

1 Town of Amherst, New Hampshire  
2 **Historic District Commission**  
3 **Minutes**  
4 **March 19, 2015**  
5

6 The Amherst Village Historic District Commission met on **Thursday, March 19, 2015 at 7:00 pm** in the  
7 Barbara Landry Meeting Room in Amherst Town Hall.  
8

9 In attendance were Jamie Ramsay, *Chair*; Tracy Veillete, *Vice Chair*; Susan Clark, *Secretary*; Sally  
10 Wilkins, *Planning Board Representative*; Thomas Grella, *Board of Selectmen Representative*; Bruce  
11 Fraser; Larry McCoy, *Alternate*; Jeanne Rosenblatt, *Alternate*; Helen Rowe, *Alternate*; Christopher Hall,  
12 *Alternate*. Also in attendance were Colleen Mailloux, Community Development Director; Mike Akillian,  
13 *Chair*, Village Strategic Planning Committee; Amily Moore, *Member*, Village Strategic Planning  
14 Committee.  
15

16 Jamie called the meeting to order 7:05 pm.  
17

18 **Case #: PZ5904-021815** – Nancy Tarpley – 6 Old Jailhouse Road – PIN #: 017-070-000 – To allow the  
19 installation of a 20KW Kohler Standby Generator.  
20

21 Present: The property owner was not present for the discussion nor did they send a representative.  
22

23 Jamie stated that the Commissioners conducted a site walk of the property just prior to the meeting.  
24 He said that the house is a two-story hip roof colonial and a new home. He stated that he thought that  
25 Jim Sickler would be doing the installation and the unit would be installed approximately 5 feet behind  
26 the rear of the house on a GenPad block. Jamie asked if this was a contributing property. Sue  
27 answered “yes” – it was house # 67 on the National Registry of Historical Places.  
28

29 Sally stated that the unit could only be seen from the playground behind the church and that lilacs  
30 were present and would screen the unit. Tracy recommended adding more plantings. Sue agreed.  
31 Chris questioned whether abutters were notified. Jamie stated “yes” and no abutters had any issues.  
32

33 Hearing no other comments or concerns, Jamie called for findings from the Commission.  
34

35 **FINDINGS:**

- 36 1. Contributing property.
- 37 2. Remote location.
- 38 3. Not visible except to own house.
- 39 4. Lilac bush would provide screening.  
40

41 Hearing no other findings, Jamie called for a motion.  
42

43 MOTION: Helen made a motion to approve the application as submitted, Chris 2<sup>nd</sup>. *VOTE: All in Favor.*  
44

45 Amherst Historic Village Brochure Discussion  
46

47 Jamie began discussion by asking whether all members received a copy of the current “Welcome to  
48 Historic Amherst Village” brochure. All said they had. He stated that he felt that the “boiler plate was  
49 generally good”, however, he would like to try to soften the perception that the public has of the  
50 Historic District.

51  
52 Jeanne questioned whether the format of the brochure needed to be this way. She recommended  
53 that the website link this document on to every realtor so everyone would know what the Historic  
54 District represents, however, she felt that the whole ‘question & answer’ portion should be scrapped.  
55

56 Sally recommended that we have this document “live” on the Town’s website. She said that the  
57 Historic District couldn’t control what the realtors do with it and that we couldn’t enforce MLS listings.  
58 Chris felt that the front page was not very welcoming.  
59

60 Community Development Director Colleen Mailloux stated that it could be possible to add a link into  
61 Vision and get this on the website as a “user friendly” document. She also added that we could do an  
62 “email blast” to advise folks about the District. Colleen stated that it was the goal of the department to  
63 work with the Assessing Department to send out “welcome” letters when properties transfer. She said  
64 it might be too late at that point but at least the new owners will know about the District’s rules and  
65 guidelines.  
66

67 Amily Moore thought the process was very confusing. She recommended that the District put photos  
68 and drawings to simplify the document and make it less scary to newcomers. Jamie agreed but said it  
69 does encourage the public to come before the HDC and it would head off a lot of problems. Colleen  
70 stated that Deb can encourage people to come and talk to the HDC on an informal basis before the  
71 application is actually submitted.  
72

73 Discussion followed regarding the brochure and the intention for it. Sally said that anybody that buys a  
74 house in the District would receive one. Tracy said that she didn’t think people really knew what a big  
75 deal this really is. Sue agreed and suggested that it could be linked to the National Register.  
76

77 Larry felt that by following the rules and regulations of the District, it would guarantee that the value of  
78 our homes would stay up and that was a strong selling point. He said he makes sure new folks are  
79 aware of this when he talks to people. He added that it would also turn away people who are not  
80 interested in the rules of the District.  
81

82 Discussion followed regarding the educational component of living in the Historic District. Mike  
83 Akillian stated it would provide a unique opportunity to create stewards of the District. He said that  
84 most residents don’t understand the role of the Historic District and when to engage them. Sally said  
85 they encounter us when they want to make changes to their properties or when they have already

86 made changes. Sue added that there are those few who break the rules and then perceive the HDC as  
87 the “bad guys”.

