

Heritage Commission

Wheelwright Room

Town Office Building

June 13, 2012

Members present: *Mary Dupré, Peter Smith, Jaime Lopez, Planning Board rep. Kathy Corson, Historic District rep Ron Schutz and Selectmen's rep Julie Gilman.*

Vice Chairman Julie Gilman called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Wheelwright Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

1. Approval of the minutes of the May 09, 2012 meeting was tabled.
2. Follow up/discussion of the Great Dam Removal study
A public meeting on the status of the study was hosted by the River Study Committee on May 23, 2012 at the Town Hall. The consultants, Vanasse Hagen Brustlin, addressed their findings to date and outlined was to follow. As part of the Cultural Resources Studies, the Phase 1A abstract; project Area Form, including the Individual Inventory Forms prepared for NH Division of Historic Resources were completed. (The report is available for viewing online on Town website under **Boards; River Study**. The May 2012 report may be viewed in *Past Documents*.

Ms. Gilman noted NOAA (National Oceanic Atmospheric association) and a contributor to the current River Study, is requesting a reply in six (6) days.

As an aside, Ms. Gilman noted the report states although the Exeter River Great River Dam is a contributing resource to the Exeter Waterfront Commercial Historic District which was listed into the National Register of Historic Places in 1980; the dam today with its outlet structures (modifications) is not eligible for listing.

Mr. Schutz commented it is a difficult issue; historical versus ecological. Ms. Gilman said the decision will be to remove or repair. Discussion focused on historical uses (hydropower) and current water rights of The Mill complex and the Academy.

The discussion initiated by Mr. Schutz lead to the motion to prioritize the response from a historic standpoint:

- a) Keep the dam
- b) Adapt or modify present dam structure to reflect past historical function
- c) If removed, some type of mitigation or recognition (for its removal)

Ms. Corson seconded the motion.

Further discussion on the inefficiencies of present dam, contribution of cultural resources and possible loss of recreational opportunities.

Motion passed. Ms. Gilman will respond to NOAA, NHDHR and pass comments onto River Study Committee.

3. CLG grant update: Town mapping

A packet of 4 maps prepared by Harvey Research and Consulting of Syracuse, NY were distributed to the members for their review. Two maps used a thirteen color-variations key to represent parcels by age of existing structures. A third map denoted five time periods from 1802 to later than 1892 for year of presence of road. Same map used six different symbols for denoting area developed by year; again from 1802 to 1924. The final map outlined the Historic District and location of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) properties

As the maps were reviewed varying comments and questions were put forth; the map size needed to be larger, choice of colors difficult to discriminate, the decision to use an existing structure to date a parcel of land and the need for explicit documentation in legend. Ms. Corson commented “did it give a story”, but to the ultimate user would it make sense.

Accompanying the maps was one copy of the narrative that Ms. Gilman offered to members to take home for review. The consultants were anticipating a reply in a short turnaround time.

4. Form Based Code update

Subcommittee is continuing to work on the ordinance with the primary area of focus to be Portsmouth Avenue with two zones: High St. to Walgreens and Walgreens to Foss Motors. Ms. Corson explained the intent is to allow owners to fully develop their properties only in a better way; creating a transition from the busy highway to the downtown. And this can mean locating the buildings to the front of the property closer to the road and have the parking to the rear; favoring the pedestrian and the cyclist.

(Ms. Corson noted Mr. Merkle passed on a website to be viewed *Form-Based Code Institute*; excellent visual examples of transformed streetscapes and the possibilities for adaption.)

The next meeting of the subcommittee is to be a walking tour of the lower part of Portsmouth Ave. to look for possible “connections”; to see how to link Jady Hill pedestrian-wise to Portsmouth Ave.

5. Baggage Building

Acquisition of is moving forward; step by step. Ms. Gilman is preparing a request for project review for DOT and then will be sent on to DHR for review; then will have to attend meetings with both agencies; most likely in July.

The changes to the inside (of the building) will be minimal; waiting area with Wi-Fi, restrooms, ticket counter (manned by volunteers), display racks for maps/schedules/advertising. Ticketing will no longer be in Jerry’s but riders are able today to print their tickets online.

Mr. Lopez asked if the history of the baggage building and the developments leading to the acquisition of the building was anywhere on Town web site and it was determined it was not; perhaps on new Town website.

6. Historic Signage Fund

Mr. Smith reported the Historical Society has roughly \$2000 in an account designated for signage on historic sites. For a number of reasons, they wished to donate the monies to the HDC for signage on such sites. Ms. Gilman suggested it be given to the Heritage Commission as it has an account that does not lapse and can (signage) may be extended into the entire community and not just historic properties. As for suggested locales, Mr. Smith replied he already has a list and mapped out appropriate sites.

What Mr. Smith envisages would be signs similar to the “green” one in front of Town office building and have all signs be similar. The signage he was referencing is embossed aluminum with a State seal on the top only have the Exeter Town seal. As to the costs, Mr. Smith replied about \$2000.

The Rotary Club is replacing the signage at the Powder House and the State will be placing one at the Rollins-Fogg house. To be a State sign it must abut a State road and has very definite criteria to be followed.

This prompted a discussion on the various signs placed by groups/organizations on sites around the Town; all of different size, materials. Perhaps something to be addressed by Selectmen.

Returning to the cost of the aluminum signs, Mr. Schutz felt there is a need to find a compromise to be effective. He cited the medium density fiberboard that has the properties of wood but not the problems of. Also spoke of having a digital image printed onto a sustainable material and applied to a sign/background, be it metal or wood/fiberboard. Mr. Smith talked of the signs used by the Park Service and the variations of but still retains its identity.

The Vice Chair felt it sounded as if the project needed a leader to proceed. Mr. Lopez agreed to begin the research on the project and will confer with Mr. Smith on his notes etc. It was suggested whatever is decided will be after looking at a number of concepts that will be applicable, economical and effective.

7. Future Projects

Tabled until Chairman can lead discussion in more detail.

8. Demolition Requests

Since last meeting three requests for demolition have been received and enacted upon; all projects on Academy owned properties. What was removed were not of historical significance. Ms. Gilman also viewed a barn to be taken down at the Belmont Farm on the Kingston Road; not original building materials.

With no further business, the Vice Chair called for a motion to adjourn. So moved by Mr. Schutz; seconded by Mr. Smith.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary