

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

In attendance: Doug Chabinsky – Acting Chair, Martha Chabinsky (remote), Tom Grella – Board of Selectmen Ex-Officio, Chris Buchanan, and Bill Glenn – alternate.
Staff present: Nic Strong (Community Development Director) and Kristan Patenaude (Recording Secretary) (remote)

Doug Chabinsky, Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. **CASE #: PZ17849-090823 – Michelle Huxtable (Owner & Applicant); 5 Old Jailhouse Road, PIN #: 017-072-000** – Request for approval to build a 12'x16' garden shed. *Continued from October 19, 2023.*

**Chris Buchanan moved to untale the hearing. Seconded by Tom Grella.
Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Tom Grella – aye. Motion carried 4-0-0.**

Bill Glenn sat for Tom Quinn.

**Doug Chabinsky moved that the application is complete and has no regional impact. Seconded by Chris Buchanan.
Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Tom Grella – aye, Bill Glenn -aye. Motion carried 5-0-0.**

Michelle Huxtable, owner/applicant, stated that the request is to install a shed. Originally, she wanted to be as close to the abutter at 3 Old Jailhouse Road as possible, but this would have required a variance from the Zoning Board. She is now requesting to withdraw the original request and will place the shed with a 20' setback from the boundary lines. The proposed shed is from Reeds Ferry.

Doug Chabinsky noted that the windows seem to have an aluminum trim, per the spec sheet, and the Commission would prefer these to be all-wood. Chris Buchanan reviewed the specs for the proposed shed and stated that there are various options available. Michelle Huxtable stated that, if the windows are not all-wood, she will request this to be amended.

Chris Buchanan asked the preferred location for the shed. Michelle Huxtable stated that a survey was completed at 3 Old Jailhouse Road. There are granite posts to establish the boundary line, and the shed is proposed to be 20' from this east property line.

Bill Glenn asked how the proposed location has changed. Michelle Huxtable stated that the existing space between the two properties is overgrown, and she wanted originally to be close to her property line to be hidden by some mature trees. This was an aesthetic request. Originally,

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

the location was placed 15' from the property line, but she has increased this to 20'. This will now be located on the edge of the septic field.

Linda Kaiser, 6 Manchester Road, stated that there is a boundary dispute between the owners of 3 Old Jailhouse Road and abutters. Her deed shows that there are 143' from Manchester Road to the corner marker at the property in question. The document submitted by 3 Old Jailhouse Road is not a survey. She asked if the regulations require that boundary lines be surveyed. Doug Chabinsky stated that the requirement is for fences only. Linda Kaiser stated that there is an existing property dispute. Doug Chabinsky stated that the dispute is between Linda Kaiser and the owners of 3 Old Jailhouse Road. Linda Kaiser stated that the corner marker is located on the property in question; thus, this is part of the dispute. The property line may not be located where the applicant believes it is. Doug Chabinsky stated that this Commission does not settle property line disputes. This Commission reviews style, massing, and construction of buildings. Linda Kaiser stated that, for purposes of this boundary line, this is equally in dispute for the owner of 3 Old Jailhouse Road, as the applicant's property contains the corner boundary marker. Doug Chabinsky stated that the Commission cannot rule on property lines. Linda Kaiser questioned if the Commission can rule on an item that is in dispute. Doug Chabinsky stated that the Commission can rule on the style, construction, and materials of the proposed shed. The applicant then has to seek a building permit from the Building Inspector. The Building Inspector can require a survey be done, but the Commission cannot as it is not in its purview. Linda Kaiser disagreed.

Doug Chabinsky asked if the regulations mention ruling on property lines, other than for fences. Nic Strong stated that she believes this only applies to fences. Chris Buchanan read Section 12.15: Property Line Disputes, "The Historic District Commission will not review a fence application if there is an unresolved property line dispute. In the event of such a dispute, the application will be denied, and the fee refunded. Once the dispute is settled, the applicant may re-apply without prejudice. If the fence is approved, the burden is on the applicant to ensure that it is built within the limits of his or her own property lines." Doug Chabinsky stated that all other property line items are in the purview of the Zoning Board, not this Commission. Concerns with applications regarding property lines would be flagged for the Building Inspector.

