

Historic District Commission Meeting Minutes 12/05/2017

Historic District Commission Minutes Landuse Meeting Room December 5, 2017

Members present: Chair Ken Fowler, (KF); Mark Smith (MS); Jason Berger, (JB); Pat Jaouen (PJ)

Absent without notification: Kameron Spaulding, (KS)

Staff present: Gwen Miller, Land Use Director/Town Planner, (GM); Peggy Ammendola, Land Use Clerk, (PA)

Other Business

Elaine Steinert (ES), due to illness, is no longer able to serve on the HDC. A letter of appreciation will be sent to Elaine for her many years of service to the community.

MS made a motion to appoint alternate member PJ as a regular of the HDC, replacing ES. JB seconded the motion and the Commission voted to approve 4-0.

Discussion ensued regarding the current members and meeting the membership criteria. ES has filled the Realtor® position, and for the time being, KF will fill that slot. The others are as follows: JB, property owner; MS, although a designer, not an architect, American Institute of Architects (AIA); KS, at large, and PJ, Historical Society.

PA was asked to write a letter to Cecil Pollen, Realtor®, to see if he was interested in serving on the HDC.

Approve minutes:

September 19, 2017-JB made a motion to approve the minutes with one edit. MS seconded the motion and the Commission voted to approve 3-0-1. PJ abstained as she was not at this meeting.

October 31, 2017-MS made a motion to approve the minutes with two edits. PJ seconded the motion and the Commission voted to approve 2-0-2. KS and JB abstained as they were not at this meeting.

Discussion of HDC goals

KF stated that there is an issue of communication between the Commission and Building Department as there has not been an update on the violation process. He said that he noticed that shingles are being replaced at the Heritage. The Commission should be notified via email when building permits are given for work being done in the District. PA told the Commissioners that the Building Department does have a process in place whereby they request departments to sign off, but did not get a request from them for the Heritage. MS mentioned that Bagel and Brew has a giant banner on their building that hasn't been approved by the HDC. KF said that they haven't been to the Board of Selectmen. (If it were of a temporary nature, the BOS would be the approving authority.) KF apologized for not getting in touch with the Building Department prior to this meeting, but it will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

JB said that the Commissioners have expressed frustration for some time regarding violations, in particular with signs, and suggested that the Commission use Section 3.3 d of the Historic District bylaw to remove signage from the Commission's purview. This section reads:
The Commission may determine from time to time after public hearing that certain categories of exterior architectural features, colors, structures or signs, may be constructed or altered without review by the Commission without causing substantial derogation from the intent and purposes of this chapter.

To do this, the Commission would provide the sign criteria to the Building Department and as long as the applicant meets the criteria, the Building Inspector could issue a permit. JB believes that signage represents 85% + of the Commission's workload. JB said that he has done an outline for categories for a more streamlined process within the criteria the Commission has. This benefits an applicant as well as the Commission. This will be discussed at the next meeting.

In order to have better communication with the Building Department, JB offered to act as liaison. GM believes that this would be helpful for the Building Department. KF made a motion to appoint JB as liaison to the Building Department. PJ seconded the motion and the Commission voted to agree 4-0.

GM told the Commissioners that the Town has received funding to do a Communitywide Historic Preservation Plan with a goal to decide on how the Town could help with historic preservation efforts. This would not just be for Town properties, but also for residential and institutional properties. There will be a meeting on this topic at the Historical Commission's meeting of December 14, and Heritage Strategies, LLC, consulting firm will be represented. There will be a steering committee and GM will be reaching out to different people and asked that an HDC member participate. Heritage will also be working on an update of the Master Plan, which hasn't been updated since 1999.

The Commissioners discussed their feelings of frustration over the years. This led some Commissioners to discuss whether or not the Historic District was needed or wanted, but all have come to the conclusion that their work is important and that if the Town had not approved the Historic District and if the Commission didn't do their job, downtown would look very different.

KF encouraged all members participate in the meetings for the Communitywide Historic Preservation Plan and Master Plan forums.

MS made a motion to adjourn and JB seconded the motion. The Commissioners voted to agree 4-0 and the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Ammendola