

Town of Amherst, New Hampshire
Historic District Commission
Minutes
March 19, 2015

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

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

Jamie called the meeting to order 7:05 pm.

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

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

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

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

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

FINDINGS:

1. Contributing property.
2. Remote location.
3. Not visible except to own house.
4. Lilac bush would provide screening.

Hearing no other findings, Jamie called for a motion.

MOTION: Helen made a motion to approve the application as submitted, Chris 2nd. *VOTE: All in Favor.*

Amherst Historic Village Brochure Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jamie stated that the HDC could consider it a pre-application discussion. Larry asked whether the tree 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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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147 MINUTES:

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

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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 2nd. *VOTE: All In favor.*

153

154 Respectfully Submitted,

155

156 Debra A. Butcher

157 Recording Secretary

158 Town of Amherst

159 Historic District Commission