



Historic District Commission Meeting

Thursday, June 26, 2008

Council Chambers, City Hall, Claremont at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Approved July 8, 2008

Meeting called to order by Chair Messier at 7:20 PM

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Jason Farrell, Deborah Cutts, David Messier, John Hall, Peter Guillette

City Staff: Eric Giles, City Planner; Michelle Aiken, Boards & Commissions Coordinator

Absent: Trinity Dix, Brenda Taite

II. Introduction of Eric Giles – City Planner

Mr. Giles introduced himself and advised that he is planning on attending as many meetings as he can. Mr. Giles advised that he wanted to mention the change in the ordinance for the HDC in that it previously stated the “City Manager” was a member and now it will say “A member of the City Council”. Mr. Giles also advised that they are in the process of updating the Master Plan and are looking for additional members to serve on the committee. Chair Messier advised at the last meeting they asked Mr. Guillette to Chair on behalf of this Commission to help with that part of the chapter. Chair Messier asked if he sees his role as advisory or more keep on track of what is happening. Mr. Giles advised he would come to the meetings for more of observation and support. He would also be available for any zoning or ordinance guidance they need. Chair Messier advised they would be happy to have his input and a sort of pre-review that he knows is available. Mr. Giles advised there is a Technical Review meeting that people can come to so they can work out any issues before the hearing. Chair Messier advised that they do often do preliminary discussions with applicants also.

III. Review of Minutes - Minutes from May 22, 2008 meeting

Motion to: Minutes from May 22, 2008 meeting

Made by: Mr. Farrell **Second:** Mr. Hall **Vote:** Unanimous

IV. Preliminary Discussion

- Preliminary discussion with Nancy Merrill on the Moseley wrought-iron bridge across the Sugar River from Monadnock Mill No. 6

Ms. Merrill advised that she came to work for the City four years ago and saw people staring out the window at the Visitor’s Center with cameras wandering around and she wanted was curious as to what they were looking at. She asked the Historic Preservation Office about this rusty old bridge they were looking at. She didn’t know there was such a thing as Industrial archeology bridge. People come from all over to look at the bridge. It appears Claremont will be known for our bridges. The State is excited about this bridge and it is an important heritage piece for the City, this is the only one that is in its original position and there are only a few of them left in the country and two of them were moved off site and this is what makes it so important. The end of the bridge ends on the corner of the Wainshal building. She thought it would be a good time to start thinking about what they could do with it. She went to Concord and they would like to help with grant money and recommended a 2 phase project. Someone could do a structural analysis to tell us if it should be moved or stay.

Ms. Merrill advised Part 2 would be a grant for cleaning it up and making heritage markers on it. It is unlikely that it would be a pedestrian bridge because of the wrought iron material, but it takes step a to get to step b. They said it would be good to have this body support what they were doing especially for the larger grant.

Chair messier asked if she is looking for a letter of support to send to the state. Ms. Merrill advised that the State is looking for that and are excited about helping with a grant. Support in a letter format would be helpful. They took a photo of the plaque that is on the bridge and Ms. Merrill provided the picture to the Commission. Consensus from the board that preserving this bridge whether it be pedestrian or utility and it is the last piece of evidence we have. Chair Messier advised even if it's a stabilization project he is in support. Mr. Hall advised it is an important gateway between the sides of the river to where the factories were and it is a great piece of evidence of what was. Mr. Merrill felt that even if its just there for visitor's to take pictures. The heritage tours for the City, tourism is not what should be in the city but this is part of what it could be going forward. Chair Messier asked what kind of time frame she is looking for with the letter. Ms. Merrill advised they are looking for the small grant now, but the State Preservation Program with the National Park Service has a grant called 7 for 7, which is a large grant to do restoration projects on things of historic importance. That grant is due in September. She is looking to see if they can make that, but there is a lot of competition for that grant money. Chair Messier advised they will support the project and will draft a letter and Mr. Messier will draft the letter and pass it out.

V. New Business

- **(04-2008) Trumbull Nelson Construction Company, Inc, 200 Lebanon Street, Hanover, NH - A** Certificate of Appropriateness Application has been submitted to complete exterior work to include stripping paint, replacing windows and installing new sign with lighting at **46-54 Opera House Square**, Map 120, Lot 52, Zone B-1. Owner of record Claremont Development Authority.

Chair Messier advised that he would like to disclose a possible conflict; his wife is an employee of SCOHC and a member of the City Council. He does not feel it would influence his decision on this application one way or another although he would prefer to step down although if he does we will not have a quorum. Mr. Messier looked at Robert's Rules of Order and he doesn't see anything about having to have a quorum for the vote only for the meeting. Mayor advised that she does not see a conflict of interest. Mr. Messier advised that normal he would be OK with it but with the circumstances as they are he would like to recuse himself.