Linda Kaiser stated that the applicant explained that she moved the shed because the supposed survey showed that the original location would require a variance. This may or may not be true, as a true survey has not yet been completed. Michelle Huxtable stated that she would have needed a variance due to violating the setback, not the property line.

Doug Chabinsky stated that Linda Kaiser can go to the Planning Department and lodge a complaint. This is not the right Commission for this complaint.

Linda Kaiser stated that she wrote her neighbors an email which was not responded to. Ignoring one's neighbors is a mistake.

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

FINDINGS:

- 1) Style, construction, and size of the shed is appropriate and in keeping with other structures on the property
- 2) Visibility is limited to abutters; public view is minimal
- 3) Materials, as discussed, are consistent with requirements, especially if they are all-wood
- 4) Massing and general position of shed are consistent with Section 9.1.E.

**Chris Buchanan moved to approve the application as submitted, with the change that the window frame trim be wood, not aluminum. Seconded by Tom Grella.
Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Bill Glenn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.**

Doug Chabinsky noted that neighbors should talk to one another and try to find a solution that works for all.

2. APPLICATION WITHDRAWN BY APPLICANT

**CASE #PZ18129-110123 – David Deysher (Owner & Applicant); 5
Manchester Road, PIN #: 018-039-000 – Request for approval to install a 22KW
Generac standby generator.**

Doug Chabinsky noted that this application was withdrawn by the applicant.

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Village Streets Study Committee Update

Tracie Adams, Chair of the Village Streets Study Committee, presented an update to the Commission. She introduced the members of the Committee and thanked them, along with Staff members, and the citizens of Amherst for providing support and tremendous participation across the timeframe of this project. The process for this project began with Article 30, which was passed by the citizens to fund the design engineering for safety improvements on streets that were scheduled for reconstruction. The Town has already budgeted funds for road construction which would account for the 20% local match that might be needed if the Town wants to apply for a federal grant. Design engineering is required to apply for the federal grants along with the 20% local match. The Committee plans to present the action plan it created to the Board of Selectmen, which is another component necessary for the application. The roads up for reconstruction include Carriage Road, Church Street, Davis Lane, Jones Road, and Main Street.

The Village Street study began in October 2022 and the Board of Selectmen created the Village Street Study Committee in July 2023. The Committee was tasked to evaluate the suggested streetscape improvements, to conduct an assessment of the recommendations to develop a vision of how to apply specific treatments around the Village, and to provide recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. These recommendations will be provided to the Board on Monday,

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

November 20th. The Committee met on the first and fourth Tuesdays of the month from August through November.

The Committee was interested in prioritizing public input opportunities. The Committee tried its best to let people know when the meetings were held and to encourage people to participate. The Committee held a site walk and citizens were invited to come to the five streets and provide input. During the visioning phase, the Committee reviewed previously completed work and input. The second phase reviewed materials provided by the consultants, with Step 1 being network design, Step 2 being streetscape design, and Step 3 being intersection design. The Committee decided on three guiding principles to help navigate the process. In addition to those, the Committee also included a summary of citizen priorities that were collected along the way from the beginning of the process. Some of these goals included improving safety for all users, trying to reduce speed, noise, and cut through traffic, and redesigning some confusing or dangerous intersections. Another goal was to reinforce the unique small-town character and celebrate the Town's history.

The Committee considered the use of traffic calming techniques such as narrowing streets. Narrowing streets helps because narrow streets tend to make traffic slow down. If the center lines are removed, drivers of vehicles no longer feel like they own the space and are more likely to slow down. Using alternate surface materials or paving materials can also help define the space. When the material looks different, feels different, and sounds different, people behave differently. A technique called optical narrowing means that the roads remain the same width but feel narrower to the driver. Chicanes and horizontal deflections mean there is something for drivers to go around, helping to slow them down. Vertical elements refer to things like trees at the edges of roads, which make people feel like they need to slow down. Reducing corner radii is another traffic calming technique.

