



Historic District Commission Meeting
Thursday, May 24, 2012
City Hall, Council Chambers, Claremont at
7:00 p.m.

MINUTES
Approved 6.21.2012

I. Roll Call

Present: Kristin Kenniston, David Messier, Deborah Cutts, Richard Wahrlich

Absent: Cynthia Densmore

City Staff: Kelly LeBlanc, Administrative Assistant

II. Review of Minutes from August 25, 2011, April 11, 2012 & April 26, 2012

Motion: approve the minutes from August 25, 2011

Made By: Ms. Kenniston **Second:** Ms. Cutts **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: approve the minutes from April 11, 2012

Made By: Ms. Kenniston **Second:** Mr. Wahrlich **Vote:** Unanimous

Motion: approve the minutes from April 26, 2012

Made By: Ms. Kenniston **Second:** Mr. Wahrlich **Vote:** Unanimous
Ms. Cutts abstained as she was not present

III. New Business

- **Lower Cul De Sac Place – Claremont, NH** - Synergy Site – (National Register notes the building as the Claremont Gas Light Company, Monadnock Mills Co. (1859, c. 1910). Discussion on EPA findings. **Property Location:** Lower Cul De Sac Place Tax Map: 120, Lot: 10, Zone: MUM.

The EPA is asking for comment from the HDC for possible remediation options.

There are two buildings on site. One building and one partial building exist on the site. The EPA has come in to look at the site.

Kurt Beek, Project Manager in the Planning and Development office, reviewed the site with the HDC. The City owns property from where the Visitor's Center is all the way down to the bridge near Leo's Market. If this parcel was to come up for sale it would complete a nice tract of land from Broad Street down to the lower bridge area. The chain of ownership was reviewed a few years back by the City Attorney, but no solid answers were found. The DES has been watching this site over the years due to contamination and has made attempts to find the owner who is responsible for the contamination. The EPA has now stepped in as they have some funding available to clean up the site. There is a contorted legal chain of ownership, so the City appreciated that the EPA has stepped in. Since federal funds are involved, certain steps must be

taken such as notifying the NH Division of Historic Resources. What is also not uncommon is that they have come back stating there would be an adverse effect if the building was taken down. The contamination is so extensive per the EPA that there is really no other alternative for remediation outside of demolition to fully decontaminate the site. A write up is recommended through the NH Division of Historic Resources.

Low flow in the summer shows the sheen on the river which signifies contamination. There is a concern that the contamination has gone underneath the river but the reports have not been received yet. The most cost effective solution is being researched. Chair Messier confirmed that the City owns the turnaround area.

The site contains remnants of a round brick building. Mr. Beek stated that while the standing structure is a nice building, age and vandalism has caused deterioration to the point where it is in danger of collapse in some areas. Chair Messier confirmed that if contamination is under the building it would likely need to be removed to remediate the contamination.

Chair Messier stated that the action taken is not under HDC jurisdiction, but they have asked for comment.

Chair Messier read a Letter from Richard A. Boisvert, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, to Gary Lipson, US Environmental Protection Agency for the record. At this point they may or may not have to remove the building but it is likely that they will. The HDC will draft a letter with options in order of preference.

Draft Options:

1. The building should remain if remediation/work can be done around the site.
2. If the building must be removed, the HDC would like to see a footprint left & photo documentation completed (It would be the EPA's responsibility to document the site).
3. If complete demolition is required, the commission agrees with the documentation of the site & addition of signage to preserve as much of the integrity of the site as possible. The commission suggested the recreating of an outline of the building with original materials.

Signage was recommended at the Common Man Restaurant or by the Pedestrian Bridge and onsite. Signage will include crediting the EPA with cleanup.

○ **39 Central Street demolition – discussion**

City Council has asked the HDC for input on 39 Central Street as potential demolition of this building is being considered. Please see NH RSA 155-B, Hazardous & Dilapidated Buildings.

The city has spent \$4400 to date and could potentially incur an additional \$45,000 for complete removal of the building.

Kelly LeBlanc, City of Claremont, presented a brief update.

Chair Messier stated that this is not a city owned building and while the city does not need to go to the HDC for approval, City Council asked the HDC to formulate recommendations for the city and give additional information on the building. The building was given a rating of three out of three and was built from 1835-1840. J. Brickett is the original owner with subsequent owner Dr. C. A. Volk. This is a Late Greek Revival sidehall form with excellent picturesque details, gothic

paneled doors, interesting cornice moldings, “pediment” form, and use of over-scaled metopes on the cornice moldings.

Chair Messier stated that there is no question that the building is in serious disrepair. The brick appears to be in sound condition. The porch is a later addition. The back half is an attached shed type structure and porches that are in very poor condition.

