

Town of Amherst, NH
Historic District Commission
DRAFT MINUTES

Barbara Landry Conference Room
Saturday, 6 January 2018, 9:00 AM

Historic District Commission members in attendance were: Jamie Ramsay, Chairman; Chris Hall, Vice Chairman; Doug Chabinsky; Chris Buchanan, Secretary; Sally Wilkins, Planning Board Representative

Staff in attendance: Gordon Leedy, Community Development Director; Simon Corson, Planner

Public in attendance: Kinney Clark, GIS at the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office; William Cook, Associate General Counsel at the National Trust for Historic Preservation; Robin Zeigler, Historic Zoning Administrator at the Nashville-Davidson County Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission; Will Ludt, Heritage Commission Chairman; Amy Dixon, Grants Coordinator at the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources; Megan Rupnik, State Survey Coordinator at the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources; Kristan Patenaude, Katrina Holman, and Cynthia Swank.

The meeting was called to order at 9:15 AM. Gordon Leedy welcomed the group to the Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP). He thanked the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources for awarding the grant that made the event possible.

Robin Zeigler discussed the format for the day. She announced that Will Cook was stuck in Newark, New Jersey due to the weather disallowing his flight to takeoff. However, it was expected that Will would join the group for lunch and the afternoon sessions. Robin asked the attendees to take turns sharing why they chose their profession or to become a commissioner, and what they wanted to learn about during the CAMP event. The audience obliged and Robin interacted with each person to gain a better understanding who the audience was and set expectations for the upcoming sessions.

Robin began her presentation about the role of the local Historic District Commission (HDC) in the pursuit of historic preservation. Preservation was used conversationally as the Amherst Historic District Commission understands they are aiming for rehabilitation as defined by the Secretary of the Interior. Robin currently works on the staff of the Nashville-Davidson County Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission. Prior to that, she was a Senior Historic Preservation Planner for the Planning Division of the Salt Lake City Corporation, and the Preservation Planner for the City of Bowling Green in Kentucky. By working for some small and large communities, Robin has developed a diverse set of skills that allow her to be successful protecting properties that have significance and integrity. There was discussion about Robin's professional experiences as they relate to the challenges that the Amherst HDC faces.

Kinney Clark spoke after Robin. Kinney told the audience about himself discussing his current occupation as a GIS Specialist with the NJ State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) where he

coordinates culture resources GIS development, administer HPO's annual federal funding process, and participates in project development and data coordination for the Certified Local Government sub-grant program. Kinney presented on the standards and guidelines for design review. The Amherst HDC regulations reference the Federal Standards and Guidelines. Kinney's presentation helped the group understand how these standards and guidelines can be effectively applied during a public hearing. Several Amherst HDC cases from the past were shared with Kinney to help contextualize his presentation. Kinney gave explanations in response to specific Amherst HDC cases.

Kinney gave a presentation about identifying and designating historical resources. He overviewed the process behind conducting historic resource surveys using the information collected to determine eligibility for designation to the National Register of Historic Places. The expert also conversed about drawing and defending historic boundaries. The Amherst HDC is considering perusing a survey for the Town's locally designated district. The locally designated district is regulatory and the National Register designated district is honorary. There has never been a survey done that includes all the properties within the regulatory district. Both preservation professionals agreed that completing an updated survey would help the Amherst HDC better protect historic properties and make defensible decisions during public hearings.

Kinney transitioned to present about the tools needed to be an effective spokesperson for the work that a HDC does in a community. Simon Corson and Kinney had a dialogue about using International Supplier of Geographic Information System's (ESRI) ArcGIS software to help connect with citizens. The presenter shared his success using ESRI's tool called StoryMap.

The group took a break for lunch.

Will Cook was introduced as the next speaker. Will is currently an Associate General Counsel at the National Trust for the Historic Preservation. His primary areas of responsibility include litigation, tax credits, and trademarks. Will gave a talk on the background of preservation law as it relates to local preservation commissions. He reviewed and discussed the positives and negatives in the Amherst's local ordinance, and local codes. There was a conversation about how the Amherst HDC's regulations might be tweaked to most effectively protect the district while allowing modern technology.

Will Cook also gave a presentation focused on the best practices and preparation strategies for before, during, and after a public hearing. From a legal perspective, avoiding conflicts of interest and maintaining ethical standards were discussed in detail. Similarly to other topics, this conversation allowed the Amherst HDC to ask specific questions about prior cases and get answers from preservation professionals.

Will departed Amherst following his presentation to travel to another speaking engagement. Robin spoke about alternative materials. The Amherst HDC is aware that as fewer original materials are available to replace deteriorated or missing features, they need to understand when approving alternative materials may be appropriate. Robin's presentation provided the group with a framework to consider alternative materials. She stressed that the process of deciding to accept or deny alternative materials needs to be consistent as new products are appearing

constantly. The group discussed several engagement methods to have conversations with builders and residents regarding alternative materials.

Gordon Leedy and Simon Corson from the Office of Community Development and Jamie Ramsey, Chairman of the Amherst HDC thanked Robin, Kinney, and Will for training the audience during the CAMP event.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Simon Corson