The Committee decided to preserve the current network of roads and did not recommend any closures of roads. The Committee received feedback from citizens that they wanted more of a light touch approach and so looked at narrowing the streets. Removing the center lines also speaks more of rural character. Use of alternate paving materials can be used to convey that drivers have entered into a different, shared space, connecting to the pedestrian network. There was consideration regarding placing conduit for utilities underground at the same time when the road is already under reconstruction. This could also be an opportunity for water mains to be reviewed. The Committee discussed the speed limit throughout the Village, particularly along the five roads in question. Many citizens mentioned that speeding was their biggest concern.

Step one was to review the way that streets function throughout the Town and throughout the Village area. Four of the five roads up for reconstruction are considered local flow streets. Local flow streets are streets that take traffic from one side of the Village to the other side of the Village. Carriage Road is a neighborhood access street, which is likely only traveled on because someone lives there or is visiting. Regarding streetscape design, the Committee discussed a pedestrian priority option or a separate pedestrian sidewalk option. Regarding the separate

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

pedestrian sidewalk option, there were three variations on that theme. The entire road surface could be an alternate surface material, such as granite paving blocks. While these are more expensive up front, they last over several life cycles of the other materials. The long-term costs for maintenance and replacement would be lower. Another option for a separate pedestrian sidewalk could include a separate footpath. Historically, a footpath may have been along the outside edge of a roadway. This footpath could be made of asphalt or a similar material. Another option for constrained spaces includes making the sidewalk flush with the road surface. This was not a primary consideration by the Committee but could work in places with narrow roads. Another variation would include a sidewalk on the left-hand side, alternate paving material on the edges, and a mountable median down the middle. This deals with optical narrowing of a road.

Aside from picking the streetscape designs, the Committee also looked at material options. The Committee determined ideal, basic, and minimum options for shared spaces and the vehicle spaces. The basic material for the vehicle spaces would either be asphalt, chip seal, or something comparable. The shared spaces would be granite paving blocks and the parking accent areas would also be granite paving blocks of a rougher texture. If this is cost prohibitive, a basic option for all of the spaces was proposed to be asphalt, chip seal, or something similar. These could be temporary materials that could perhaps be upgraded in the future.

Carriage Road is a neighborhood access street. The Committee agreed that the streetscape design for this road has a pedestrian priority. The design utilizes an alternate surface material. Currently, the entirety of this road often functions as a sidewalk. The alternate surface material would reinforce that. For Church Street, one of the concepts would be to narrow the street from its current 25' to 20'. This would help address traffic calming. This street does currently function as a shared space. During the site walk, residents mentioned that they prefer to walk and bike on the road and did not see a need for a separate sidewalk. Ideally, to make this street a pedestrian priority, it would be reconstructed with granite paving blocks on the whole area. Davis Lane is also currently a shared space for pedestrians and vehicles. The biggest concern mentioned on the site walk was a concern for speeding. Use of an alternate paving material would calm the traffic and address the speeding concern. The ideal option for this road would also be granite paving block material over the whole street. For Jones Road, the Committee recommended that no center lines be painted, and a separate pedestrian sidewalk be created. The Committee also discussed narrowing the road from 27' wide to 20' for the vehicle space. The additional 7' would be used for the creation of the separate pedestrian sidewalk. This road is particularly of interest because it is located near the Wilkins School and is part of a large walking loop in the Village. Making this area safe for everyone is a priority. The sidewalk would likely be separated from the roadway using a grass separation, or the sidewalk could be flush with the road. This will be determined during the engineering phase.

