

Exeter Heritage Commission
Approved as Submitted, April 6, 2011
Nowak Room, Exeter Town Offices
February 9, 2011

Call Meeting to Order

Members Present: John Merkle, Don Clement, Amy Bailey, Mary Dupré, and Peter Michaud

Chairman, John Merkle, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Offices.

1. Approval of the minutes of November 3, 2010 and December 1, 2010.

Peter Michaud moved to approve November 3, 2010 with the correction to add Peter Smith to the members present and December 1, 2010 minutes as presented, Don Clement seconded: Vote unanimous.

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.

Pam Gjetum, chairwoman to the HDC, presented the Heritage Commission with an inventory of the properties currently considered for the proposed historic district expansion. John Merkle agreed to distribute the list to the Heritage Commission and draft a letter to send to the property owners for the following meeting.

Peter Michaud suggested to the Board to concurrently explore the option of Form-Based Code alongside the expansion of the Historic District. The Board agreed that it would be helpful to discuss both options in order to explore a full range of goals. Mr. Merkle agreed to contact Jeffrey Hyland, who helped to implement Form-Based Code in Stratham, and Peter Michaud suggested a meeting with Becky Mitchell and possibly Alan Manoian from Nashua who was the first to speak of the code in New Hampshire.

3. Review request to remove a chimney at 27 Front Street.

Mark Sullivan, representing Jeff Salisbury, presented the request to remove a chimney at 27 Front Street. The chimney, which is located along the back of the house, has been unused for many years and needs to come down in order to complete a kitchen renovation. The fireplace has been boarded up as well.

The Heritage Commission began a discussion on the chimney, stating that the Heritage Commission and Demolition Review Committee act only as an advisory board for the HDC and cannot deny demolition. John Merkle noted that the chimney under discussion is not one of the main chimneys of the house which help to define its architectural character. Members of the Board agreed that the chimney was not integral to the historic nature of the home and requested documentation of the element if it is to be removed. The applicant has yet to file a formal demolition application.

Peter Michaud moved that the Heritage Commission recommend that while the chimney on the back of the house is historic, its removal would not be a severe character-altering demolition, but that the Commission would advise the owner to document the chimney pictorially and verbally as good preservation practice before its removal, depositing the documentation to the Historical Society. Don Clement seconded: Vote unanimous.

4. Discussion and update on 89 Front Street.

John Taylor was present to discuss the application for planned demolition and alterations regarding 89 Front Street. Mr. Taylor stated that he attended the previous HDC meeting and discussed all application items not involving demolition. Peter Michaud explained the historical importance of the Amos Tuck house and its architectural elements through a letter he had drafted and read aloud during the meeting.

Demolition Items:

Due to the historical importance of the building, the DRC felt that any demolition would require the full 30 days for review. In addition to demolition, any alterations would merit a response from the Heritage Commission to the HDC. Proposed demolition plans include the following elements: the back deck, a stair to the barn, a privacy wall, a portion of the driveway side porch, and a connecting roof spanning between the two barns. Other proposed work includes removing the side terrace and replacing it with a retaining wall, window replacement, extension of the back porch which faces the back yard, opening several blind windows, the addition of a patio and an exterior chimney to the ell, building a one story connecting bridge between the two barns, the addition of quoining to the building, and adding balustrades to the porch roof. Mr. Taylor presented pictures to the Board and discussed the elements he believes to be unoriginal to the building based on the evidence of existing construction. The Board began an extensive discussion concerning each of these items, focusing on elements that maintain the historical and architectural integrity of the building.

Doug Eastman, Building Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer, outlined what the DRC is required to do in order to ensure a legal timeline. The DRC, composing of Amy Bailey, Peter Michaud, and Don Clement, agreed to meet at the site at 9:00 AM on Friday morning. The public hearing for the DRC was scheduled for the following Wednesday, February 16 at 6:00 PM. John Taylor invited the Heritage Commission to visit the site as much as necessary, requesting two hours advance notice.

Proposed Work and Additions:

The first item involved the removal of the side terrace and replacing it with a retaining wall. John Taylor explained that the entire landscape plan will be presented at the following HDC meeting in full by the Landscape Architect, Michael Coutu of Sudbury Design Group. Peter Michaud advised the HDC to consider keeping the element as it is a character-defining landscape feature of that property.

Mr. Michaud stated that the Board did not have a problem with the addition of the chimney and fireplace along the back ell, explaining that there was probably a chimney previously there.

The proposed connector between the two barns was a concerning addition to the Board, changing the relationship between both barn structures.

The Board advised that the quoins and balustrades on the porch roof not be included in the proposed work as they would destroy the significance of the simplified Italianate architecture. Mr. Taylor explained that the reason for the quoining would be to seal the mitered joints around the house which are in need of repair. Mr. Michaud suggested that a more thoughtful approach should be taken to solve this maintenance issue. John Taylor agreed to remove the quoining and balustrades off the application.

There was additional discussion involving the proposed landscape and the need to keep water from seeping into the basement. Peter Michaud made a motion that the Heritage Commission advise the Historic District Commission against the removal of terracing in the landscape, the addition of quoins and balustrades, and the proposed connector between the two barns as they are serious character-altering proposed to the property. Amy Bailey seconded: Vote unanimous. Peter Michaud agreed to write a letter to the HDC on each of these items in detail.

5. Follow-up discussion on possible changes to the demolition review ordinance.

John Merkle stated there would be no changes to the demolition review ordinance.

6. 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.

Peter Michaud provided a contact to follow up on the Certified Local Government grant for additional information on how to continue.

7. 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.

7. Other Business.

Don Clement and John Merkle stated that they attended the Exeter Conservation Commission meeting yesterday to observe a presentation by Neatline Associates for the natural resource survey to be completed in the upcoming months. This survey would not be much different from the Town-Wide Mapping Survey of Historical and Cultural Resources in that it would compare various maps to establish key elements and zones for identifying areas of importance. Mr. Clement suggesting contacting the firm currently in use by the Conservation Commission to see if they would be interested in concurrently working with the Heritage Commission on the Historical and Cultural Resources Mapping Survey, allowing an overlap of conservation and cultural mapping. There was a discussion concerning the need to keep archeological findings hidden on a public map to avoid theft of those artifacts.

Peter Michaud motioned to adjourn, Mary Dupré seconded: Vote unanimous.

Chairman John Merkle adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gillian Baresich
Recording Secretary