

HERITAGE COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

October 6, 2011

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the City Council Chambers, at 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, October 6, 2011, at 4:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates:

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

Present at the meeting were Chairperson Donovan, Members Dr. Bryant Tolles, Jr., Robert V. Johnson, II, Stephen Shurtleff, Marilyn Fraser, and Carol Durgy Brooks. Administrative Specialist Donna Muir was also present.

2. Minutes of the September 1, 2011 meeting:

The Commission considered the minutes of the September 1, 2011, Heritage Commission meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Fraser to accept the minutes as presented and seconded by Dr. Tolles.

Ms. Muir stated that she had received a written request from Ms. Hengen to amend the minutes as follows: Page 2, 1st full paragraph, 2nd and 3rd sentences should be revised to read:

“Ms. Hengen agreed, stating the 1930s dwelling lacked architectural and historical significance and is a house type fairly common in the City. Furthermore, given the commercial development all around it, the dwelling has lost its contextual setting.”

Ms. Fraser amended her motion to include the changes requested by Ms. Hengen, and Dr. Tolles seconded the amended motion. The motion to accept the minutes of the August 4, 2011, meeting passed unanimously.

3. New Business:

- a. *Invitation to the Heritage Commission by Michael Castagna to have a conversation regarding the Schools Re-Use Program.*

Mr. Castagna was in attendance and addressed the members of the Heritage Commission. He stated that he has been contracted by the Concord School District to create a comprehensive plan for the adaptive re-use of the five schools which are or will be closed at the end of the current school year. The five schools are Walker, Rumford, Dame, Eastman, and Dewey. Mr. Castagna explained that he is in the process of gathering information regarding the sites and the surrounding areas, including cost analysis and real estate analysis, as well as public hearings and meetings with stakeholders to provide the Concord School District with a proposed plan.

He stated that he would to meet with members of the Heritage Commission to obtain feedback from the Heritage Commission. Ms. Fraser inquired about Mr. Castagna's time frame for the completed report. Mr. Castagna replied that his plan was to have the information gathering phase completed by the end of October, and the final report completed by mid-February. He also plans to hold public sessions in each of the neighborhoods during mid-January, to present his conclusions.

Chairperson Donovan stated that the proposed meeting should be held outside of the regular monthly meeting of the Heritage Commission. He stated that dates should be suggested to the members of the Commission, some of whom were not in attendance, to find a workable date. Once a date was selected, Chairperson Donovan would be in touch with Mr. Castagna.

b. Presentation by the Conservation Commission and Five Rivers Conservation Trust regarding the Acquisition of an Executory Interest in a Conservation Easement on Open Space Property northerly and southerly of Stickney Hill Road.

Ms. Hebert from the City's Planning Division was in attendance and addressed the Heritage Commission on behalf of the Conservation Commission. Ms. Hebert stated that the Conservation Commission, together with the Five Rivers Conservation Trust, is interested in acquiring a conservation easement on open space property northerly and southerly of Stickney Hill Road. She stated that a four-acre area surrounding the existing house and barn would remain outside of the conservation easement, while the remaining 76 acres of land would be protected and open to the public for hiking, birding, cross-country skiing, and other passive recreational uses. The current owners plan to place the property on the market, but would like to see the land protected. Ms. Hebert explained that the land is in current use, and the City will continue to collect taxes on the property.

Ms. Hebert reported that two adjacent property owners at 84 and 90 Stickney Hill Road have also verbally committed to conveying conservation easement on their land, if the City moves forward with the protection of Maplewood Farm. She explained that these other easements have the potential of protecting an additional 37 acres of open space in the Stickney Hill neighborhood.

The Maplewood Farm property was identified by the Heritage Commission as an important farmstead during a City-wide survey of rural agricultural properties. The farm was further recognized as a key component in the larger Stickney Hill Road historic agricultural neighborhood. Ms. Hebert stated that of the seven Stickney Hill Road area properties identified in the Heritage Commission's rural agricultural survey, this acquisition would have the potential to protect three of the properties.

Ms. Hebert explained that the funding for the acquisition would include funds from the Conservation Fund and grant funding under the Federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program, for which the Five Rivers Conservation Trust will apply.

Mr. Rob Knight, the Treasurer from the Five Rivers Conservation Trust, stated that the Trust is conducting a fundraising campaign to help offset the costs of procuring the conservation easement. He stated that \$42,000 has been pledged thus far.

