

Exeter Heritage Commission Demolition Review Committee

Draft Minutes

Nowak Room, Exeter Town Offices

September 15, 2010

Members present: John Merkle, Peter Michaud, and Anita Bailey
Several Heritage Commission members in attendance

Chairman, John Merkle, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

55 High Street

John Merkle introduced the Demolition Review Committee (DRC) as a sub committee of the Heritage Commission, and explained the process of the Demolition Review Committee. The applicant, Christopher Roseberry, owner of 55 High Street, applied for a demolition permit to demolish his barn. Mr. Merkle specifically noted that the applicant is free to demolish the property, but explained that the DRC felt the building met the Zoning Ordinance criteria for historic preservation:

- The Exeter zoning ordinance (section 5.3.5) page 5-8 states:
 - a. The building or structure is of such interest or quality that it would meet national, state or local criteria for designation as a historic, cultural, or architectural landmark.
 - c. The building or structure is of such architectural or historic interest that its removal would be to the detriment of the public interest.
 - d. Retention of the building or structure would help preserve and protect a historic place or area of historic interest in the town.

Peter Michaud explained the reasons why the DRC came to its conclusion, stating that the barn and its connection to the house reflected the historic integrity of its context. After researching the property and reviewing an 1884 map of Exeter, the DRC discovered the barn was original to the site and its balloon framing was typical to that period. Mr. Merkle stated that the DRC's intention for this decision was to record public concerns and to attempt to convince the applicant to pursue alternatives for preservation of the barn. John Merkle opened the discussion for public comment.

Ron Schutz, member of the Exeter Heritage Commission and the Historic District Commission, and neighbor to the property under review, stated that he has had a similar experience with a home he previously owned. Mr. Schutz made alterations to his barn by building several rooms on a second floor. Those alterations included adding piers and an internal structure to reinforce the barn. Mr. Schutz encouraged Mr. Roseberry to consider similar methods of salvaging

his own barn. Mr. Roseberry stated that he has already spoken with three builders, who gave him a quote of around \$80,000 to reinforce the barn for the weight of a car. The barn door would also have to be enlarged to fit a car. The barn as it stands does not support a car's weight and the property without a garage space would lower the value of the home.

Don Clement, Selectman's Representative of the Heritage Commission, began a discussion about how the barn reflects its historical context, and the importance of the town's need to preserve those structures. John Merkle explained that due to these concerns, the Heritage Commission has begun to research the possibility of expanding the Historic District into Portsmouth Avenue, along with other preservation methods.

Peter Michaud explained that when the Historic District is run properly, changes such as demolition can occur, but not without extensive analysis and discussion beforehand. These changes need to be considered for the good of the Historic District and the integrity its historic character.

John Merkle presented the applicant with an information packet about the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance: Barn Assessment Grants, as well as the State of New Hampshire Barn Tax Incentive Program which provides tax rebates on maintaining and saving historic barns.

Mark Harrison, neighbor to the applicant, explained that he has been in the same situation as Mr. Roseberry and completed all the necessary work to salvage the historic structure. After raising his barn, adding a foundation, and reinforcing the floor, the original barn was salvaged. Mr. Harrison explained that his concern with the previous expansion of the Historic District is that it was forced upon the residents and the Historic District Commission's actions are not consistent enough to provide the proper preservation for the area.

Peter Smith, member of the Heritage Commission, stated that within the Historic District, there exists a historic fabric that could easily be changed when a building is demolished. It is easy enough to tear a building down, but it is harder to retain that historical context once the building's heritage is considered.

Mr. Schutz pointed out that even though historical buildings are more costly to maintain, property values within a Historic District have a higher value.

John Merkle explained that in order to stay consistent with the Zoning Ordinance, the DRC is supposed to make arrangements with the applicant to suggest alternatives and provide more time before demolition. Mr. Roseberry explained that his decision to tear down the barn will not change. Based on this statement, the DRC agreed to waive that meeting.

Chairman, John Merkle, requested a motion for adjournment. The motion was seconded by Peter Smith. Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gillian R. Baresich

Recording Secretary