

HERITAGE COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

May 5, 2011

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the City Council Chambers at 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, May 5, 2011, at 4:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates:

Chairperson Philip Donovan called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Chairperson Philip Donovan, Vice-Chairperson Frederick Richards, and members James McConaha, Robert V. Johnson II (who arrived at 5:10 p.m.), Marilyn Fraser, Dr. Bryant Tolles, and Steve Shurtleff. Absent from the meeting were Commission Members Carol Durgy Brooks and Elizabeth Durfee Hengen. City Planner Douglas Woodward and Administrative Specialist Donna Muir were also present.

Chairperson Donovan elevated the alternate members to full member status for the meeting.

2. Minutes of the April 7, 2011 meeting:

The Commission considered the minutes of the April 7, 2011, Heritage Commission meeting. A motion was made by Dr. Tolles to accept the minutes as presented and seconded by Mr. Shurtleff. Chairperson Donovan asked if there was any discussion regarding the minutes. The motion to accept the minutes of the April 7, 2011, meeting passed unanimously.

New Business:

- a. *Consideration of an application for a Discretionary Preservation Easement for a barn, wagon shed, and related extensions on the property of Lorraine V. Hayes Pierce at 84 Stickney Hill Road.*

Chairperson Donovan introduced Peter and Lorraine Pierce, owners of the property at 84 Stickney Hill Road, and Kathryn Temchack, the City's Director of Real Estate Assessment. He opened the public hearing at 4:38 and asked the applicants to provide an overview of their application.

Ms. Pierce stated that they had lived on the property for 33 years, having moved from New York City in the early 1970s. At that time, they were looking to find a place with a barn in this area. During their search they noted that a number of barns in the area were falling down. They felt that the property on Stickney Hill Road was perfect for their needs. Ms. Pierce stated that Ms. Hengen provided them with much information regarding the property and the surrounding area. Ms. Pierce reported that they had put a new roof on the barn about 20 years ago and around the same time, hired Eric Owen to jack up the barn and replace the stone foundation. Some of the sills were replaced at that time as well. She stated that some sills still need to be replaced and the roof needs to be done again. Mr. Pierce stated that there are no leaks in the roof of the barn, as they had put 5/8" plywood over the roof prior to reroofing it.

Ms. Pierce believes that the barn was built in two sections prior to the 1800s. Ms. Hengen showed her where pieces of wood were numbered, which builders were known to do in the 1700s. Mr. Pierce stated that the windows are original and that the barn has gunstock corners. Ms. Pierce

thought the barn may have started out as an English barn. The barn has two stories with a hayloft and a third story houses the beam for the hayfork, which still works. She stated that the wagon shed is beautiful, and they have tried to restore all the buildings as they fix and repair them. The west side of the wagon shed still needs to be repaired.

Ms. Pierce stated that they originally had horses, but now have only chickens.

Chairperson Donovan thanked the applicants and asked the Commission members if they had any questions.

Mr. McConaha asked if the applicants brought any additional photographs. Mr. Pierce stated they had, and the photographs were passed around.

Vice-Chair Richards stated that he had been out in the area recently and that it is the last historically intact agricultural area in Concord.

Ms. Pierce stated that from the south side of the property, they could hear traffic noise from I-89. Ms. Fraser asked if many people stop by to look at the property. Ms. Pierce said people constantly stop by to look at the property and to take pictures. The property is located near a bike route as well which results in more visitors to the property.

Ms. Fraser asked if the applicants replaced the window sashes with wavy glass and if so, was that difficult to do. Mr. Pierce stated that they had. Ms. Pierce said that in 1880, the house was "Victorianized", and the owners had saved everything, so the Pierces' were able to use the original sashes, which had the wavy glass panels. She said that the windows in the barn had been all mismatched, and Eric Owen took the old ones and installed the saved original sashes in the barn.

Ms. Pierce stated that they have also tried to bring the house back to what it was like in 1880. She said that the walls and ceilings are rounded and that there was only one layer of wallpaper in each room. She also stated that there is a hand-dug well in front of the wagon shed, which is 30 feet deep that they still use. They also have a new well.

Mr. McConaha asked Ms. Temchack if the barn and other structures were listed separately on the tax card. Ms. Temchack stated that they were all listed separately on the tax card under the outbuilding section.

