated that he would like to have a photo file of each property in the Town. He has a photo of all of the buildings in 1970. This can be used as a resource when someone wants to make a change. The Commission can look at the photo file to see how the building once looked. Ms. Weiss stated that this could be part of the inventory project.

Mr. Hauck stated that he would place the photo file for each property on the Town website. Mr. Fox questioned whether people would mind that the information on their house was on the website. It was noted that there was a lot of information on the assessor's page for each property. Ms. Wheaton stated that it may be inappropriate to have information on the rear yard on the site. Ms. Mittelbusher stated that when completing inventories, a person generally only documents what can be seen from the street. Mr. Hauck stated that it is interesting to see the minor changes over time.

## MINUTES

Mr. Hauck noted that the minutes on the website only go back to 2016. However, some of the Commission's major decisions go back further. Mr. Fox stated that he has older minutes that may be able to be placed on the website. Mr. Hauck stated that he has a list of all the members that have served on the Commission.

## APPLICATION SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

Mr. Hauck stated that he gets upset that people do not submit all of the required materials when they come to the Commission. There was an extensive discussion on the issue.

## DISCUSSION OF WORKSHOP ON DEMOLITION DELAY

Mr. Fox stated that Chris Skelly of the Massachusetts Historical Commission has stated he would be willing to present a workshop on demolition delay, if other towns were invited to attend. The Commission requested that Mr. Fox contact other adjacent towns to see if they would be interested in the workshop.

## NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Hauck would like to see if the subject 'demo delay' would be moved under bylaws. Mr. Fox will put the Historic District Commission bylaw on the site.

Mr. Hauck stated he would like 'Rulings' placed on the website. Ms. Wheaton noted that 'Commission Decisions' might be a better title. The members concurred that the decisions should have an explanation. There was an extensive discussion on how the decisions should be written.

Mr. Hauck has several articles about the Commission. He would like to see these on the website.

Mr. Hauck made a motion to adjourn at 8:07 p.m. Ms. Weiss seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.