88

89 Mike said that he has spoken with folks who have gone before the Historic District and many had no  
90 problems. He said those who did their homework had better experiences with the Commission and it  
91 worked out well and was less scary. He said that the feedback received by the Strategic Planning  
92 Committee that got the most attention involved issues around traffic.

93

94 Jamie stated that the Commissioners are pushing to be as positive as possible and strengthen  
95 relationships to those wanting to buy in the Historic District and not to be divisive thus creating an “us  
96 vs. them or village vs. non-village” situation. Helen stated that the Historic District benefits the entire  
97 town. She said that one of the reasons people move into Amherst is because of the Village. Larry  
98 agreed and said that all these old homes are well kept because people take care of them at their own  
99 cost. He said it is great when people understand the value and that the Village becomes a “magnet” in  
100 town.

101

102 Jamie asked what should be kept in the brochure and what should be scrapped. Sally stated that some  
103 of the language needed to be changed. Chris stated that item #6 (choice of color) is not enforced.  
104 Helen stated that the rationale behind that is that neighbors were most effective in controlling colors.

105

106 Discussion followed regarding HDC regulations and ordinances as it involves trees. Sally felt that it  
107 needed to be changed. Colleen stated that ordinances are part of a town meeting vote. She asked for  
108 volunteers to work with her to review the regulations and ordinances as a subcommittee. She said  
109 that the subcommittee could refine the brochure as well as work on a welcome letter for new buyers.  
110 Tracy, Sally and Sue volunteered to be on the subcommittee and work with Colleen.

111

112 Jamie stated that the whole “tree” issue was a nuisance. He said that he prefers to have the HDC meet  
113 with residents who want to take a tree down in order to educate them. Sally agreed. Jamie stated  
114 that he was advised that it was a liability issue telling folks that they cannot take down a distressed  
115 tree that is causing damage. Sally stated that we could possibly give authority to the tree warden if it  
116 were an emergency and then later consult with the HDC.

117

118 Sue stated that she has researched this and cited a Supreme Court ruling that the HDC has authority  
119 over structures only and that trees were not considered structures. She recommended the application  
120 or the application fee not be taken for trees. Jamie stated that it would make the HDC more inviting to  
121 residents. Helen recommended that the HDC work with Colleen to establish the subcommittee with 2-  
122 3 Commissioners in order to create a document that everyone will embrace.

123

124 Mike stated that the Strategic Planning Committee has five working groups within it and the issue of  
125 trees has come up. He said it made great sense to look at the Village and to create an inventory of the  
126 common so the town can anticipate costs as an investment strategy and work it into their plan.

127

128 Jamie stated that the HDC could consider it a pre-application discussion. Larry asked whether the tree  
129 warden was available to the public. Tracy stated “yes”. Tom stated that the tree warden could answer

130 many questions from residents. Sally suggested that she, Sue and Tracy work with Colleen on  
131 massaging the brochure.

132

133 Discussion followed concerning the District boundaries. Larry stated that it needed to be determined.  
134 Tracy recommended making street signs within the District a different color. Mike stated that he  
135 envisions having different signage to let people know that they are coming into a different part of  
136 town. He said that some communities change things, i.e. narrowing roads, pavers, etc. at the entrances  
137 of their District to cue people.

138

139 Tom proposed that Jamie, Larry and he work with the DPW Superintendent in investigating the cost of  
140 changing signs in the Historic District and report back to the Commissioners next month.

141

142 Mike stated that the main reason he asked to speak with Commissioners was to obtain a member to  
143 participate on the Strategic Planning Committee who could take over for Jamie who can no longer  
144 serve due to his personal work schedule. He said that he didn't want to miss the opportunity to include  
145 the HDC. Chris volunteered to be the Historic District representative.

146

147 MINUTES:

148 February 19, 2015 – Sally made a motion to approve the minutes of February 19, 2015 after some  
149 minor amendments, Tom 2<sup>nd</sup>. *VOTE: All in Favor.*

150

151 Hearing no other issues before the Commission, Jamie asked for a motion to adjourn. Sue motioned to  
152 adjourn at 8:30 pm, Jamie 2<sup>nd</sup>. *VOTE: All In favor.*

153

154 Respectfully Submitted,

155

156 Debra A. Butcher

157 Recording Secretary

158 Town of Amherst

159 Historic District Commission