Mr. McConaha stated that it is rare to have a historic survey form accompanying an application. He asked if anyone knew if the form was used for eligibility for the National Register. The Chair recognized Mary Kate Ryan from the NH Division of Historical Resources was present in the audience, who said that the Concord Agricultural Survey was never used to determine eligibility; the survey forms were used only to see what agricultural buildings remained in the community. She stated that the Stickney Hill area could be eligible for listing on the National Register.

Vice-Chair Richards stated that one aspect that is reviewed for the determination of a discretionary easement is the historic significance of the property. He asked the applicants if they knew who had lived on the property in the past. Ms. Pierce stated that they originally thought the property was built in 1880s, but while renovating they found it to be older and the house was possibly built as a cape originally. She found copies of renovations dating back to 1788.

Ms. Pierce also stated that in the cemetery located in the area most of the headstones are from the Stickney family, many of whom died from a small pox epidemic. She said that many of the headstones have recently been destroyed. Mr. Shurtleff stated that there is a hitching post at the cemetery entrance. Ms. Pierce stated that the road originally was between the house and barn on and the original owner, Mr. Bunten moved the barn behind the house. She stated that electricity was brought to the area in the 1930s. Ms. Pierce said that the Stickney's settled the area and that Colonel Stickney served in the Revolutionary War. One of the Pierces' neighbors researched the area and the families who lived in the area. Ms. Pierce has a copy of that research, but had not thought to bring it to the meeting.

Chairperson Donovan asked the Commission if they had any other questions for the applicants. He also stated that he felt the buildings are important and worthy structures.

[Mr. Johnson arrived at 5:10 p.m.]

Mr. Johnson stated that he would abstain from voting, but felt that the property was worth the entire 12 points.

Chairperson Donovan closed the public hearing at 5:12 p.m.

The Commission discussed the three areas of public benefit on the Discretionary Preservation Easement Evaluation form:

Scenic Enjoyment – The Commission agreed that the property was a beautiful landmark that retains its historic character and deserved an outstanding rating. (4 points)

Historical Importance – The Commission agreed that the property, included on the Concord Agricultural Survey completed by Ms. Hengen for the Heritage Commission, is historically important and also deserved an outstanding rating. (4 points)

Physical or Aesthetic Features – The Commission agreed that the property substantially reflects each of the four criteria in this category and deserved an outstanding rating. (4 points)

Mr. McConaha stated that the wording on the front of the form under this category concerns him and feels that the Commission should address this in the future. Ms. Temchack stated that the wording was taken directly from the website of the committee responsible for setting up the Discretionary Preservation Easements program.

Chairperson Donovan stated that the total of 12 points which the Commission awarded provides for a tax reduction range of between 65 and 75 percent. Vice-Chair Richards made a motion to recommend to the City Council that the City acquire a Discretionary Preservation Easement for the Pierces' Stickney Hill property and grant a tax reduction of 75 percent. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shurtleff. The motion passed unanimously.

Vice-Chair Richards stated that this property was as good as it gets in Concord and wanted to encourage the property owners to keep up and preserve their structures by providing this incentive. Mr. Shurtleff concurred and said that it is refreshing to have owners who are such wonderful caretakers of their property.

[Mr. & Mrs. Pierce and Ms. Temchack left the meeting at 5:18 p.m.]

- b. *Further consideration of the upcoming revisions of the Planning Board's Site Plan Review Regulations as they relate to demolition and preservation of historic structures.*

Chairperson Donovan asked Mr. Johnson to provide the Commission with a report on the Master Plan Regulatory Committee (MPRC). Mr. Johnson stated that the committee met and discussed neighborhood districts and the demolition review ordinance.

The consensus among the group regarding the demolition review ordinance was that they would like to see the period of review extended to a year, but were not sure that the City Council would be amenable to that. They also discussed a six-month review period and have not come to a final decision on a recommendation.

Regarding the neighborhood districts, the committee discussed creating a neighborhood district in the Kimball School area, as they believe that there would be enthusiasm from the property owners in the area.

Vice-Chair Richards, also a member of the MPRC, stated that he volunteered to research and write a brief outline of the pros and cons of the various initiatives that the MPRC is working on. Some of the research would include what other jurisdictions have for demolition review regulations and new construction requirements regarding historically significant properties.

