

*These minutes are subject to possible corrections/revisions at a subsequent
Exeter Heritage Commission meeting.*

Exeter Heritage Commission
Draft Minutes
Nowak Room, Exeter Town Offices
December 1, 2010

Call Meeting to Order

Members Present: John Merkle, Ron Schutz, Don Clement, and Peter Smith
Absent: Amy Bailey, Mary Dupré, and Peter Michaud
Historic District Commission Members present: Pam Gjettum and Wendy Bergeron

Chairman, John Merkle, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Offices.

1. Approval of the minutes of November 3, 2010

There were not enough Heritage Commission members present for a quorum. The approval of the November minutes was tabled to the January meeting.

2. Follow up discussion with the Historic District Commission on the possible expansion of the High Street and Downtown Historic Districts to include a portion of Portsmouth Avenue.

John Merkle welcomed the members of the Historic District Commission and began the discussion of expanding the Historic District along Portsmouth Avenue. This suggestion for the expansion of the Historic District came about when the owners of 8 Portsmouth Avenue filed for a demolition request and never came into contact with the Heritage District. The Demolition Review Ordinance stated that the Heritage Commission could only act as an advisory committee and could do nothing to prevent future demolition. This property is one of many along Portsmouth Avenue that act as an integral gateway into the Exeter's Historic District, allowing for a transition zone between the commercial corridor and the historic downtown. As it stands now, each of these properties is at risk of demolition and this residential gateway area could eventually change into a commercialized district with no connection to its historic roots. Don Clement advised that it would be best to soften the approach onto High Street while providing more control over the façade appearances of the buildings.

The question "what is our goal?" was brought up several times in order to identify what would best accomplish the Boards' intentions. Peter Smith stated that the Board is trying to create an area that will remain a transitional zone between two districts in order to preserve the integrity of both. The Board also discussed what it means to be a part of a Historic District and why this portion of Exeter needs to be included. It was agreed that in order to receive support from the residences from within the gateway area, the Board would need to properly answer each of these questions in a simple and understandable manner.

The proposal requires at least several months to properly prepare before being brought before the Planning Board. Therefore, it would be in the Board's best interest if the project was not rushed to bring before the Planning Board before the end of the year. Proper planning and coordination, as well as the Town-Wide Mapping Survey would help to

These minutes are subject to possible corrections/revisions at a subsequent Exeter Heritage Commission meeting.

convey the importance of this item. First, the Board will need to contact each of the property owners individually to inform them of the proposed expansion and receive their input. Once the Commission has received the Town's input and support, the Board would move forward with the steps required to add the item to the ballot. This would involve several public hearings, a Town Meeting, as well as media releases.

Mr. Merkle also suggested utilizing other methods to preserve this gateway area if the expansion of the Historic District does not pass. Three of the options discussed included a change in the Zoning, applying Form-Based Code to the area, and creating a Heritage District. Mr. Clement posed the question, "What is it as a Heritage Commission are we trying to accomplish and what are the goals? Now what tool is the best way to accomplish that?" While each one of these options has its own unique outcome, the two Boards overwhelmingly believed that the best route would be to stay with the expansion of the Historic District. Although Form-Based Code would help to create a unique district for the Town of Exeter, the area under discussion is too small to be effective. Zoning would help to manage the business types but would not allow for the proper amount of control over aesthetics. Heritage Districts would help to preserve the character of an area, but would still not provide the exact control necessary to keep demolition from reaching any of the historic homes.

The Board discussed the locations of the properties to be included in the expansion, explaining that a Historic District does not need to be symmetrical along the street. After further discussion, it was agreed to consider properties along both sides of the street to allow for a more cohesive district. Those boundaries, which were voted on during the previous November Heritage Commission Meeting, included properties 33 through 153, and 7 through 110. However, by including the commercial properties with the residential ones, the Commission will have to propose a separate argument geared towards commercial businesses in order to gain the support of those property owners. Ron Schutz volunteered to draft a letter explaining the contents of the Historic District Preservation Guidelines as well as information concerning Historic Districts and their resulting benefits. Mr. Schutz also suggested that the Board try to contact all property owners before March, 2011 in order to create a timeline for the Board to work from. Pam Gjetum suggested utilizing the Tax Office to find the contact information for the owners.

3. Discussion on possible changes to the demolition review ordinance.

John Merkle requested a reading of the change to the Demolition Review Ordinance. Pam Gjetum read the change aloud:

On page 8 under Demolition, in the first sentence, delete "HDC review" and insert "review by the Demolition Review Committee of the Heritage Commission and subsequently the HDC. The HDC should consider the findings of the Demolition Review Committee before deciding on a demolition application. Demolition review requirements are contained in Article 5, General Regulations, of the Exeter Zoning Ordinance. Demolition review is initiated by submission of an application for a building permit. Applicants wanting to demolish structures in the historic districts should review the zoning regulations so that they are aware of the actions and the time needed for them by the Code Enforcement Officer and Demolition Review Committee."

These minutes are subject to possible corrections/revisions at a subsequent Exeter Heritage Commission meeting.

The change has to be publicly read three times and has already been read once before during the last Historic District Commission Meeting. Hoping to allow the update to be accepted sooner than later, the two Boards discussed whether or not this reading would be counted as the second reading. There was a follow-up discussion about how this change would allow any demolition requests to first require review by the Heritage Commission before moving on to the HDC.

4. Update on the status of the Certified Local Government grants for a town wide mapping survey of historical and cultural resources and the survey for the Winter Street cemetery.

Due to Peter Michaud's absence, there was no update on the status of the Certified Local Government grant for a town-wide mapping survey. The Board hopes to hear something at the upcoming meeting.

5. Demolition request updates.

There were no demolition request updates to discuss.

6. Update and discussion concerning other properties at possible risk.

There were no new properties at risk to discuss. The Board began a discussion with Peter Smith concerning the status of the Fogg-Rollins House. Mr. Smith explained that although the building itself will not be moved, the Historical Society is currently in the process of moving the tools and equipment to another site for display purposes. The Fogg-Rollins house is one of the last remaining wheelwright shops in the state with a complete set of tools and equipment. Currently, the Fogg-Rollins house cannot be used as an exhibit site due to its inadequate structure, foundation, and site. Mr. Smith stated that after several walkthroughs of the house and barn, they were able to uncover sixteen wheels, a covered wagon, an unusually-structured barn gate, twelve stoves, two sleighs, a cider press, and several other items of historical value. The Board began a conversation about the best ways to preserve these artifacts as well as the building itself. Don Clement suggested mounting a plaque on the site explaining a short history of the building.

7. Other Business.

There was no additional business to discuss.

Ron Schutz motioned to adjourn, Don Clement seconded: Vote unanimous.

Chairman John Merkle adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gillian Baresich
Recording Secretary