Both Mr. Knight and Ms. Hebert stated that the support of the Heritage Commission would be appreciated. Ms. Hebert suggested that a member of the Heritage Commission could attend and speak in favor of the acquisition of the property the City Council hearing on October 11th, and/or a letter from the Heritage Commission favorably recommending the purchase of the easement could be sent to the City Council.

Chairperson Donovan asked whether there were any plans for the future preservation easement on the buildings or whether the current owners were marketing the property with intent to preserve. Ms. Hebert stated that the current owners were not interested in an easement on the buildings. She also stated that the realtor being used by the current owners is very conservation minded and she would be able to speak to prospective owners regarding preservation.

Chairperson Donovan asked what the timeframe for completing the conservation easement was. Mr. Knight stated that May 2012 is the likely timeframe. He stated that there is a purchase and sales agreement on the property, and the next step after City Council approval would be to apply for the federal grant funding.

Mr. Shurtleff asked whether the entire Stickney Hill area could be placed under a historic district designation. Ms. Hebert stated that the City Council would need to refer that to the Planning Division. Chairperson Donovan stated that perhaps the place to start would be to designate the area as a neighborhood heritage district. Ms. Hebert suggested that the area could also be designated under Scenic Road Protection.

Chairperson Donovan stated that this conservation easement would be a wonderful thing and that he feels it is important for the Heritage Commission to support the project.

Ms. Brooks made a motion to support the conservation easement, and Mr. Shurtleff seconded the motion.

Chairperson Donovan stated that he would write a letter of support on behalf of the Heritage Commission. Mr. Shurtleff stated that he would be at the City Council meeting and would verbally offer the Heritage Commission's support.

The motion to support the conservation easement passed unanimously.

- c. Follow up in regards to the rezoning and reuse of the Angwin Property at 107 Commercial Street.*

Chairperson Donovan reported that the Planning Board did not approve the change to the Master Plan or the rezoning of the property.

Mr. Johnson asked Ms. Hebert to explain the Conservation Commission's position on the 107 Commercial Street Property.

Ms. Hebert stated that the Conservation Commission felt that the rezoning was inappropriate and that Commercial Street served as a natural barrier between the districts. The Commission also thought that any additional impervious surface added as a result of development on the land would be detrimental to Watanummon's Brook and Horseshoe Pond. She stated that the Conservation Commission believes that the current residential use is appropriate for the site.

- d. Invitation to the Heritage Commission to attend the EPA/Historic Trust Team Community Meeting and Property Owner / Developer Workshop scheduled for the evening of November 15th and the morning of November 16th.*

Chairperson Donovan stated that the Heritage Commission had been involved in the previous meetings held in conjunction with this project, and that Commission members have been invited to attend the November meetings. He stated that there is no additional information at this time, but that he will keep the Commission members updated.

- e. Update on the Major Site Plan Application of the Bindery Redevelopment Property at 43 and 45 South Main Street, in regards to the Demolition Delay Committee.*

Chairperson Donovan reported that the Demolition Delay Committee held a public hearing last week on the Bindery Redevelopment properties at 43 and 45 South Main Street. He stated that a number of people spoke at the hearing, including Steve Duprey, the project developer. He also said that the Planning Board approved the site plan application at their October 5th meeting.

As a result of comments at the Demolition Delay public hearing regarding this and other historically significant properties that have been demolished within the City of Concord within the past year or so, Chairperson Donovan stated that there have been a few conversations with developers, City officials, and preservation individuals regarding options that could be pursued to help the City be more proactive in preserving historic structures in the future.

Chairperson Donovan stated that the Heritage Commission has worked and must continue to work to develop some of the options, such as the following:

1. The Neighborhood Heritage Districts – this was on the Commission's agenda about six or eight months ago, and some discussions with the Abbott Downing neighborhood have taken place.
2. The Certified Local Government grants have allowed the Heritage Commission to be proactive in identifying properties that are historically significant. Currently, 19th century manufacturing facilities in the South Main Street area will be inventoried once a consultant for the grant is selected.
3. Past CLG grants have allowed the Heritage Commission to inventory historic agricultural properties and historic school buildings.

