Exeter Heritage Commission

Wheelwright Room **Exeter Town Office Bldg.**

July 16, 21012

Members present*: John Merkle, Mary Dupré, Peter Smith and Selectwoman rep. Julie Gilman*
Guests: Bruce Harvey and James Sexton

Vice Chair Julie Gilman called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm in the Wheelwright Room.

- **Approval of minutes**
  Ms. Dupré motioned to accept the minutes of May 09, 2102; seconded by Mr. Smith. Motion carried.

  Approval of the minutes for the June 13, 2102 meeting was tabled because a quorum of those members in attendance was not present at this meeting.

- **Town mapping survey**
  Ms. Gilman introduced Bruce Harvey and his associate James Sexton of the Harvey Research and Consulting firm of Syracuse, NY presently under contract to prepare the Town wide mapping survey with a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant.

  Mr. Harvey spoke of the project as being a very interesting and unusual study; to do a preliminary mapping study speaks well of Exeter. The goal was to obtain a "high" overview of the Town; to look at patterns of growth and how the Town changed over time. As the Town grew what were the contributing influences. The Town is too large for one architectural survey; project will help to prioritize what the group might want to survey first when applying for grants. It will help identify what areas might benefit from a survey and how to compartmentalize the Town for carrying out a survey. Mr. Harvey did say this was a new project for them and everyone involved even at the State felt it had merit as it makes good sense of what is doable for individual projects/surveys.

  In outlining their research, Mr. Harvey noted historical maps were found, scanned into digital files and then fed into mapping software (GIS). GIS allows the creation of layers; to see how different areas of the Town have changed over time. Although the maps were a primary source a brief historical overview was developed to interpret those maps; to identify key themes. Mr. Sexton added there was an ongoing parallel process of "ground truthing"; actual driving around the Town to verify what was represented on the map matched.

  A packet of the prepared maps were received by the members prior to the meeting. In referencing the maps, it was noted one map reviewed at the June meeting that received comments on size and color designations was prepared from assessor's data and it was agreed it was too general in details and of limited utility; does not need to appear in the final maps. The maps themselves are a nice end product but can lend themselves to the next series of steps (surveying).

Discussion continued on the various maps and the representation. It was determined the West End is eligible for listing in the National Registry but has not been listed; eligibility allows for historical sense as well as architectural structures. Also it was agreed there may be some confusion as to why one's house does not appear on a map. Mr. Harvey agreed stating this (survey) has nothing to do with buildings but with areas of development.

Mr. Merkle asked if there were any surprises (while doing the study) and Mr. Harvey felt the usual patterns held true. In the early years the focus was on the waterways for transportation and power and then the arrival of the railroad/trains in Exeter in 1844. The only surprise was how clear the patterns were revealed.

The roads were identified (by date) that led into development. The date of the road was determined by when it first appears on a Town/Village map. Ms. Gilman was interested in the development(s) on the outskirts of the Town in the 50's and 60's. Mr. Harvey responded a survey such as this doesn't take them into consideration as it focuses more on the historic core.

Discussion continued on members' comments and specifics of the maps. Mr. Merkle commented on the 1802 industrial phase and noted the Dam not being identified when we knew a dam had been in place with mills on either side if the River. Mr. Harvey agreed they could extend that district and make that revision and include the Dam.

As to the final deliverables, all maps will be on a DVD with PDF versions and will be GIS files that may be interfaced with Town GIS and a narrative. In reviewing the time line for the remainder of the project, the RFP states by the end of August DHR will have reviewed and acknowledged all aspects of the project have been fulfilled and all monies dispersed. Keeping that in mind, it was suggested and agreed to have final comments to Ms. Gilman (Heritage Commission) by August 1, 2012.

Mr. Merkle was pleased with the report and felt the report will generate a lot of interest in the Town. Mr. Harvey acknowledged it was an interesting project and thoroughly enjoyed working on it. He felt the State would almost prefer more preliminary studies such as this be undertaken before an actual launching on an architectural survey. Mr. Harvey and Mr. Sexton were thanked for their work and for coming to the meeting.

- **Follow up on Great Dam removal study**
  The Individual inventory Form prepared for NH Division of Historic Resources by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Inc. (VHB) found the Exeter Great River Dam to be a contributing resource to the Exeter waterfront commercial Historic district which was originally listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. However, they stated because the Dam has had modifications over the years it is not individually eligible for the National Register.
  The DHR in reviewing the 106 review form disagreed and sent a memo to VHB and the Exeter Town Manager's office stating it was individually eligible because of its contributing resource to the Town and the District. (Ms. Gilman did not have a copy of the response.)

Mr. Merkle inquired as a consulting party what is next? Ms. Gilman did pass on the recommendations and comments expressed at the June meeting to the federal agency involved in the study, NOAA, but doesn't think we have any more to do at this point in time. Discussion was had when the archeological studies, if any, would take place.

- **Form Based Codes update**
  Ms. Gilman reported they are looking for some minor changes to the zoning ordinances for sections of Portsmouth Ave.; going to C1 a smaller scale commercial zone allowing for mixed use. This will appear on March 2013 ballot. Ms. von Aulock is putting together some documents to apply for a Citizens Planning Grant to have a consultant write the FBC.

- **Baggage Building project**
  Ms. Gilman stated it is moving along but at a very slow pace. She did put in a request for the project review. The various steps all have to be approved by a number of agencies/departments before you can move ahead; cannot execute the purchase of the building until all the pieces are approved. It looks as if it may be a lengthy process.

- **Historic Signage**
  Mr. Smith did meet with Mr. Lopez but had nothing to report; Mr. Lopez was looking at signage materials. Mr. Smith did re-iterate his idea for the most economical but informative signage for historical information; to have a central sign with numbers assigned to the various historical landmarks and then have the corresponding numbers attached to/on the building/site. Mr. Merkle remarked that is similar to how Portsmouth does their cemeteries; one by Prescott Park and on Maplewood Ave.
  Ms. Gilman suggested Mr. Smith give her what materials he has and if he wished she would make copies and distribute to the members for discussion at the August meeting; prioritize how the Commission wished to proceed.

- **Demolition requests**
  None at this time
- **Properties at risk**
  None at this time. But Ms. Gilman did mentioned Al's Automotive Service moving to the Epping Road and vacating his downtown location; what was its former use and what may be its future use.

With no further business, the Vice-Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. So moved by Mr. Smith; seconded by Ms. Dupré. Meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary