

Draft Minutes

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

Exeter Heritage Commission Wheelwright Room, Exeter Town Office September 7, 2011

Call Meeting to Order

Members present: *Mary Dupré, Julie Gilman, Peter Smith, Peter Michaud and John Merkle, Chairman*

Chairman, John Merkle called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm in the Wheelwright Room at the Exeter Town Office.

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the August 15 and August 20 meetings were not available for this meeting

2. Review, discussion and responses relative to Exeter River Great Dam Removal Working Group RFP

Members had received electronically copies of a flyer inviting the public to an informational meeting on the Great Dam Feasibility and Impact Analysis Wednesday, September 14 7:00 – 9:30 pm at the Exeter Town Hall. Also received was a completed copy of a Request For Proposal (RFP) prepared in accordance with Section 106 regulations. Ms. Deb Loiselle of DES and co-chair of the Exeter River Great Dam Working Committee asked the Heritage Commission to review and offer any additional information they felt might be helpful to the Working Committee to include in the RFP before submitting to the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) for their review.

Although some members would not be able to attend the public informational meeting on the 14th, Mr. Michaud said Ms. Rita Walsh, a senior preservation planner of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), the consulting firm under contract to prepare the feasibility and impact analysis on the Great Dam removal, will be in attendance. The documentation of cultural resources is just one component of the Section 106 application and review.

In reviewing the RFP Mr. Merkle felt the comments were general and not specific and asked if any of the members felt there were any obvious items omitted. Mr. Michaud stressed DHR will look at document to determine if there is the potential for adverse effect with the dam removal. He felt the material presented gave enough evidence of a potential impact to historic and cultural resources; enough to warrant the continuance of consultation.

A general discussion ensued on a wide range of issues pertaining to the River and dam removal: the documented historical presence of the dam within the Town, the fish ladders, the Mill's deeded right for use of the River for their cooling and fire suppression systems and the Academy's use for their cooling systems. Because the discussion issues were not just of Great Dam, Mr. Michaud felt the phrase "the dam and its impoundment" should be used. Mr. Merkle

agreed as he spoke about archeological items currently covered but after the waters recede, how will they be addressed and treated.

Ms. Loiselle requested comments be submitted by Friday, September 9, 2011. Because of the limited time between this meeting and the deadline for submission it was agreed to send a letter thanking the Working Group to allow the Commission to review the report and at this time there appears to be no obvious omissions but request the Commission be a consulting partner in cultural and historic affairs of the 106 process as it moves forward.

3. Review status of changes to demolition review ordinance

The Chair expressed his hopes for a meeting with the Town Planner soon to further discuss the proposed demolition review ordinance. Hopefully the wording and intent of the ordinance can be finalized to appear on the March ballot for voter approval.

4. Update on Town wide mapping survey

Mr. Michaud stated the paperwork is complete and on the way to Attorney General for a signature. From there it goes to the Governor and Governor's Council for their approval. The Town can post the RFP but the actual project can't move forward until the funding from the Certified Local Government Grant program is in place.

5. Progress of HDC recommendation to adopt Form Based Codes (FBC) in certain areas of Town

Mr. Merkle is still waiting for a meeting with Town Planner to discuss further the adoption of FBC and the benefits to the Town. Ms. Gilman said she too will follow up. In talking with Kathy Corson, chairman of Planning Board, she expressed an interest in learning more and perhaps incorporating certain aspects of the Code into the Site Review Guidelines; this the PB could adopt themselves. Consensus was they talk with Julie LaBranche of the Rockingham Planning Commission who worked with Stratham on their code and the grant money Stratham received helped fund her training. Ms. LaBranche has expressed a willingness to talk with any municipal groups.

Mr. Merkle re-iterated this won't be accomplished this year. Mr. Michaud felt we should continue to advocate for adoption because when the economy starts to improve there will be increased pressure on that strip (Portsmouth Ave. /High St. intersection). Interest in including Lincoln St and Epping Road was also mentioned. Ms. Gilman stated the Economic Development Commission (EDC) was holding a half day Visioning Session on Sept 12 from this they hope to adopt their Master Plan and the Epping Road appears to be the area of focus. Mr. Michaud spoke of just the economics of printing and updating the Code book versus a booklet outlining the FBC. The adoption is good for the Town, good for development and good for the applicant. It is a win-win situation all around; it just makes the negotiation process that much easier. There was an agreement to continue working on scheduling a meeting of the land use boards to hear a presentation.

5. Update on Winter Street cemetery

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Mr. Michaud and Ms. Gilman have not had contact with the consultant doing the task. Although the deadline for completion is approaching Mr. Michaud did not anticipate any complications.

Over the past weekend, Mr. Merkle observed a group working on the cannon in the island by the cemetery and questioned who gave permission for the project as they had not appeared before the Heritage Commission. The grinding and refurbishing would definitely fall under the guidelines of the EPA regulations in working with the metals. Mr. Smith also spoke of what he believed to be another Eagle Scout project being discussed and the concerns on the scope of the project. He felt extensive research was needed to put forth correct information and if a physical display became involved did that not need public input? Ms. Gilman added the Board of Selectmen are the trustees for all Town cemeteries until a Board is established. It was agreed however the need for better communication among the departments on who and what were doing what projects.

6. Update on demolition requests

The proposal for the construction of an administrative building on the Reedy property on Brentwood Rd did require a demolition permit review submitted to the Building Dept. In performing the review the Commission was mindful of the Planning Board concerns about incorporating the history of the site into the design. Following the review, Ms. Gilman and Mr. Michaud forwarded a letter stating their findings. A demolition review looks at the building for demolition as an example of its historical use. In this particular case, the barn is devoid of its original features, the exterior of the house compromised but the interior of the house does retain a decent level integrity. It was felt the house with an addition could be rehabbed to function as an administrative building. It would be a nice compromise and be in keeping with the neighborhood as desired by members of the Planning Board and the abutters. It remains what the ultimate outcome of the property will be but the Commission did offer their evaluation and opinion.

Comments and observations on previously reviewed projects were exchanged.

7. Other business

Mr. Michaud reported he met with a descendent of the original owners of the Connor Farm who was considering the purchase of the house. Presently the potential buyer is in the fact finding mode as there are a number of agencies involved before a subdivision can be finalized.

Ms. Gilman gave an update on the Train Committee's plan to purchase the baggage building at the Train Station. Again funds need to be received before actual transfer can take place.

8. At 8:10 pm, the Chairman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Gilman. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted

Ginny Raub
Recording Secretary

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