Mr. Johnson stated that the MPRC understands the significance of establishing a firm relationship between the Heritage Commission and the Planning Board.

Chairperson Donovan stated that it is important to keep the momentum going with the MPRC, and asked Mr. Woodward what the Planning Board's timeframe was regarding their review of the Site Plan Review Regulations. Mr. Woodward stated that the Planning Board held another meeting on May 4, 2011, for additional review of the Site Plan Review Regulations and have the review on the agenda for their next regularly scheduled meeting on May 18, 2011. He believes that the Planning Board will have at least one more special meeting devoted to the review of the Site Plan Regulations and then would schedule a public hearing. Mr. Woodward stated that it would be nice to have any suggestions or recommendations from the Heritage Commission to the Planning Board prior to the public meeting.

Mr. McConaha said that it would be nice if the MPRC would have their comments to the Heritage Commission at the June 2, 2011, meeting, so that the entire Commission could discuss and prepare recommendations to the Planning Board. Chairperson Donovan asked that the MPRC prepare and present a broad outline of specific items for discussion at the June 2, 2011, Heritage Commission meeting. Vice-Chair Richards invited other Heritage Commission members to attend the next meeting of the MPRC.

Mr. McConaha stated that he would send an email to Craig Walker, the City's Zoning Administrator, requesting information that Craig prepared regarding changes to the demolition review ordinance. He will provide copies of Craig's information to the Heritage Commission members.

c. Further consideration of an application for a Certified Local Government Grant in May of 2011.

Chairperson Donovan asked Vice-Chair Richards to provide an update to the Commission regarding the Certified Local Government Grant for 2011. Vice-Chair Richards stated that he received a letter from the NH Division of Historical Resources acknowledging the receipt of the Commission's letter of intent to apply for the Certified Local Government Grant for 2011. He noted that the application deadline was changed from May 15 to May 20. Mr. Woodward stated that the City Council will decide whether to authorize the application for the grant at their meeting scheduled for May 9th. Mr. Woodward reminded the Commission that once authorized by the City Council, the completed application would need the City Manager's signature. Vice-Chair Richards stated that he would have the completed application to the City by May 15.

Mr. Woodward stated that City Council has also been asked to authorize the City's Grounds/Cemetery Division's application for a Certified Local Government grant. Mr. Shurtleff said that he believes the grant will be used to repair headstones at North Cemetery.

Old Business:

d. Demolition Review – Committee Report.

Chairperson Donovan stated that the Demolition Review Committee received an application on the 205 North Main Street property. Mr. Johnson stated that with Ms. Hengen out of town till the end of the month, it would be helpful if someone else from the Heritage Commission would volunteer to fill in for her on the Demolition Review Committee.

Vice-Chair Richards said that the Demolition Review Committee would be going full throttle to save this building from demolition. He stated that the SEA is purchasing the property to keep for future expansion. Currently, the property is under a purchase and sales agreement between the League of NH Craftsman and SEA. Mr. Woodward stated that the SEA has offered to allow the building to be saved, contingent on the building being moved. He also stated that the SEA expressed a willingness to allow for the salvage of any materials within the building that had historic significance. Vice-Chair Richards stated that the building has not been well-cared for and it would be no small expense to move the building and renovate it.

Mr. McConaha stated that it is important for the Heritage Commission to find out what would encourage owners not to tear down properties that have historic significance. Mr. Shurtleff wondered whether a 79D tax exemption could be created for these types of properties. Mr. Woodward stated that Frank Lemay suggested to him that there should be grants or other funding available to bring old buildings up to code. Mr. Johnson wondered whether there was anything on the state or federal level available. Mr. McConaha thinks that owners/developers perceive complications in dealing with the various authorities and don't want the hassle. Mr. Shurtleff said that he believes that individuals are more attuned to the historic significance of buildings than are political subdivisions.

e. Posting of official meetings.

Mr. Woodward reminded the Commission members that whenever a meeting or subcommittee meeting is held, there is a need for the meeting to be posted at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. The posting needs to include the reason for the meeting and the time, date, and place of the meeting.

Chairperson Donovan thanked the guests in attendance for their attendance at the meeting. The guests were students at Plymouth State University, who were learning about local government and sustainability.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Mr. McConaha and seconded by Vice-Chair Richards to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Donna Muir
Administrative Specialist