The Committee broke Main Street into three parts for the purpose of discussion because it has different functions. One section is Amherst Street to the Library driveway. This needs a different technique than from the Library's driveway across the Moulton's intersection to 8 Main Street.

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

The third section is from that business to Town Hall. From Amherst Street to the Library driveway, the suggestion is to narrow the road from 25' to 20', remove the center line, and reinforce the separate pedestrian sidewalk that currently exists. There is a small walkway that comes from Amherst Street at Country Mansions towards the Library. This Committee discussed making this into an ADA compliant sidewalk. The Committee also discussed trying to formalize the parallel parking across from the Library, including having 2-3 parallel parking spaces in a row and then having a vertical element to break up the space, such as a tree. This would have a traffic calming effect. From the Library driveway to 8 Main Street, the theme is narrowing the road and installing an alternate paving material. An alternate paving material running from the Library's driveway all the way through the intersection would help alert everyone to this being a different, shared space and a priority space for pedestrians. From that area toward Manchester Road, the proposal is to narrow the road, remove the center lines, and reduce the existing asphalt to make more green space.

Tracie Adams thanked Sam Fortier, CMA Engineers, who led the Committee through the discussion regarding intersections, Step 3. The concepts for the intersections are to narrow the roads to slow speeds and to use alternate surface materials to designate the shared spaces and crosswalks. The Town has already had great success with realigning intersections to be T-intersections. This design is safer and less confusing. This is also proposed in the Village where needed, along with changing or reducing the corner radii. This will make people drive slower and be more intentional about the turns. She showed the Commission a photo of the current intersection at Amherst Street/Main Street/Davis Lane/Carriage Road. There is a crosswalk from Country Mansions across Amherst Street which is currently a long diagonal, placing pedestrians in the crosswalk for a longer period of time and with difficult sight lines. Straightening the crosswalk would allow for better sight lines. With alternate paving materials proposed on Carriage Road and Davis Lane, the intersection in this area could be defined as a shared space. The parking spaces near the Library could be more defined along the edge as the road is narrowed.

Regarding the Davis Lane/Foundry Street intersection, the Committee considered extending the alternate paving material and reducing the turn radii. This would make the area a pedestrian priority and will alert traffic coming down Christian Hill Road. For the Jones Road/Mack Hill Road/Dodge Road intersection, there is currently a large amount of extra asphalt in this area which could be removed and made into a green space. An alternate paving material would help define this is a pedestrian space. The Town could also consider taking the Jones Road sidewalk and bending it onto Mack Hill Rd.

The Main Street/Pierce Lane intersection contains two driveways and another large amount of asphalt that could be removed. Removing this could be accomplished with very little to no additional cost. Trees or other vertical elements could be installed to be traffic calming. This area shows a decrease in the width of the road, due to the proposed narrowing. For the Boston Post Road/Main Street/School Street/Carriage Road intersection, the intention is to make this safer for pedestrians and drivers as well. The proposal is to narrow this area and tee up the intersection.

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

Regarding the existing parking and dumpster area along the side of the Moulton's building, the proposal includes decreasing the pavement in this area, placing the parking spots elsewhere, and allowing Moulton's to use this space differently. The dumpsters could be placed in a more aesthetic location, and this would take delivery trucks off Boston Post Road.

The proposed action plan is in compliance with the Master Plan. She noted that, in the Master Plan survey, 82% of people responded that maintaining the rural character and feeling of Amherst was either their highest priority or a high priority. The plan proposed by the Committee tries to maintain the rural character and feel, while also increasing safety for all. The Committee hopes that the Town will apply for the Safe Streets and Roads For All grant. The Committee will hear input from the Board of Selectmen on Monday, November 20th, and incorporate this into a final package for the Board.

