



Town of Amherst, NH

HERITAGE COMMISSION MINUTES

Barbara Landry Meeting Room

2 Main Street

Thursday, January 8, 2015 at 7:30 PM

I. Call to Order: Chairman Will Ludt called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Attendees: Will Ludt, Andy Ouellette, Carolyn Quinn, Mary Mahar, Larry McCoy, and Selectman Tom Grella. Also present: Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes. Absent: Bill Veillette and Eric Hahn. No members of the public were in attendance.

II. Topics of Discussion

a. Update on NHDHR Grant

Chairman Ludt stated that the project is on target. Consultant, Katy Holmes, has been to Amherst twice and has been in contact with Jackie Marshall with the Historical Society and Katrina Holman who does a lot of work with deeds in Nashua. Ms. Holmes continues collecting data and doing research. She has been to three of the four farmsteads, and expects to meet with the Nelsons in January. The project is 100 percent reimbursed by the State.

b. Status Update: Amherst Village Strategic Plan

The issue was taken up later in the meeting.

c. Stonewall Update

Andy Ouellette stated that he, Carolyn Quinn, and Larry McCoy met in October. Carolyn had a good suggestion to contact Maggie Paul to recruit students to help with the project. Another suggestion was to contact Nashua Community College. Mr. Ouellette stated that \$10,000 from the town budget was scratched. It's the second year that the funds have been scratched and while the funds are not crucial for the moment, at some point financial resources will be needed. Mr. McCoy stated that grant money might be available for the project. Chairman Ludt said that there are grants available and he will get a listing from the NH Preservation Alliance.

Mr. McCoy asked how the Strategic Planning got started. Selectman Grella indicated that the Nashua Regional Planning Commission offered to conduct the survey that has now been responded to by 511 residents. Mr. McCoy questioned why the Board of Selectmen are not more proactive on other more important issues; such as, revealing stone walls and maintaining the colonial aspects of the town.

The Stone Wall Subcommittee will meet in February and plan work to begin in May.

b. Status Update: Amherst Village Strategic Plan

Chairman Ludt distributed a list of questions on the Village Strategic Planning process.

1) What is best about the village?

- Amherst is the largest historic district in the State of NH
- Colonial, pristine village
- Village is unique and wonderful

- 2) What do you think is the most important issue facing the village?
- Traffic and Noise
 - Keep the village as is
 - Risk of village becoming cordoned off where it becomes two Amhersts – those living within the village and those outside the village.
 - Village should be a living village – government, stores, schools, sports
 - Don't destroy character of the village with more businesses
 - No commercialization which is on 101A
 - Keep village quiet, historic, and charming
- 3) What do you think could be done to address the issue?
- Develop a noise code
 - Ban through trucking
 - Loosen up restriction on use of property
 - More activities – Chairman Ludt noted that the Village hosts many activities – every month something is going on. There are library events and those hosted by the Garden Club. Selectman Grella pointed out the calendar of events is listed on the website.
- 4) What past changes have you seen in the village, what changes are happening now and what changes do you anticipate in the future?
- More transient generation
 - Road Construction
 - Traffic/Speed
 - Too many Stop Signs/too much striping
- 5) How often do you walk or bike in the village?
- Daily
- 6) Is it safe and convenient to walk or bike in the village?
- Yes
- 7) How would you make this better?
- Take down stop signs
 - There are too many stop signs – aggravating to stop every few feet
- 8) Are there any specific locations or conditions that pose safety concerns when driving?
- End of Courthouse Road/Middle Street coming on to intersection with Amherst Street
 - Mt. Vernon Road taking a left onto Boston Post Road
 - Intersection of Jones Road and New Boston Road
- 9) How would you make them better?
- 10) Are there any additional destinations you would like to see in the village?
- There would be a parking problem no matter what comes into town

- 11) Would burying all or some of the utility lines make a noticeable improvement to the village? (The tradeoff would be visible transformer boxes on the ground)
- Yes
- 12) How much do you think the town should spend to accomplish this?
- Zero – must be funded through private funds or grants
(Chairman Ludt mentioned a MA town that has done this. It would require a 25-30 year plan)
- 13) How would you like to see existing businesses in the village evolve over time?
- Moulton's
 - Mike & Mickey
 - Carriage House (where PO use to be)
 - BMA Architects (offices)
- 14) Would you like to see more activity (festivals, fairs, chili cook-offs) or fewer activities in the village?
- More
- 15) What is your long term vision for the village and what key things must happen to make it a reality?
- Stay the same with more activities, especially surrounding the 250th anniversary
- 16) Is there anything else that you would like to add that we haven't covered?
- Do not jeopardize Amherst as a historic district
 - Find a balance between cordoning off the village (museum) and bringing in too much commercialization.
 - Develop a property maintenance code (village neighborhood is well maintained)

Larry McCoy again questioned the need and import of the Strategic Planning initiative. Selectman Grella and Andy Ouellette stated that the impetus came from complaints regarding road construction and traffic speeds. Mr. McCoy suggested changing the hours of operation at the transfer station to accommodate more residents. Chairman Ludt suggested that better communications across town government could be improved.

d. Updates from other Boards and Commissions Attendance

Larry McCoy stated that at the most recent Historic District Committee meeting there was discussion of looking into more enforcement of the rules. Mr. McCoy also mentioned a book in the library that includes a partial property maintenance code.

Mary Mahar brought up the property located at 131 Hollis Road that was demolished after the Zoning Board denied the owner a variance. The owner then decided to construct affordable housing which did not need a variance. The property was priced out as low as possible and allows people to do their own grass cutting and the like.

Chairman Ludt indicated that he did not attend the Conservation Commission meeting in December but will do so in January. The Commission has moved its meeting day to the 2nd Wednesday of the month, instead of Sunday nights.

Selectman Grella reported that the Conservation Commission had recently accepted a gift of real estate consisting of 240 acres of woodland on three tax parcels surrounding The Flume development.

In response to Chairman Ludt, Selectman Grella stated that the proposed FY16 budget does include a line item for the Heritage Commission.

III. Approval of Minutes: October 9, 2014 and November 13, 2014.

Mary Mahar moved to accept the October 9, 2014 meeting minutes. Seconded by Selectman Grella. Vote 6-0

Mary Mahar moved to accept the November 13, 2014 minutes. Seconded by Andy Ouellette. Vote 5-0-1 (Selectman Grella abstained).

IV. Commission Roundtable

No additional discussion took place.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.