Before Chair Messier stepped down he wanted to advise the board that the Historic Assessment of the building has a rating of 2 and since the sheet has been done there has been a great deal of work completed on this building including the façade work. The board does have the authority to change ratings on buildings if they degenerate or improve. He would recommend changing the rating on this building from a 2 to a 3. Consensus from the board that they will change the rating from #2 to #3.

Chair Messier stepped down. Mr. Hall stepped in as Chair and asked Mr. Shoenig to provide his proposal for the public hearing.

Mr. Shoenig advised that they will be doing the façade work and removal of the metal cornice, any electrical conduit, stripping the paint by soft means, replacing windows consistent with the Brown Block & Granite State College. They will leave the existing woodwork around that and any deterioration would be repaired with that. There is a door in the middle that is blocked off in the middle and that will have a fixed glazing and they will install a piece of granite there to continue the appearance. The door will be a full transom glass consistent with what is at the Brown Block & Granite State. The new sign will be consistent with what is around the corner, Sununu's sign, with black and gold mounted above the granite and will be about 12" high. Mr. Guillette wanted to confirm that the air conditioners will be removed. Mr. Shoenig advised they would be removed and the entire area would be glass and restored to its original.

Open Public Hearing

No abutters present

Closed Public Hearing

Board members discussed the review criteria.

Criteria #1 – Consensus that the building located at 1 Tremont Street historical, architectural, and cultural value of the building has an important architectural and cultural value and that it does relate and contribute to its setting. The building has a level two rating and the proposal at hand does bring the building back to its original state. Consensus that the level of work and type of work is consistent with the rating of the building and the rest of the appearance of the building.

Criteria #2 – the exterior design, arrangement, texture, materials, proposed to be used in relationship to the existing buildings or structures and its setting and the surrounding use. The proposal to remove the existing paint will be minimally harmful and they will be removing elements that do not add to the buildings historic nature and replacing elements such as the glass and the granite will have a positive impact on the overall appearance of the structure. Consensus that the proposal as presented will have a positive impact on the building.

Criteria #3 – not applicable

Criteria #4 – Consensus that the sign being moved out and the lettering being consistent with the others on the building is positive affect.

Criteria #5 – Consensus that the applicant’s proposal will enhance and approve the effect on the setting and will help to preserve and enhance the historic, architectural and cultural qualities of the district and community

Criteria #6 – Consensus that the applicant’s proposal is in keeping with the guidelines set out in the Secretary of Interiors Guidelines for Rehabilitation

Motion to: approve the Certificate of Appropriateness application for 1 Tremont Street to complete exterior work, stripping paint, replacing windows and installing a new sign with lighting.

Made by: Mayor Cutts

Second: Mr. Guillette

Vote: Unanimous

With Mr. Messier Abstained

VI. Correspondence

- Letter to City Council regarding preservation easements for historic farm structures

Chair Messier asked Mayor Cutts regarding the preservation easements. Mayor Cutts advised there was one applicant although the City Council did not approve it. Chair Messier asked if there is a better way to present it to the Council. Mayor Cutts advised it was hard for the Council to get a good handle on how much money was in question and how many people would come forward with applications. There were some offline comments about how to do it differently next year; they may invite the representative from Concord to come and talk to the Council and to have the assessor notify the council sooner than previously done. This way the Council could have an opportunity to discuss the application other than on the same night a vote must be taken. There is a strict timeline for when the applicant must receive an answer. The applicant was encouraged to apply again next year. Mr. Farrell would like to have some hard copy visuals because it was hard for the audience to follow. Mayor Cutts advised it was in the council packets although not available to the audience.

Mr. Hall asked if there was a way to get statistical data on how many barns in the area would qualify. Mayor Cutts advised that it is not just limited to barns, it is historic structures and there were a few hundred that were identified and there are criteria. She does not believe that all those structures would pass the criteria. They have been doing this for three years now and the number of applicants has decreased and only 1 applicant has been tenacious enough to reapply. The Concord office has data for cost analysis and to the best of her knowledge there are no communities that have anything but success with this.

Chair Messier noted it is presenting a loop hole in the tax law and a community should take advantage of this when they can. The City did receive positive feedback from Concord and most of the other communities have very subjective review, the city can decide how much of an exemption to give. In Claremont we developed a rated score sheet, it could meet some of the criteria and maybe not all. Mayor Cutts advised that she feels this board is very important in Claremont's history and its future. It is very important to have the history of the City be preserved. Mr. Hall advised that he feels that the reputation of Claremont having structures that people want to come see makes a big difference. Mr. Farrell commented that each time he sees the piece from ReArch on the Mills and Claremont he thinks he would want to live there.

