

Exeter Heritage Commission
Approved as Amended, September 1, 2010
Nowak Room, Exeter Town Offices
August 11, 2010

Call Meeting to Order

Members Present: John Merkle, Amy Bailey, Don Clement, Mary Dupré, and Peter Michaud
Guest: Pam Gjetton of the Historic District Commission.
Absent: Ron Schutz.

Chairman, John Merkle, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. Discussion regarding the request by RiverWoods at Exeter to demolish the buildings at 77 Kingston Road, (former Reedy Sign property): Charles Tucker

Charles Tucker, attorney representing RiverWoods Community, presented the application, explaining the existing conditions of the building and its history. He provided the Board with a structural assessment report of the property by Emanuel Engineering, Inc. The building was originally built in 1860 and has a balloon frame structure. The property consists of a two-story house, house addition, multi-level barn, and barn addition. RiverWoods purchased the property from the Reedy family with the intention of using it as an administrative office building. Emanuel Engineering, Inc. was hired to inspect the building, and in the end, demolition was recommended as the best option. Several structural beams have been removed from the building and the structural integrity of the house was deemed inadequate for the purpose of office-use. The foundation was also unstable and would need to be rebuilt. The only salvageable piece of the building is the walls, which would need to be lifted from the building in order to reconstruct the foundation. If the barn was salvaged to be rebuilt into an office complex, the entire interior of the barn would require a large amount of work to provide the proper office environment. RiverWoods has decided to demolish the building and plans to construct a replacement building on the property.

Charles Tucker described the new replacement building as having a smaller footprint than the existing building. He provided the Board with a rendering and explained how the design elements reflect both the existing architecture and the RiverWoods architecture.

The Board discussed the details of the existing structure and if there were any salvageable elements from the pictures within the report. Charles Tucker explained that there was nothing of value that could be reused throughout the building. It was agreed that it was unlikely the building held any historic significance, due to the presence of so many modern intrusions. However, the Board felt a site visit is necessary to provide an official opinion.

Charles Tucker informed the Board that they have yet to present the application to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, or the Planning Board, but invited the Heritage Commission to inspect the building for any cultural or historic significance. Mr. Merkle suggested the entire Heritage Commission visit the site in order to provide a learning opportunity. Mr. Merkle explained that only three members are needed to visit the site, but felt the Board would benefit from understanding the process.

2. Request for input and possible involvement of the Heritage Commission with an Eagle Scout project to rejuvenate the George Leonard Smith cannon monument adjacent to the Winter Street Cemetery.

John Merkle explained that he was approached by Boy Scout, Stephen Tatarczuk, who requested permission to refurbish the George Leonard Smith Cannon Monument for his Eagle Scout Project. He provided several options for refurbishment, including sanding and repainting the cannon, adding mulch, a picnic table, flowers, fencing, and other landscaping. He also suggested replacing the plaque, or putting it on a different stone. The Board suggested a meeting with Stephen, to provide him the opportunity to present his ideas in detail, and allow the Board to respond and provide advice. Mr. Merkle began a discussion of the history of the memorial, detailing the invention of the breech mechanism, conceived by Exeter resident, Captain George Leonard Smith. It was noted that Peter Smith, cousin to Captain George Leonard Smith, showed an interest in working with Stephen Tatarczuk on this project.

Amy Bailey brought up the topic of safety. She stated a concern about the existence of lead paint and the stability of the cannon. A comment was made that perhaps Peter Smith could act as a sponsor and assist in these safety concerns, along with other professionals in the community. Don Clement stated that he had previous experience sponsoring a scout in a similar project, and explained that this would be a large undertaking and a lot of preparation would be necessary.

The Board discussed other projects for the scout to consider and invited the scout to attend a future meeting.

3. Discussion on the objectives of the expansion of the High Street and Downtown Historic Districts to include a portion of Portsmouth Avenue.

Mr. Merkle began a discussion concerning the expansion of the Historic District along Portsmouth Avenue. It was explained that the area of concern acts as an important gateway to the Historic Districts within Exeter. The Board suggested the idea of turning the area into a transition zone which would provide more regulation in the preservation of historic character and may be more readily accepted within the community. It was agreed that the intention behind this change would preserve several historic homes and businesses along the corridor. Peter Michaud suggested the Board consider the implementation of form-based code, which was recently put into use in Stratham. This code, acting as a transition zone, would preserve the historic context of the area by requiring new construction to maintain historic integrity. However, form-based code would not prevent structural demolition.

The Board began a discussion about whether they should preserve the historic character or the actual buildings, as well as what should be included within the district. It was decided that Pam Gjettem, representative of the Historic District Commission, would present this proposal at the upcoming HDC meeting for their opinion. Peter Michaud offered to research form-based code, as well as speak with Linda Wilson, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources, to obtain information concerning the expansion of historic districts. Don Clement offered to provide the Board with maps of the area under discussion for the next meeting.

4. Follow up discussion on the status of the Certified Local Government grant for a town-wide mapping survey of historical and cultural resources.

Peter Michaud stated that the progress of the town-wide mapping survey project is presently underway, but has yet to go before Governor and Council. Providing the necessary funds for this project may take longer than anticipated.

5. Follow-up discussion on the possible relocation of the Fogg-Rollins House Wheelwright Shop.

The Board discussed the details concerning the moving of the Fogg-Rollins Wheelwright Shop. John Merkle stated that a trustee is opposing the move, and further research of the zoning district is necessary. The Board expressed concerns over preservation of the building, and who would become the responsible party. If the property were to go on the market, it was noted that the value would be undervalued due to the nature of its current state. It was decided to take a wait-and-see approach and leave the issue up to the Trustees and the Division of Trust with the Department of Justice.

6. Discussion on changing the meeting dates of future Heritage Commission meetings.

John Merkle stated that Don Clement has a conflict with the Heritage Commission meeting on the second Wednesday of each month, due to his involvement with the RPC. It was suggested to change the meeting dates to either the first or third Wednesday of every month. Peter Michaud motioned to move the Heritage Commission meetings to the first Wednesday of every month. Mary Dupré seconded: Vote unanimous.

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

There was no additional discussion concerning properties at possible risk at this time.

8. Other Business.

A general discussion ensued regarding recent Town involvement on Railroad Avenue.

The Board is presently working on the completion of the minutes from previous meetings to amend, finalize, and vote.

Peter Michaud motioned to adjourn, Amy Bailey seconded: Vote unanimous.

Chairman John Merkle, adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gillian Baresich
Recording Secretary