

**HERITAGE COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes draft
April 7, 2016**

The Heritage Commission held its regular monthly meeting in the City Council Chambers, City Hall Annex, 37 Green Street, Concord, New Hampshire, on Thursday, April 7, 2016, at 4:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order and Seating of Alternates:

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

Present at the meeting were Chair Phil Donovan, and members Richard Jaques, Robert Johnson, Carol Brooks, Dr. Bryant Tolles, Richard Woodfin, and Fred Richards. City Planner Nancy Larson and (temporary) Planning Division Administrative Specialist Kate Kindel were also present.

2. Approval of Minutes of March 3, 2016:

Chair Donovan proposed some changes to the Draft Minutes: 3a; “Ms. Larson will check with Mr. Baia, but that she thought it was **not** too late;” same paragraph: “because they felt this needs to be voted on sooner **rather** than later.” “Common Room” should be changed to “Concord Room.” Under 4a, “Committee” should be “Commission,” in both instances. 4b should be rewritten as follows: “This has been postponed until the April City Council meeting. Chair Donovan wondered about requiring a further delay until all permits have been fulfilled.” Under Item 6, “Free” should be changed to “Three.” Mr. Johnson moved to approve the March 3, 2016 Minutes with the designated corrections to be made; Mr. Jacques seconded the motion, and the Committee unanimously approved.

3. New Business

a. Renewal of Discretionary Preservation Easement per RSA 79-D for 102 Little Pond Road

Kathryn Temchack, Director of Real Estate Assessments for the City of Concord, was present, as the City Council wanted the Heritage Commission to review this renewal. This is the only easement due for renewal this year; did the Commission want to make any changes? Chair Donovan commented that the property seems to have been well-maintained. Ms. Brooks inquired about the meaning of “recapture original easement.” Ms. Temchack said that this is a statute which would allow for the receipt of the original back tax amount once the easement is no longer in place, but is not applicable to this property. Mr. Richards stated that he saw no reason to change the percentages from those established in 2006. He also commented that the barn restoration expert, Arnold Gratin, has done a “first-class job” with this project. The barn and shed have been re-painted, and the barn has been securely repositioned; it has also been satisfactorily inspected. Chair Donovan noted that the exemption rate can vary from 55% to 75%, which is not only the maximum but also the current rate for this property owner. Mr. Woodfin asked if any stipulations should be made prior to approval of the extension. Ms. Temchack said that the purpose of the extension is to encourage preservation by property owners, who are able to use funds which would have been earmarked for taxes to instead be allotted for property repairs; therefore enhancing the overall property value. In this instance, the assessed value on the structure has been reduced by 75%, according to Ms. Temchack. Mr. Woodfin commented that it is very difficult to predict a barn’s future over a ten-year period.

On a motion made by Ms. Brooks, and seconded by Mr. Jacques, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the extension of the preservation easement for 102 Little Pond Road.

4. Regular Business

a. Demolition Review – Committee Report

Mr. Richards reported that there is a worker cottage on Blake Street, and that the dentist office which abuts it would like to demolish it in order to expand their parking area. He plans to visit the area and photo document it.

The issue of the Beede House is ongoing. The NH Preservation Alliance has intervened in order to provide the American Legion (owner of the property) with an architect – John Jordan – as a consultant.

Mr. Richards also reported that the Commission has been told that, from a legal standpoint, it may proceed with the CLG application to nominate the Gas Holder building for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This will be presented at the City Council meeting on Monday, April 11, 2016. Liberty Utilities has stated that they are meeting with the DES to discuss environmental issues on the property, which may well be costly to resolve. As a regulated utility, they have to take this cost into serious consideration.

b. Update on Demolition Permit Funding and Amendments to Demolition Delay Ordinance

The presentation to the City Council has been delayed, because the City Solicitor has questions regarding the definition of “historic properties,” as well as the length of the delay period. Further, what level of discretion does the Heritage Commission hold? Mr. Johnson asked for confirmation that the Commission will have a chance to review the Ordinance prior to being presented to the City Council. This was answered in the affirmative.

Chair Donovan stated that the City Council has granted the Commission’s request to release funds from the (Heritage Commission) Trust Fund in order to further photo document historic buildings. A consultant will be hired to assist with this project.

5. Informational Items

Mayor Bouley and City Manager Tom Aspell appeared before the Commission to provide information about a Resolution to modify the provisions of RSA 79-E, which was slated for discussion at the April 11, 2016 City Council meeting. This resolution would allow historic structures not currently located within a designated RSA 79-E District to be eligible to participate in the RSA 79-E program.

It was noted that developer Jon Chorlian has a plan to convert the Sacred Heart Church on Pleasant Street into residential condominiums. Sacred Heart is not located within a 79-E District. The Mayor stated that this building meets the requirements of a “historic structure,” and he would like to see all Concord properties that are eligible for the Historic Register to also then be eligible for participation in the 79-E program. According to Mr. Aspell, this Community Development Tax Incentive Program has a set of criteria that must be met before a property can be accepted into the program. There is thus a tax incentive to restore local historic buildings. Non-profits and governmental agencies cannot

participate, but if they sell a property to an individual who wants to develop it, that person may then apply.

Mr. Jacques commented that he thought this should be a city-wide program, as it provides an alternative for property owners who cannot afford to keep up their properties, and may be contemplating demolition. Mr. Woodfin said that this would provide additional value for the whole community. This cannot be applied to small individual home renovation projects.

Mr. Richards said that there are various criteria that must be considered in order to be included on the National Register: architectural significance; the presence of a famous person; and social significance.

The Mayor will discuss this at the “State of the City” speech next week, and will be informing the building and design communities, as well.

Ms. Brooks asked if the 79-E district would be enlarged, or if individual applicants might be considered on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Aspell replied that simply enlarging the district might have its limitations. Ms. Brooks stated that this might be useful in conjunction with property owners considering demolition. There was an offer made by the Commission to assist City Council with the decision-making process, should they so desire. It was confirmed that applicants’ properties must first be listed on the National Register. City Council has ultimate authority with this; they can establish a standard at their discretion.

There was a general consensus by the Commission to endorse this proposal; though Ms. Brooks wanted it noted that they had not yet had time to study the ordinance in detail.

6. Any other business to come before the Commission

The Mayor and City Manager have met with the utility company (Liberty Utilities) that owns the Gasholder building, and reported that they are willing to work with the City. Chair Donovan reiterated that the Commission has applied for a CLG Grant to provide the funds in order to place the building on the National Register.

Mr. Johnson commented that he would have liked to have known the conversation(s) that took place between the City and the American Legion prior to the public hearing of the Demolition Delay Committee. Mr. Aspell clarified that City Councilor Mark Coen had spoken with Jim Place (representing the American Legion), and had suggested that the City provide assistance to the American Legion, but Mr. Aspell said that the City does not offer free development advice to the private sector. It was recommended that Jim Place meet privately with the Development Team Committee; Ms. Larson reported that this meeting had, indeed, occurred earlier that day.

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chairman Donovan adjourned the meeting at 5:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Larson
City Planner