- Sign Guidelines – “Your new Sign”

Chair Messier advised this is an old guideline that should be updated and he would like someone to go through it and it would be a start to developing guidelines.

VII. Other

Mayor Cutts brought up a previous conversation regarding adding HD to the tax card and she is not sure what happened with that. Discussion among the board members regarding adding an HD to the zoning designation for the Historic District. Ms. Aiken advised that it went to the City Planner who was here at the time and nothing became of it. Chair Messier explained to Mr. Giles that we would like to have some fore warning / designation telling someone they are in the Historic District. Mr. Giles advised he would be happy to speak to the assessing office regarding this and see if it is possible to add it to the tax card. Chair Messier wanted to clarify that this would not be a change in the Zoning it would just be a disclosure of being in the Historic District. Mr. Bernie Folta felt that this was also an assessing office issue and it could be added to the assessing database as another code.

Chair Messier thought that a letter to new property owners in the district would also be beneficial. Discussion among board members regarding letters and welcome packets for people who have come into the Historic District. Mr. Hall felt it was important to tell people that it the Historic District is not just a regulatory arm that will not allow you to do what you want to your property. There are economical, social and historical reasons why the historic district exists and changing the siding or windows on your house may seem minor but it does have a strong impact on the community that you are in. Mayor Cutts asked if someone gets any sort of welcome kit when they come into Claremont and there was consensus that that is not done anymore. Chair Messier advised that most people find out they are in the Historic District when they go in for a building permit. Consensus from the board that we should have a welcome packet especially for people in the Historic District.

Mr. Folta advised that when someone buys a house they get specs from a realtor and it should indicate what the zone is and that is the optimal place to receive this information, at purchase time. Mr. Hall felt it was important that the realtor should disclose the H in the Zoning if this is changed so that people will know before or at least at the time of their purchase. Chair Messier thinks that we should find some general information to give to realtors and we should have enough information to give out to a homeowner. Mayor Cutts advised she would be willing to do some research from other communities and see how they do it. Mr. Farrell brought up the idea the board previously had about labeling the street signs and it did not ever go anywhere. Discussion among board members regarding changing the street sign colors to be special in the historic district.

Mr. Folta asked if the historic district changed its size, is it likely or unlikely it will change in the future. Chair Messier advised that the Historic District is set up of 3 districts, the downtown, the Mills and the lower village, which are three distinct national districts, it can be extended although it takes City Council approval for any additions or changes to the district. There was a point before he was on the commission, which was before 1990 to extend the Historic District and at that time it was not favored. It was set up to be able to extend.

VIII. Reports of Boards and Commissions

- **Master Plan** – Cultural and Historic Resources combined with Community Design Section

Mr. Guillette has volunteered to chair this committee. Ms. Aiken advised there was a Master Plan Advisory Committee yesterday and they are trying to recruit new members for the working groups and they would like to invite the volunteers to a special membership meeting. The Planning Office is looking for names that would be approved by the Planning Board and they will ask the Planning Board to create an outline or mission for these groups. We need to find people who are interested in volunteering. Chair Messier asked Ms. Aiken to contact Colin Sanborn or someone from the Historical Society to see if they would like to be involved in doing this chapter.

Mayor Cutts advised that it does not only have to be members of the community, for example Transportation is one of the chapters and there is a rails commission study going on and there are two people on that commission who are interested in working with Claremont on helping to develop that Transportation chapter. We are looking for all sorts of expertise. Mr. Folta wanted to make sure that the people we ask to volunteer know before hand that if they are non residents would not be voting members on these committees. Ms. Aiken advised that we are looking at having the special meeting the first week or so in August and have names into the Planning Office by June 25th.

IX. Other

Chair Messier noticed that the Dickenson block windows on the top floor windows do not fill in the entire space. They put in stock windows and a piece of wood has been installed where the extra space is. Chair Messier asked Ms. Aiken to pull the notes from that meeting where approval was given.

Mr. Farrell referenced the Green Acres market and asked if an application has been submitted. Ms. Aiken advised that an application has been submitted for next month and they have identified 6 items they believe are not in compliance.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to: To Adjourn

Made by: Mr. Hall

Second: Mr. Farrell

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting Adjourned at: 8:29 pm

Respectfully Submitted By,

Michelle Aiken

Boards and Commissions Coordinator