

Town of Amherst
Historic District Commission Work Session
Thursday, August 3rd, 2017
7:00pm

Attendance: J. Ramsay-Chair, C. Hall, C. Buchanan (via Skype) S. Wilkins-Planning Board Representative

Staff: S. Corson Planner

New Business:

Jamie called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

Presentation on GIS maps

Simon introduced a solution that allows the Commission to see a map of the Amherst Village Historic District with general parcel and building footprint information, as well as applications, staff memos, and certificate of approvals from past Amherst Historic District Commission (HDC) cases. By projecting this map during HDC hearings, the public could follow along with the Commission's discussion about past cases, the shape and location of any structures that a property contains, and the shape of a property. Several basemaps could also be used, including topography, and aerial imagery. There was discussion about what additional information could be added. Suggestions included information from the National Register of Historic Places' *Nomination Form for the Amherst Village Historic District*, Property Record Card information from the Assessing Department's database, Vision Government Solutions, and photos of the property. Simon responded that all the additional information could be integrated into the map. There was agreement that using this map during public hearings in the future would be helpful.

Presentation on Visibility

Simon began a PowerPoint presentation about how the HDC defines public visibility. According to the Commission's regulations, under Article II-General Criteria, "the public view shall include neighboring properties to the extent that the structure, facility, or condition may be reasonably observed from neighboring property." Simon reached out to the Town of Lexington, Massachusetts, Nantucket, Massachusetts, and Hollis, New Hampshire to learn more about how other communities define public view in their Historic Districts. Corson put the three communities in conversation to better understand the different approaches. There was discussion about the positives and negatives associated with the different approaches. Simon recommended that the Commission should consider amending their regulations to only acknowledge public visibility as defined by a view from a public way or property. There was extended conversation about the potential advantages and challenges associated with the recommended change. Whether or not an abutter's view should be considered part of the public's view, there was agreement that the language in the regulations should be definitive and easy to understand.

HDC Subcommittee/ priorities to discuss with NAPC's CAMP

The Commission generated several questions to ask the preservation experts when they come to Amherst through the Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP). These questions were concentrated on when the use of modern materials would be appropriate, and how to develop effective leniency guidelines that insure the protection of the character defining features while allowing continued use of the property. Simon expressed that compiling a list of important questions to refer to the preservation experts will help the Commission get the most out of CAMP.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Simon Corson