

Exeter Heritage Commission

Wheelwright Room

Exeter Town Office

March 14, 2012

Call Meeting to Order

Members present: *Peter Smith, Mary Dupré, Historic District rep. Ron Schutz, Selectman rep. Julie Gilman, Peter Michaud and John Merkle, Chairman.*

Chairman Merkle called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm in the Wheelwright Room at the Exeter Town Office

- **Approval of minutes**

Mr. Schutz moved to accept the draft minutes of the February 8, 2012 meeting as presented; seconded by Ms. Gilman. Motion carried. (Mr. Michaud was not present for the vote.)

- **Review Master Plan: Historical and Cultural recommendations status**

Mr. Merkle sent electronically to the members' copies of Exeter Master Plan Recommendations for Chapters 7-9. Each chapter and section has three columns entitled **Recommendation**, **Comments/Status** and **Dept./Board Responsible**. The Town Planner asked the Commission to review and add updates as needed. The Chairman felt only Chapter 9 need be addressed.

Ms. Dupré did say she found in **Chapter 7 Conservation and Preservation**, the Heritage Commission was referenced as a contributor for carrying out the recommendations stated in numbers 4 and 5. Recommendation #4 reads *The Planning Board should develop site plan regulations which will allow Board to review archeological investigators on sites that are determined to contain or deemed likely to contain archeological resources*. Recommendation #5 states *The Exeter Historic Society and Historic District Commission should develop signage and monumentation to be placed at significant public, historic and archeological sites within Exeter and encourage private property owners to do the same*.

Discussion focused on the availability of such information as archeological sites are normally kept non-public and who or how such information could be obtained for use by the Town. Mr. Schutz questioned if it was the Heritage Commission's responsibility to identify the sites in Exeter. Consensus was it was (the responsibility of the Commission) but how to develop site plan regulations was queried; again because of the issue of confidentiality. Ms. Gilman stated the need for the Planning Dept. to be aware of the sites; could be just a list. It seemed more of a process than site plan regulation.

Ms. Dupré felt the response could be the Planning Board to request the developer have an archeological investigation done if deemed appropriate. Ms. Gilman added the Heritage Commission should provide a list of likely sensitive areas; site plan regulations are not relevant. There is the need for this to be accomplished while maintaining anonymity.

Mr. Merkle offered to speak with State archeologist for more guidance while Mr. Michaud

added he would talk with DHR to see what could be done to try to highlight the areas of the Town of possible sites. And he commented on a proposed Senate bill allowing Towns to adopt legislation to protect archeological resources and would look at it to determine what were the review processes outlined in that bill.

Because of the uncertainty of how to obtain the desired information and how to manage such information it was agreed to ask for a delay in response until clarification of how much information can be provided; a task that may not be accomplished readily.

Chapter 9: Historic and Cultural Resources

It was noted many of the recommendations listed shared responsibility with the Historic District Commission.

Section Resource Identification (A1) and (A2)

Town wide mapping survey ongoing was added in Comments

Section Education: (B2)

Each of the numbered items and the subsets were reviewed individually; *ongoing* was added to the Comments/Status column for several of the individual subsets.

(B2e) Responding to recommendation for the utilization of Channel 22 (B2e) Mr. Michaud suggested Inviting Mr. Jay Childs, the consultant hired by the Town to aid residents in how to utilize the new access Channel 98, to come to the Heritage Commission to outline some of the possibilities and the processes for implementation. Mr. Smith spoke of several programs developed by the Historical Society that seemed appropriate for presentation; may need some updating. After further discussion on the Town TV channels, Mr. Schutz agreed to serve as liaison for the Historical Society and the Access Channel to determine what programs could be adapted.

Section Resource Protection and Stewardship

Each subset was discussed and comments noted.

(C5 #7) Discussion determined pursuing the adoption of Form Based Codes was an appropriate response in the Comments/Status column.

(C6 #8) The recommendation to remove the capital letters of this specific revitalization plan proposed some years ago for the downtown and noted to include the Heritage Commission in any future planning process.

(C7 #9) Discussion determined much of the back/river front property is owned privately and have not been willing to permit public access; unsure what more could be done.

(C8 #10) Suggested identifying programs that may involve volunteers; through the Adult Education program offer course(s) for historic property owners with timely information on the care and restoration of their property. Add Heritage Commission to **Dept. /Board Responsible**

(C #10) Discussion determined to do a thorough archeological survey is not feasible: would be cost prohibitive.

Section Cultural Activities and Programs

No comments.