Chairperson Donovan explained that other suggestions made to assist in the preservation of historic buildings include amending RSA 79-E, which is a tax incentive for buildings 75 years or older. The incentive is provided for the removal of older buildings and the development of new buildings in areas of the City that probably wouldn't otherwise be developed. Mr. Duprey has stated that he would like to see RSA 79-E amended even further to allow for the same tax credits when a building is being partially preserved as a way to offset the cost of redesign.

Chairperson Donovan stated that while none of these items would stop historic buildings from being demolished, all these things combined would help.

Mr. Shurtleff stated that there seems to be something wrong with the demolition delay process. He suggested asking the Mayor to form an ad hoc committee to look at the demolition process to revamp the ordinance. He suggested that the committee consist of preservationists, developers, property owners, planning staff, etc.

Ms. Brooks felt that it was important for the Heritage Commission subcommittee looking at the Neighborhood Heritage Districts move forward to have something to present to the Heritage Commission prior to the ad hoc committee, which Mr. Shurtleff has discussed, being formed.

She also stated that part of the issue is that the Demolition Delay Committee is usually notified about a project for demolition at the end of the process.

Ms. Audra Klumb, a local business owner who is taking classes at Plymouth State College, was in attendance. She asked why there was only a 49-day delay, as she understood that in some jurisdictions around the country that allow for a year long delay. Chairperson Donovan stated that the Heritage Commission has been reviewing and making suggestions to amend the demolition delay to reflect a 90-day delay. He said that he wasn't sure that even that length of time would be agreeable, and that you have to be cognizant of property owners' rights as well.

Mr. Shurtleff stated that one of the suggestions made by the Planning Board is to have inventories done for properties that are important historically to the City. Mr. Johnson stated that it costs money to have the inventories completed and that the City and the community needs to be willing to pay for them.

Ms. Muir stated that a similar discussion took place at the Planning Board meeting and that she would forward copies of the minutes of the Planning Board to the members of the Heritage Commission.

Chairperson Donovan stated that he felt that the good news was that this is now being discussed in City Hall and not only at the Heritage Commission. Mr. Shurtleff stated that developers are also talking about this.

Chairperson Donovan reiterated that the discussion must continue and that various options need to be put in place.

- f. Consideration of the NHDHR Project Review for a Lead Abatement at 75 River Road, Concord.*

Chairperson Donovan stated that this item was for information purposes only, and that no further action by the Heritage Commission was necessary.

- g. Amendment to the Code of Ordinances, Title 1, General Code, Article 1-6, Code of Ethics and Code of Ordinances, Title V, Administrative Code, Chapter 30, Administrative Code.*

Chairperson Donovan stated that these two amendments were adopted by City Council and the Heritage Commission members are governed by the amendments.

- h. Update relative to the CLG Grant for 19th Century Manufacturing Facilities – South Main Street Project.*

Chairperson Donovan reported that two proposals were received in response to the RFP for the CLG grant. The next step is to have a small subcommittee to review the grants and present a recommendation for selection the Heritage Commission at the November 3rd meeting.

4. Old Business:

- a. Heritage Sign Program.*

Ms. Brooks explained that the Heritage Sign Committee was hosting a workshop on Wednesday, October 12th at the Concord Library. She stated that 11 individuals have signed up for the program.

Ms. Brooks stated that there was a lot of enthusiasm at the workshop held in April of this year; however, no completed applications for signs were received.

Chairperson Donovan asked Carol how extensive the research needs to be for a sign application, as he is curious as to why not more signs have been sold. He stated that the program has been around for quite some time and the Committee has worked hard on the program. Ms. Brooks stated that it is not necessary to have copious research akin to applying to the National Register, but there has to be documentation to prove the assertions bear fact. She stated that although the Sign Committee members do not do the research for the applicants, they will provide assistance to them.

Ms. Brooks explained that she feels that it is necessary to have an ad designed for newspapers and the Heritage Commission's website. The Sign Committee has worked hard to get the Concord Monitor to do a story on each of the houses with signs. She said that the Concord Insider did do an article, but it was more generic in nature.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know whether any applicant gave up during the application process in frustration. Ms. Brooks stated that there was one individual, but the Sign Committee was able to

assist that individual obtain their sign. Ms. Brooks suggested that all Heritage Commission members could apply for signs for their own properties.

Ms. Brooks stated that the Concord Library has been great, and she appreciates all the work Pat Immen and her staff has done.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Mr. Shurtleff and seconded by Mr. Johnson to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Donna Muir
Administrative Specialist