Chair Messier read from the National Register nomination information when the area was being nominated as a National Historic District. The lower village survey area west of the historic district was initially created by industrial development and accompanying land speculation in the 1830’s. On a ridge overlooking the developing lower village were private residences along Central Street, including a series of fine Greek Revival homes with temple style porticos. There was a group of investors in 1832 that purchased 15 acres of land in Tremont square down to the lower bridge area and from Sullivan Street over to the river. Over the next few years 60 residences were added. In two years the investors made their money back and started redeveloping. This Central Street building is the beginning of the redevelopment of this area.

Mr. James Garvin, previous state Architectural Historian, sent a letter to the Historic District Commission. Chair Messier read the letter from Mr. Garvin for the record. Mr. Garvin has offered to do a full inspection of the building and present a report on the structure.

It is important to note that in the nomination in the National Historic District, 39 Central Street was included in the 19 individual properties.

Nadine Peterson, the state of NH Division of historical Resources preservation planner, sent a letter to the HDC. Chair Messier read the letter for the record. Ms. Peterson suggested ‘mothballing’ to preserve the building.

Chair Messier would like to recommend the City ‘mothballing’ the brick portion of the building. If Southwestern Community Services was interested in the building, they could potentially acquire federal funding for restoration and preservation of the building.

From a cultural standpoint, Otis Waits, author of the History of Claremont, writes that Dr. Volt moved to Claremont in 1844 and had a medical practice in Claremont receiving his MD from Dartmouth College in 1859.

Ms. Cutts stated that when the mills were in disrepair she had the pleasure of serving on the council and HDC. When they were dangerous, an eye sore and in disrepair Ms. Cutts toured the buildings before their renovation. After 9 years of public service, she stated that Claremont built its reputation in the last 8-9 years and was put back on the map because of the work it did with historic structures. She does not support the razing of 39 Central Street at this point after reading the recommendations of the State. It is approximately \$50,000 to clear the site, and while the mothballing costs are unknown, she would like to hear what other efforts have been explored for adaptive or rehabilitated use. Ms. Cutts feels strongly on this matter because of walking through the mills and sawtooth and seeing the extensive turn around. She would strongly discourage the City Council from voting for razing the building.

Ms. Kenniston stated that the significance of the Gothic Revival architecture cannot be overlooked and also the added Victorian editions are equally renowned. Chair Messier stated the

front porch is approx 1870 and the detail is significant. The cornice details on this house are rare for a residential building.

HDC Criteria	
1 Values of the building and contribution to the surrounding area.	Highest rating of 3, property is an example of sustainability, historic connection to physicians in Sullivan County, specifically Dr. Volt. 39 Central Street has a possible connection to the architect that built the three houses that remain as part of St. Mary's (rectory, school, and convent). The Architectural significance as a Gothic Revival and the Cultural connection is on a socio-economic level. There is a social connection. The building is part of the best concentration of Gothic Revival in the state.
2 Compatibility with the existing bldg/structure to setting/surrounding uses	N/A
3 Scale and size compatibility with surroundings	N/A
4 Affect of the proposed improvement on other buildings/structures	N/A
5 Proposed impact on setting & extent of proposal to preserve/enhance surrounding	The HDC is part of the zoning ordinance. Section 22-402, Purposes, gives the reason for creating the district which is for the recognition, preservation, the enhancement, the perpetuation and use of cultural resources, and particularly of structures, sites and areas within the City having historic, architectural, cultural, community or design value which is required in the interest of the health, economic, cultural and general welfare of the community. Razing would be in direct opposition of the zoning ordinance. From an economic standpoint, the lot would then be nonconforming. The wooden structure on the rear of the building does not speak to the original historic aspect of the house. It could be removed as the brick structure is most significant
6 Are the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitation met?	An inspection of the building is necessary for further comment.

The HDC will issue a letter to the City that will include the 2 letters from the state (from Mr. Garvin and Ms. Peterson), National Historic District nomination, information gathered from the building of historic significance, and recommended alternatives to be sought before demolition is completed. The commission should highlight that Mr. Garvin will do his work free of charge. It is important to remind the current officials who will be making the decision on this building that over the past years similar challenges and decisions had to be made (e.g. the Mills). There have not been any bad experiences. A survey of the building is needed prior to the building. There is a consensus from the commission to write a letter after a site walk through has been completed.

IV. Other

Chair Messier attended a walking tour conference in Claremont.

V. Adjournment

Motion: to adjourn at 8:36

Made By: Ms. Cutts

Second: Ms. Kenniston

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 PM

Respectfully Submitted by, Kelly LeBlanc