- **Certified Local Government Grants**

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Ms. Gilman did attend the workshop mandatory for those Certified Local Government Towns wishing to apply for grant funding. Listening to other attendees on their past projects or what they wished to accomplish, she noted what the Commission might want to add to the Master Plan for future consideration. Working from a prepared sheet the projects were noted and discussed.

One towns has set up a Capital reserve fund for projects, Ms. Gilman noted the Heritage does have a bank account the Town could add to if they wished, but after learning of a State statute allowing any unused portion of their line-item budget amount may be rolled over into this Heritage Fund; the \$900 remaining from 2011 will roll over into this account. It is a line item in the budget that is separate but can be added to; it was noted these funds can be used for any grant requiring matching funds.

Another idea mentioned at workshop for possible implementation is developing and outlining the list of Department of Interior Standards for both the Heritage and Historic District Commissions to define and clarify the vocabulary for those members of the volunteer boards that might not be familiar working with the Standards (guidelines). This would be included in Master Plan recommendations.

It was suggested this Commission become a member of the National Alliance of Preservation Planners; (Commissions) would be helpful in the next phase of an area survey.

Returning to the walking tours, Mr. Michaud commented Somersworth used CLG funds every year to expand their survey of properties in their regulated historic districts. By taking a digital photo and noting the defining features of the property then when a property does come to HDC for a project proposal, the digitized image permits it to be looked at and know what should be addressed in the work proposed. Ms. Gilman stated she would add to Recommendations in Master Plan.

As for the CLG grant, it was determined the HDC could apply. Mr. Schutz agreed to take back the proposed project to the HDC meeting for consideration; present the idea with more details provided at a future meeting. Ms. Gilman would add digital photo file of HDC properties to the Recommendations in Master Plan. Also, Ms. Gilman offered to write the letter of intent (to file for a CLG) due by April 1, 2012.

- **Exeter River Great Dam Removal Study**

The public meeting set for April 12, 2102 has been postponed.

- **Status of the Town Wide Mapping Survey**

The contract for the survey was awarded to Bruce Harvey of Harvey Research and Consulting of Syracuse, NY. They did have the obligatory meeting in Concord with DHR personnel to review the deadlines and deliverables of the contract. It is the intent to return to the Town in April to begin the data gathering and research. It is his intent to provide the Commission with overlay maps compatible with the Town's Maps OnLine.

- **Update on adoption of Form Based Codes**

The discussion reflected the feeling things were progressing favorably. Ms. Gilman acknowledged the Photoshop image Mr. Merkle prepared illustrating what Portsmouth Ave could look like with more green and less asphalt. At this time the primary area of focus is to be from High St. up Portsmouth Ave. to the

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Gary Blake Saab dealership; will eventually continue on down Portsmouth Ave. Ms. Gilman reported a presentation is being prepared for the various Boards and Commissions whose support would be helpful.

- **Winter Street Cemetery National Register nomination**

Discussion focused on the Commission's vote at the February meeting to pursue application to the National Register but not to proceed with such at this time. Ms. Gilman is to be in contact with the DHR to determine the steps necessary for filing for the application. The Town did receive the paperwork for the State Register and will be signed.

- **Demolition request update**

No official requests have been received at this time

- **Update on properties at possible risk**

Discussion on the signage at 8 Portsmouth Avenue seemed to indicate the plans for demolition of that property have changed.

- **Other Business**

Mr. Smith spoke of the activity on the of the Rollins-Fogg home on the Exeter Road; was optimistic about a favorable outcome.

As for seeking CLG funds to continue on with the Town Mapping Survey, Mr. Michaud felt it could be delayed a year to see what type of information is obtained from the present Mapping survey project. Hopefully the HDC will proceed with an application to do the digitized photo filing project as done by Somersworth as that would be of great benefit to the Town; suggested a conversation with the staff at DHR expressing our interest in such a project and how to submit the best letter of intent.

Mr. Merkle did respond to the author of the letter sent to the Heritage Commission asking for intervention on the Gooch Farm on the Kingston Road (the Riverwoods property) that the recommendation of the Commission was to keep the front part of the house. However the decision has been made to remove all the buildings on the property.

The Town did pass on their option of first refusal for the purchase of the Conner Farm on Rt. 101. As part of the selling process the Town could exercise its option but would have to match the offer of the potential buyer and submit a plan for stewardship and consent to other conditions of the easement.

Mr. Merkle stated his term expires the end of April; he has served two terms. He was unsure what the by-laws state but is willing to stay involved.

With no further business The Chair made the motion to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8.34 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary