

HERITAGE COMMISSION
Meeting
Minutes
May 2, 2013

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the City Council Chambers, City Hall Annex, 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, May 2, 2013, at 12:00 noon.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Chair Phil Donovan, Members, Richard Jaques; Fred Richards; Robert Johnson; Dr. Bryant, Tolles; Council representative Steve Shurtleff; alternate Marilyn Fraser. City Planner Gloria McPherson and Administration Assistant Victoria Parmele were also present.

2. Minutes of the April 4, 2013 meeting:

The Commission considered the minutes of the April 4, 2013, Heritage Commission meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Johnson to accept the minutes as written and seconded by Mr. Shurtleff. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson noted the last full sentence of the April 4, 2013 Minutes, and said he wondered if a motion was made to close that meeting. There was discussion that a motion had been made to close the meeting.

3. Public Hearing:

- a. Application by WBIN Media Corporation for property located at 4 Church Street, requesting a Certificate of Approval in the Historic (HI) District, for the redevelopment of Walker School, including renovations to the exterior of the building, installation of three ground-mounted satellite dishes and three building-mounted satellite dishes, installation of a generator, expansion of an existing parking lot, lighting, landscaping, signage and associated site work.

The Chair opened the public hearing.

Bill Binnie, President of WBIN Media Corp, preservation consultant Elizabeth Hengen and architect Jonathan Halle were present before the Commission. Ms. Hengen provided some history on the Walker School, and noted that it was the only school in the Concord School system that had still been in use as of a year ago that hadn't had any additions to it. She said among other things that a goal of this project to reuse the school was to beat the Secretary of Interior standards for preservation.

Mr. Binnie said Concord was one of the few state capitals without a full power TV station, and said the company proposed to put 5 radio stations and a TV station in the building. He said there would be a

news bureau there, and also said there would be a 24 hour dedicated radio news channel. He said while he could have done this development in Manchester, he chose Concord because he had an affinity for it, as the State capitol. He also noted that the development would bring jobs to Concord. He said he had been involved in building and restoration projects throughout his career, and reviewed some of the projects he had done. He said he had a commitment to New Hampshire and the local communities his company served.

Mr. Binnie said putting the proposed facility in the Walker School building was a unique challenge and opportunity. He said he loved the idea of preserving the building, and understood that the building and land were historically significant. He described some of the history of the building. He said they proposed to make this a state of the art facility, and also noted that he had told the design team to preserve the building in its entirety, and to adhere to local laws. He noted that it would have been easier if the plan had been to put a new wing on the building.

Architect Jonathan Halle next described the design details of the project. He noted that the turnaround in front of the School had existed for a very long time, and said they proposed to maintain it. He said the existing parking area in front would remain, and said parking to be added to the site would be put behind the building.

Mr. Halle said the new windows would replicate as closely as possible the windows found in two old photographs of the school. He said the current windows on the building were put on in the 1970's. He said the windows would be double hung, brushed aluminum clad, and said the sash, casements, transom windows and arches would be replicated. He said the window color and the sash would be white. He explained that an existing kitchen vent would be replaced by a window, and also noted that new windows would be installed on the west elevation where the window openings were currently boarded up.

Mr. Halle said the team had looked at how to focus attention on the two main entrances, and said glass canopies along with sculptural musical notes to support them were proposed. Ms. Hengen said the design was playful, which was in keeping with the elementary school, and also said it would provide protection for the entrances. She said the design was fully reversible without impacting the architectural features, and was a product of the present time period. There was a discussion about the slope of the canopy shedding rain directly on people as they walked under it. Mr. Halle stated that they would probably have to put a small gutter on to keep rain away from the entry. Mr. Halle also mentioned an elevator would be put within the existing stairwell in the future.

Mr. Halle said the brick on the building wouldn't be cleaned chemically so that the patina would remain. Ms. Hengen said the graffiti on the southwest corner of the building would be removed, and said some re-pointing of the brick would be done in a few areas to clean it up. She said the new mortar would match the original in color and texture, and would be recessed like the original mortar.

The team provided details on the mechanical equipment proposed for the roof. Ms. Hengen said they had explored putting the equipment on the ground, but said the number and size of the equipment would be very visible there. She said the parapet wall worked to their advantage in terms of screening the

equipment, and said only a few elements would be visible above it. She said they were trying to duplicate the original roof line as much as possible. Mr. Halle said they proposed something light in color to screen the equipment, but were open to getting ideas on this. Ms. Hengen said so much was going on architecturally with the building that peoples' eyes would go to this, and not to the screen. Mr. Binnie noted that air conditioning was needed for the building. He also said the antennas would be mounted close to the parapet wall, and would be painted to match.

Mr. Halle provided details on light poles that were proposed for the parking areas. He said they also proposed up-lighting that would focus directly on the face of the building. He said this lighting would be on a timer, so would only be on for a portion of the evening.

Mr. Halle said there would be 3 ground mounted signs, and said they had been to design review on this. He said aluminum lettering would be mounted on a brick background, and said the design would be consistent with the building. He said the signs would be low to the ground, and said there would be softscaping around it.

Ms. Fraser asked if the proposed lighting might infringe on the privacy of neighbors. Mr. Halle said none of the lighting would cross beyond the boundary of the property, and said the photo-metrics on this had been submitted to the Planning Board.

Mr. Jaques noted that Mr. Binnie had said he didn't want to put an addition on the building, but he said every building had to grow. Mr. Binnie said the building should be big enough, and said it would house the biggest media center in New Hampshire and north of Boston. Dr. Tolles asked if the interior of the building would be reconfigured, and team members said this was still in a state of flux. Mr. Binnie provided some details on how the interior would be configured, and noted among other things that they were trying to use the classrooms as sound stages, and that the auditorium would be used as a gathering space. The Chair pointed out that the Heritage Commission didn't have authority over the building interior.

Mr. Johnson asked what else had been considered regarding hiding the mechanical equipment, other than what was proposed and placing the equipment on the ground. He said any type of screening was offensive, but said there wasn't much that could be done with it. He said he wasn't sure what color would be best for the screening, and suggested that with white screening, a bar of music could go on it. There was discussion about other possible screening options. Ms. Hengen noted that mimicking the parapet with the screening would seem gratuitous. She also said perhaps a charcoal gray color would work.

Ms. Hengen spoke about site design elements. She said the curved drive had been there for at least 50 years, and was a common feature at a lot of 20th century schools. She said they wanted to maintain the sense of arrival that it provided. But she noted that the asphalt currently went right up to the building. She said it would be largely removed, which would set off the shape of the drive more.

Mr. Halle said a variance was received to allow 58 parking spaces instead of the 119 spaces that were required. He said they had looked carefully at the parking needs, and said what was proposed was a small expansion from the parking on the site now.

Ms. Hengen said 45 pits were dug on the site for archeological purposes, noting that the site had been in use since the 1700s. She explained that an FCC permit was needed for the media facility, so the Division of Historic Resources had required the archeological analysis.

She said much of the site had been re-landscaped over the last 15 years. She noted that the School District made no mention of the memorial park on the property when the property was sold, and said Mr. Binnie's intent was to leave it as it was. There was further discussion on this.

Ms. Hengen said the satellite dishes were placed where they were because they needed to face south/southwest and needed clearance in front. She said this restricted the locations on the site where they could go. Mr. Binnie noted that satellite dishes were getting smaller and smaller, so this would change over time. He also said they weren't sure that they would need three satellite dishes, but were asking for this in case they did need them.

Mr. Johnson noted that he had previously asked if it would be possible to get an historical marker from the State for the southwest corner of the site, where more people walked and so would be more likely to read it. He said he had never seen someone reading the existing historical marker. There was discussion. Mr. Binnie said he would be happy to include that. He also said he had approached the patrons of the memorial park that was on the property, and he provided details on this.

Mr. Halle said the existing chain link fence on the site would be taken down. He said the dumpster and generator would be screened with evergreens, and the generator would be painted green.

Ms. Fraser noted that she was a former teacher, and asked about possible additional historical pictures of the building. Ms. Hengen said they were very hard to find, which was odd. She said the architecture was the classical revival style.

Mr. Richards asked if the family memorial park would get in the way of the entrance sign, and Mr. Halle said no. He said the sign would be on the berm. Mr. Jaques asked about the possibility that there was an Indian burial site, and Ms. Hengen said she wasn't aware of that possibility. Mr. Halle noted that the excavating didn't go deep on the site.

There was discussion about trees on the property. Ms. McPherson noted that anything that could be seen from the street was within the purview of the Heritage Commission. Mr. Halle said an arborist had surveyed all of the trees. He said the two big ash trees in the front of the building would be taken down because they were unhealthy and were also destroying the foundation. He also said a tree on the southeast corner and two trees on the North State Street side would be taken down. Mr. Binnie said they would be planting hundreds of trees on the site, and said they would bend over backwards to save trees that were large and healthy. He also said people would be pleased with the size of the trees that were put in.

Attorney Phil Hastings of Cleveland, Water and Bass represented the Concord Group Insurance Company, which owned the property across the intersection. He said the company had two specific concerns, and said one was that the proposed sign at the intersection was a 26 ft wide brick wall, which would sit 4 ft high on top of a berm. He said the sight lines of people traveling north would be obscured, and said the company would like the sign to be smaller, and perhaps pushed back further in order to open up the intersection more for the safety of the company's customers and employees.

He said the second concern was that by leaving the front of the site primarily as it now was, the bulk of the parking would be at the rear of the site, which would push traffic into the intersection quickly. He said he would like the applicant to explore the idea of minimizing the use of parking in the back, and putting more parking in front, even if this meant reconfiguring the turnaround. Mr. Richards said these issues were not within the purview of the Heritage Commission, and Chair Donovan said the Planning Board would address these issues. After further discussion, Mr. Hastings said he would be sure to raise the issue before the Planning Board.

