

HERITAGE COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

October 4, 2012

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the City Council Chambers, City Hall Annex, 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, October 4, 2012, at 4:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Chair Phil Donovan, Members Robert V. Johnson II, Dr. Bryant Tolles, Marilyn Fraser, James McConaha, Councilor Shurtleff and Vice Chair Fred Richards. Administrative Specialist Donna Muir was also present.

2. Minutes of the September 6, 2012 meeting:

The Commission considered the minutes of the September 6, 2012, Heritage Commission meeting.

A motion was made by Councilor Shurtleff to accept the minutes as written, and seconded by Dr. Tolles. Motion carried unanimously.

3. New Business

a. Sewalls Falls Bridge – Update from Ed Roberge, City Engineer

City Engineer Ed Roberge presented a quick update to the Commission regarding the Sewalls Falls Bridge project. He stated that the City has hired a consultant to do a detailed structural analysis and a load rating analysis of the bridge.

Mr. Roberge talked about what represents reasonable rehabilitation versus removing the bridge. He provided the Commission with a graphic showing the ratings of each of the bridge trusses and explained that those members shown in red needed replacement. He stated that the gusset plates are deficient as they do not meet current engineering standards. He stated that rehabilitating these would include replacing the rivets on the gusset plates with bolts. Mr. Roberge also explained that 70 percent of the steel would need to be replaced or rehabilitated. He reported that the bottom section of the bridge (the roadway) cannot be saved.

Mr. Roberge talked about the fatigue life of the remaining components of the bridge, stating that the bridge would have to be rehabilitated again within 45 years or so. He reported that the Department of Transportation, as well as the Highway Department, believes that the fatigue life would be less than 45 years.

Mr. Roberge doesn't believe that it is wise to salvage the bridge because of safety concerns. He explained that he presented this information to the NH Division of Historical Resources and they asked him to provide options. One option would be to leave the bridge in place for recreation, but would require the bridge to be rehabilitated, would affect adjacent properties and would cost approximately \$75,000 to \$80,000 per year for maintenance. He reported that a bridge historian is now part of the design team to assist the team in deciding on potential mitigation.

Building a new bridge online would require closing the bridge entirely, but the process of rebuilding would be quicker. If a new bridge is built offline that would require the bridge to be built working around traffic, and that would mean a longer timeframe for building the new bridge.

Mr. Roberge stated that the team is now putting together a comprehensive report to present to the NH Division of Historical Resources.

Ms. Fraser asked how many bridges of this type were still in use in New Hampshire. Mr. Roberge stated that the Sewalls Falls Bridge and a similar bridge in Henniker are the only two he knows of. He explained that Henniker is going through the same process as Concord in regard to their bridge.

Ms. Fraser asked what Mr. Roberge meant by keeping the bridge for recreation use. He explained that the bridge would be for walking traffic only and would still have to be rehabilitated.

Mr. McConaha asked Mr. Roberge to define the term rehabilitation. He responded that if the bridge were to be rehabilitated, it would include strengthening some of the verticals by adding steel, plate welding could be used, new gusset plates would be added, and some members would be replaced. Mr. Roberge stated that 70 percent of the bridge members would need strengthening and 30 percent need replacement. He stated that the consultants looked at the cost a couple years ago and it would be \$2.9 million which included a renovation component, but now the cost is up to about \$3.9 million.

Mr. McConaha stated that according to CHA's analysis, all this money could be spent to rehabilitate the bridge and in 45 years it would need to be done again. He also added that if the bridge was rehabilitated to modern standards, it would eliminate the historic integrity of the bridge.

Mr. Roberge stated that at the NH Division of Historical Resources meeting, Laura Black brought up some of these same points. He explained that due to safety concerns, engineers would be looking at the worst case scenario. He also explained that if any of the "good" steel that remains on the bridge, that steel was made in the 1930s and now steel is much better and stronger. It will cause a significant impact to those bridge members that remain, as they will be weaker than any new steel that is used. He stated that the current bridge can't meet requirements now, even with rehabilitation, and looking to the future with truck and traffic loads, especially when the Whitney Road connection takes place, would cause additional stress to the steel.