Chris Buchanan stated that he has the Commission struggle to communicate where the Historic District is in Town. This project aligns with some of the Historic District lines and seeks to use gateway treatments effectively in the streetscape to define one area from another. The Town could consider welcome signage similar to that which exists in Hollis and Bedford in a couple of locations where these gateway treatments are proposed, such as Foundry Street at Davis Lane and Dodge Road. Also, for upcoming road work, there is a defined guardrail type in the Commission's regulations, and he suggested moving towards this when replacing any of the guardrails in the Village. Chris Buchanan thanked Tracie Adams for all of her work on this project.

Linda Kaiser noted that the existing Amherst/Main Street corner is difficult, and she likes the proposal for this section. She asked if there will be less parking at Moulton's. Tracie Adams stated that there will not be less, but it may be laid out differently. Linda Kaiser asked if the Committee spoke with residents regarding the proposal to narrow Jones Road and add a sidewalk. Tracie Adams stated that there were a total of 41 people on the site walk and comments were made about this proposal, though it is unclear if any of those comments came from Jones Road residents.

2. Discussion of RFP for Design Guidelines

Doug Chabinsky stated that one bid was obtained from this RFP. He reviewed the company's prior design guideline documents created for other towns but found them to be more like preferences and not necessarily what the Commission is looking for. This company did the guidelines for Exeter, NH but he believes clear guidelines seem to be missing. The company's quote was quite expensive, including a photographic survey which the Commission already had completed a couple of years ago. He does not see the value for dollars from this response.

Chris Buchanan stated that he believes a perfect design guideline would be one that helps people interpret the regulations. It is not a substitute for the regulations, but gives context, options, and information to help applicants align the project with the regulations. Doug Chabinsky stated that

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

most of the examples from the company do not make the regulations clearer. He could get this information from the Department of the Interior. Chris Buchanan stated that it is useful to provide a helpful document to applicants. Doug Chabinsky stated that he does not believe the proposed document would be helpful to applicants for the amount of money requested. He suggested the Commission spend time reviewing the artifacts and determining what is actually needed prior to another RFP.

Nic Strong noted that, in order to use the grant money, this work has to be completed by 2024. If this is put out to bid again, the timeline will likely lapse. The grant is for \$24,150 and this quote was for \$50,000. Chris Buchanan suggested asking the company for a lower bid. Doug Chabinsky stated that he believes changing the project scope would likely require going out to bid again.

Chris Buchanan stated that the grant money will likely expire unless this one option is taken. Even if this only completes a subsection of the document, he would like to proceed with the grant. Doug Chabinsky stated that he would like to do this but is unclear if this can be done legally. Chris Buchanan asked how specific the bid was and if there is any leeway. Doug Chabinsky stated that this is unclear. He noted that the RFP may not have been clear enough or proposed items outside of the scope that could be negotiated.

Nic Strong stated that she would send a copy of the RFP to Doug Chabinsky for review. The RFP may be able to be edited to reduce the cost as long as the fundamental scope is not altered, as this would likely require a rebid process. Tom Grella suggested running this by Town Counsel.

The Commission discussed holding a work session before Christmas in order to move this forward. Chris Buchanan stated that the work session will be his last meeting as a Commissioner.

3. Minutes: October 19, 2023

Chris Buchanan moved to approve the meeting minutes of October 19, 2023, as submitted. Seconded by Tom Grella.

Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Chris Buchanan – aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Bill Glenn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.

4. Any other business:

Chris Buchanan noted that he met with Town Administrator Shankle and DPW Director Slosek regarding the light poles previously discussed. These were approved by the Board of Selectmen in 2020. This could become an expensive project due to underground electric items and the discussion has turned to how to pay for them.

TOWN OF AMHERST
Historic District Commission

November 16, 2023

APPROVED

343 **Doug Chabinsky moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:27pm. Seconded by Chris**
344 **Buchanan.**
345 **Roll Call Vote: Doug Chabinsky – aye, Martha Chabinsky - aye, Chris Buchanan –**
346 **aye, Tom Grella – aye, and Bill Glenn – aye; Motion carried 5-0-0.**
347
348 Respectfully submitted,
349 Kristan Patenaude