Mr. Johnson noted letters from Richard and Scott Ashley concerning the existing memorial park on the site at the corner of Church Street and Bouton Street, and asked that they be made part of the public record. Chair Donovan noted that this issue had been addressed by Mr. Binnie this evening.

Chair Donovan closed the public hearing.

Mr. Richards said this was a nice plan that was proposed, and said he thought that restoring the windows to this building would transform it. He said it was a good restoration project for old timers, and also said newcomers would appreciate the fact that the improvements to the building and its handsome appearance would return it to the community. He said he was looking forward to having WBIN Media as a corporate neighbor in Concord.

Mr. Johnson moved to accept what had been presented to the Heritage Commission, and that the Commission continue its jurisdiction over the matter under the enabling Statute. Mr. Richards seconded the motion.

Chair Donovan said as the review process continued with the Planning Board, if changes were made to the exterior of the building and/or the site, which would be under the jurisdiction of the Heritage Commission, the applicant would need to come back to the Commission.

Mr. Johnson said he appreciated the fact that Mr. Binnie didn't want to take down a building in Concord.

Ms. Fraser said as a member of the Heritage Commission, she was delighted to see the Walker School preserved. She spoke about her memories of it, and about what it meant to her that it would remain in Concord. She said this was a good thing that had happened here on the Heritage Commission, and said Mr. Binnie and his team should be commended.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Donovan said it had been a good review process, and thanked Mr. Binnie for his sensitivity to the area. He wished him the best of luck with the project. He asked Mr. Binnie to let the Heritage Commission know if there were any changes to the project that the Commission should be aware of.

4. New Business

a. Update of the 2013 CLG Grant

Ms. McPherson said she had received some comments from Nadine Peterson of the NH Division of Historic Resources. She said they didn't impact what the Commission had discussed and that they were easily incorporated into the grant proposal. She said the grant application was due on May 15th, and there was discussion about who would write the grant. It was decided that the Planning Division would take on the responsibility, with Ms. Parmele taking the lead.

b. Update of the Downtown Complete Streets Improvement Project

Ms. McPherson said the final presentation of the design would take place at the May 13th City Council meeting, and said the plans were still being worked on. She encouraged Heritage Commission members to attend the meeting and make comments on the design.

Chair Donovan asked Ms. McPherson about the Front Door charrette that had taken place the previous evening. Ms. McPherson said the charrette had gone very well. She said a lot of ideas were presented and discussed, and said they would be categorized next week. There would then be a follow-up presentation where this information would be presented, although the date hasn't been selected yet. She said people would have the opportunity to comment on the ideas generated.

5. Regular Business

a. Demolition Review – Committee Report

Mr. Richards said members of the Committee had visited an old 1860-70s carriage barn on School Street that day. He said there was a connector building attached to the carriage barn and the main house. He said the new owner of the property had asked a structural engineer and contractor to look at the barn to see if it could be renovated, and it had turned out that the cost for this would be prohibitively high for the owner. Mr. Richards said the owner therefore planned to take down the old barn and connecting structure, and replace it with a more modern structure. He said the Committee would probably sign off on the barn.

Chair Donovan said the barn was in tough shape structurally, noting that there were some serious foundation problems. He said the building had been maintained over the years in a haphazard, amateurish way so over the decades it had suffered. He said the Committee had hoped to make the case to the owner that renovation and stabilization would be less expensive than demolition and new construction. He noted that the engineer who looked at the barn had warned the owner not to park in the barn. Mr. Richards said he took a lot of photos, and would write up a history. He said it was an

interesting old barn, and said it looked like it was put together from a much older timber frame because many of the timbers were hand hewn.

Mr. Richards said the second property that was reviewed was located on Mountain Road, and was part of a church until about a month ago, when it was bought by Tamposi. He said it was built around 1910, and looked like it was built at the site from an older barn frame, and was reassembled and modified. He said the owner planned to disassemble it on site and repurpose the frame and old wood from the structure someplace else. He said the barn looked bad on the outside, but good on the inside, and said the frame was 90-95% intact. He said the Committee hadn't made a determination on how to handle this. He said they would talk with the owner about making sure the frame, etc. would be put to a good purpose someplace else, or about returning it to its original state where it was.

Mr. Johnson said the building was 30 ft by 60 ft at least, and was a story and a half. He said the damage to the timber structure was minimal, and said the building was old but he wasn't convinced that the structure was taken from another building. He noted that he lived in this area, and said he was inclined to suggest having a public hearing. He said it was in an agricultural area of Town, and said he felt that developer Tamposi could do something with it and still make a profit from the land.

6. Information Items

- a. 2013 Annual Preservation Achievement Awards – Tuesday May 7
- b. Letters from Richard Ashley and Scott Ashley regarding Bouton Park

7. Any other business to come before the Commission

There was discussion about current membership and vacancies on the Commission. Ms. McPherson said John Regan was the Planning Board representative to the Heritage Commission. It was noted that Mr. Jaques had taken the last regular position, that there were five alternate positions, and that Ms. Fraser was an alternate, so there were four alternate positions open.

Mr. Jaques moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Adjournment at 5:54 pm.