The Chair asked if the decision is made to move forward with a new bridge, has any designs been looked at and whether there was a way to give the new bridge some character. Mr. Roberge responded that the designs were done a couple of years ago.

Mr. Roberge suggested that the Heritage Commission let him know what design alternatives they would like and what would the Heritage Commission want for mitigation.

Mr. Johnson asked whether the bridge historian was looking at ways to rehabilitate the bridge. Mr. Roberge stated that the historian was asked to provide thought on mitigation and on rehabilitation feasibility.

Mr. Johnson asked whether the center pier would be in the new designs. Mr. Roberge stated that it would be, but that it would need to be replaced as the abutments now sit on sand and they would have to be mounted to the bedrock.

Mr. Johnson asked if the historical significance of the bridge is due to the style of the truss bridge or to the person who built the bridge. Mr. Roberge responded that the person who built the bridge is more important.

Mr. Johnson suggested using an interpretive sign and perhaps a piece of the bridge. He also suggested that either all or a portion of the bridge could be used someplace else. Mr. Roberge stated that it would be difficult to find a location and that he can't think of anywhere that the bridge would fit. He also reported that the City would have to pay to have the bridge relocated.

Mr. McConaha recalled that at one time there was an agreement regarding saving the bridge. Mr. Roberge responded that there was a Memorandum of Affects that was issued, which was never signed by the Department of Transportation. Later the Department of Transportation handed the project to the City.

Mr. Roberge explained that the next steps would include finalizing the report to the NH Division of Historical Resources. He stated that he would keep the Heritage Commission updated.

b. Granite Stepping Stones on the Route 3 Corridor Improvement Project – Update from Ed Roberge, City Engineer.

City Engineer Ed Roberge stated that during the Route 3 Corridor Project, two stepping stones were found. The stepping stone which was found at 262 North State Street is stamped "1889" and will be placed in the grass strip in the City's right-of-way on a bump-out. Mr. Roberge stated that this stone will be kept about 10 to 12 inches above grade, and it will be located about 25 feet from its original spot.

Mr. Roberge stated that another stepping stone, without any date or other inscription was found in this area of Route 3 as well. He said that there is no grass strip in which to place this stepping stone and he does not want to turn it over to a private landowner.

The Heritage Commission discussed various options for the second stepping stone, including using in the redesigned Main Street, in Penacook by the monument, keeping it in the area that it was found, or placed in the historic district.

Mr. Richards moved to have the stepping stone remain in the neighborhood where it was found. Ms. Fraser seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Roberge stated that he would bring pictures of the two mounted stepping stones in the future.

c. South Main Street 19th Century Manufacturing Facilities 2011 CLG Grant Project – Public Forum Debriefing.

Mr. Richards and Ms. Muir reported that approximately 20 people attended the public education forum, at which Lisa Mausolf, the consultant for the grant reviewed the history of the surveyed South Main Street projects. A few owners of properties that were surveyed provided anecdotal information on their properties. Ms. Muir stated that all requirements of the grant have been completed.

d. Update on outreach for Neighborhood Heritage Districts.

The Chair stated that he and Mr. McConaha spoke and Mr. McConaha followed up with Hope Zanes, one of the property owners in the Stickney Hill neighborhood. She told Mr. McConaha that the neighbors appreciated the opportunity to speak with the Heritage Commission regarding the Neighborhood Heritage

Districts and other options for protecting their neighborhood and explained that the neighbors had not had any further discussions. Mr. McConaha stated that he explained about the grant and the need to get a feel from the neighbors whether they would be interested in pursuing the Neighborhood Heritage District program. He stated that Ms. Zanes would talk with the neighbors and get back to Mr. McConaha.

The Chair stated that there are two steps to the process of applying for the grant, the first being to find a neighborhood that is interested and secondly, to go before City Council to get their blessing for applying for the grant.

The Commission discussed other neighborhoods, including Penacook village. The Chair stated that more work will need to be done.

4. Regular Business

a. Demolition Review Committee Report

The Chair stated that there were no demolitions applications submitted in the past month.

b. Heritage Sign Program

The Chair reported that there had been no new sign applications submitted to his knowledge.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Marilyn Fraser and seconded by Dr. Tolles to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Donna Muir
Administrative Specialist