

HERITAGE COMMISSION

Draft Minutes

October 7, 2010

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the City Council Chambers at 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, October 7, 2010, at 4:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates:

Chairperson Philip Donovan called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Chairperson Philip Donovan, Vice-Chairperson Frederick Richards, and members Carol Durgy Brooks, Robert V. Johnson, II, Steve Shurtleff, Elizabeth Durfee Hengen, and James McConaha. City Planner Douglas Woodward was also present. Absent from the meeting were Committee Members Dr. Bryant Tolles and Marilyn Fraser.

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

2. Minutes of the September 9, 2010 meeting:

The Commission considered the minutes of the September 9, 2010, Heritage Commission meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Shurtleff to accept the minutes as presented and seconded by Vice-Chair Richards. Chairperson Donovan asked if there was any discussion regarding the minutes. The motion accepting the minutes of the September 9, 2010, meeting passed unanimously.

3. New Business:

- a. *Consideration of a draft of Phase IA Archaeological Sensitivity Assessment, Concord Municipal Airport, Concord (Merrimack County) New Hampshire, prepared by Independent Archaeological Consulting, LLC, and dated August 13, 2010. This was forwarded to the Commission's attention by the City Engineering Division.*

Chairperson Donovan recognized John Gorham of Jacobs Engineering, consultant to the City, who explained that an Environmental Assessment was being prepared of projects at Concord Airport that are planned for the next five years. They retained Dr. Kathleen Wheeler of Portsmouth to do an archeological assessment of the sites involved, which include an area for development of private hangers, two new taxiways, an expansion of a parking apron, and a concrete stand for large aircraft. Indian artifacts were found on a site to the east so that test pits will be dug over four acres to look for more artifacts. Each stage will be studied prior to the initiation of that stage, so that the archeological assessment will go on over five years corresponding to the development plans. Certain areas of the airport are off limits to any disturbance due to the endangered Karner Blue butterfly.

- b. *Consideration of the use of Neighborhood Heritage Districts as recommended in the Historic Resources Section of Master Plan 2030:*

This matter was delayed by the Chairperson pending consideration of item 3c.

- c. *Consideration of an amendment to Section B-5, Voting, of the Heritage Commission's procedural rules relative to adding a requirement for members to meet a juror standard or to otherwise disqualify themselves from participation in any decision making when reviewing applications in the Historic District and applications for Demolition Delay.*

The Chairperson raised the matter of whether a hearing is required. Mr. Woodward indicated that it is not by statute, but is a good practice. Mr. McConaha asked about the Commission's role in Demolition Delay. Mr. Woodward indicated that it was a power accorded under the Building Code, and gave the Commission authority to delay a demolition action that would not otherwise be required of an applicant. Ms. Brooks asked that language to be deleted be shown. The Commission agreed to post a public hearing notice on this matter for next month's agenda.

- b. *Consideration of the use of Neighborhood Heritage Districts as recommended in the Historic Resources Section of Master Plan 2030:*

Ms. Hengen explained that this was not a new concept nationally but was new to New Hampshire. It is different from a historic district, sometimes referred to as "preservation light". In a traditional historic district, every detail is under the microscope whereas in a neighborhood district, the focus is on scale, setback, massing, and demolition. "Heritage" was deemed a broader term. Nationally, the term "conservation" is used but in New England, it refers to land conservation. No such districts exist here in New Hampshire at the moment.

A heritage district is intended to be administered by a local planning board with a neighborhood advisory committee making recommendations to the planning board. The boundaries are based on physical cohesion, geography, and scale. There can be any number of districts created, and boundaries can be changed once created. A decision is needed as to whether it is a district or an overlay district, and what should be included in the regulations. The local planning board would have a hearing on a proposal to establish a district, and then make a recommendation to the City Council, which would make the decision on whether to create the district. Once created, the planning board would appoint the neighborhood advisory committee.

The review standards for a district should address demolition, new exterior construction greater than 100 square feet in area, alterations visible from the street, removal of porches, removal of landscape features, and signs. Ms. Hengen explained that it would be possible for the neighborhood advisory committee and the planning board to hold a joint hearing. The Heritage Commission would also make a recommendation to the planning board on each application. Any appeal of a planning board decision is to the Superior Court.

Vice-Chair Richards noted that this would place the Heritage Commission in a peripheral role and he preferred that the Commission have a larger role. He also questioned how a district would relate to the Commission's demolition delay review.

There was comment from Commission members about the Abbott Downing neighborhood as a possible candidate to be a district. Rolfe and Penacook Streets in Penacook were also mentioned.

Chairperson Donovan noted there seemed to be consensus that this be pursued, but noted that there is a political dimension to this in terms of getting the concept adopted, and in gaining acceptance by the Planning Board of their role.

Mr. Johnson asked about obtaining a copy of the NHDHR handbook, and it was explained that it is on their website. Ms. Hengen indicated that she would provide a link to that website.

4. Old Business:

a: CLG grant for the historic schools survey:

Ms. Hengen indicated that she has completed her work and did not include Concord High School or Rundlett Middle School. All six schools that she did review are deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. She will make a presentation at the November 4, 2010 meeting of the Commission. It was suggested that her report be posted on the website.

b. Discussion of the Concord School District's (CSD) decisions on the Elementary School consolidation plan

Chairperson Donovan indicated that CSD's third Task Force relative to the disposition of the schools is convening to discuss Dame School and the potential to use it for a community center. Mr. McConaha's article on Kimball School which appeared in the *Concord Monitor* was discussed. He spoke of an attempt by Councilor Mark Coen to secure the use the site of the American Little League fields for a school site; however, this effort failed.

f. Demolition Review – Committee Report

Vice Chair Richards advised the Commission that a demolition application was pending on 23-25 Green Street, which is an 1830's Greek Revival style dwelling with an 1890's Queen Anne style addition. The Concord Housing Authority is the applicant. A question was raised as to the use of federal funds for the site redevelopment which would trigger a Section 106 review. Mr. McConaha explained the legal concept of pre-emptive demolition. Mr. Woodward advised that former City landscape architect Bob Pollock had come by to impart information on the American Smoke Trees in front of the residence as to their age, size, and connection to the builder of the home.

There being no further business or discussion, a motion was made by Ms. Brooks and seconded by Vice-Chair Richards to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Douglas G. Woodward
City Planner