

Exeter Historic District Commission

January 16, 2014

Draft Minutes

Call meeting to Order: Chairwoman Pam Gjettum called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office Building. Members present: Len Benjamin, Julie Gilman, Patrick Gordon, Fred Kollmorgen and Nicole Martineau.

Al Lampert – Property Owner, Tom House – Architect.

Continuation of Franklin Street. Last board meeting it was decided to have a walk through with Len, Patrick and Nicole.

Tom House passed out architect sheet to each board member. He stated that last time here there was a 2 to 2 vote for demolition. The site visit was made by Tom, Patrick, Len, Nicole and Mr. Lampert. After site visit, meeting was set up with Tom, Patrick and Nicole to sit down and talk about what we can do and can't do. It was decided to preserve whatever they could, if they could. Not sure about the foundation or soil. He pointed out on the architectural drawing, that the blue lines were the walls that they would try and preserve. Wall on south side where the parking lot is, they will be required to put some parking spaces there. Franklin Street wall is on the outside and no guarantee that it can be saved because it is exposed to the elements. Will try and keep whatever they can.

Mr. Lampert stated that as a result of the Structural Engineers Report, they have met all the criteria to demolish the building. It is their opinion that because of the structure of the building, it should be demolished. Mr. Lampert would like to develop a section with a shadow box with blocks, photos or whatever artifacts can be found on the property. Maybe put a plaque on it explaining about the building. No guarantee they will be able to save the walls. They are just too old. Spoke to a demolition company about this and no one wants to guarantee saving the walls. Would like to design with the help of the Historic Commission some type of display that would represent the history of that part of town. It can be done at a reasonable expense. From a business and economical point, the building cannot be saved. Tom suggested that the entrance way could have glass so that when driving or walking by, you could see inside. Would like building to pop out and represent Exeter now and then. It is the first thing you see when you come into town. It is an entry way to Exeter.

Nicole asked what Mr. Lampert and Tom were asking for. They said they would like to demolish. The roof is no good and it is not safe. Tom stated that there needs to be some conditions with the demolition. Len stated conditions should be that they make their best effort to save the walls and have a display area showing some of the blocks, photos, etc. Those should be the two conditions they are proposing.

Pat asked about the elevation on the Franklin Street side. Tom stated no guarantee because it is not stable. Pat asked about trying to keep this wall and have it incorporated into the new building. Mr. Lampert stated that there is no guarantee for this. They don't know what the soil is going to be like. He does not want to be held with any guarantee that any of the walls can be saved.

Pat stated that the structure cannot support a second story. He would like to clarify that on the site visit, that portion (on architect sheet), is an interior wall that is original brick.

Mr. Lampert again stated that they are offering guarantees for a history shadowbox. No guarantee to save the walls. It would not be cost effective.

Exeter Historic District Commission
January 16, 2014

Julie would like to save the wall if possible. Mr. Lampert stated it would be very costly and he does not have the money. Mr. Lampert would like to help this town grow. It will be the extension of downtown. Pat stated the commission not trying to discredit what Mr. Lampert is trying to do. The commission is here to preserve historical areas. Julie would like the last wall on Franklin Street to stay, but would like to see a design for what would take its place. Mr. Lampert is trying to work for a goal that will make everyone happy. He again stated that they cannot be held responsible for a guarantee to keep any of the walls. All we can do is work towards a goal that will make as many of us as happy as we can. Tom cannot say if he can come up with a design that would incorporate the walls. Have not gotten that far yet.

Pat suggested that a contractor, Pete, who works in restoration evaluate the wall. Mr. Lampert stated that they will make a reasonable effort for a structural design and when they all sit down with the design; we will have a better idea of where this is going. Nicole asked if the wall or walls could be put in the design and not ruled out completely. Mr. Lampert stated that they are not ruling anything out. We will make our best effort to work with the group to come up with a design.

Julie recommended that Mr. Lampert might look into the NH Division of Historical Resources. He will look into it. Pat asked that Mr. Lampert meet with the recommended contractor first and then let the commission know of the outcome. Mr. Lampert will get the name or names from Nicole.

Pam asked if any residents attending would like to speak and that we were on TV. First was Eric A. I studied History and Political Science and graduated this past May. I was listening to the arguments the commission was making and was a little unsure about it. I don't feel so well listening to these arguments. History is not just the past. We live history and make it in the present. It is concerning to me when people talk about preserving history by preventing actions in the present. To me, that is logically impossible. That we live history in the present and we make history is why it is invigorating to me. It is disheartening not to be comfortable in a room with people who don't agree with that. I would just like to put out there that if you restrict someone from doing something in the present with property, property that is historically significant, you have a task at premise that what is being done in the present will not be as historically significant in the future. This is upsetting to me on many levels but mainly because for people concerned with progress, that is very upsetting. What if there was a commission back when the garage was first being built or any other historical site said we think that piece of land of piece of property the way it was being used it will never be used for a higher significant point and that commission prevented the garage from being built in the first place. Of course then we would have said that is a travesty because we would be looking back saying it was built with these very important bricks, it was the first brick building built in the world. If we knew then what we know now, that would be a very disheartening thing to prevent the building of this garage. So it could be that Al is trying to make this garage into something that is more historically significant than horse drawn carriage to car.

Next to speak was Frank P., a private citizen. This is my first HDC meeting. I am not going to speak about the particular proposal because it sounds like Mr. Lampert and you are getting to a place that there may be some agreements on, so I am not going to mess that up. One thing I heard that troubled me was the board recommending a single contractor to the applicant. You may think that you are just suggesting this, but when you suggest a single contractor to an applicant who has to get your approval, what is the applicant going to say? You can recommend a number of contractors, but by recommending a single contractor, you are putting your perimeter around that contractor and essentially directing the applicant to use that contractor, regardless of cost or qualifications. I think my look at this, is that you

Exeter Historic District Commission
January 16, 2014

should not do that and you should withdraw your request to use that contractor. Maybe you want to ask that he use a competent contractor with a historic preservation experience. I strongly recommend that you not recommend any single contractors to any applicants.

Pat stated that he thought Frank was absolutely right. The only reason that we did use that name was because of prior contract experience with that person, but I completely agree with you. We are not trying to hold anyone to use one specific contractor.

Julie stated they have not directed anyone to a specific contractor. It has been a recommendation. Nicole stated that Mr. Lampert had not gotten a contractor yet, so they were just helping him by suggesting one. She also stated that she can give five names of contractors. Frank stated that the report has the life or death of this project for the time being in your hands and you said, we suggest you get this person. That is all I am saying. The five names are fine. That's all. Pam stated that we must avoid the appearance of misdoing.

Next, Nelson L. A couple of months back you were discussing the position of economic director in order to diversify the tax base here in Exeter and the reason I obtained is because I wanted to know whether the fundamentals that allow somebody, a private citizen, to set up shop and run a successful business were conducive. What I am seeing here goes against that. This is a perfect example of regulations that are prohibiting this sort of growth. I don't know Mr. Lampert, but what I have seen is quite accommodating as far as his efforts in meeting your requirements. By the way, this is not to belittle your efforts. I think it is great that you do recommendations, but to also consider Exeter as a whole and team commercial tax base as a whole.

Julie stated that she does not disagree with him about the economic development. Just wanted to say that this is just one proposal for economic development and perhaps there is something else that can be done. It is not the board's duty to tell someone that they should do a restaurant or apartments. The proposal comes to us and we have our guidelines. She also stated that she agrees about the history comments. Every day you live, you make history. This project when we get the final presentation and it is something different, it is not a garage, it is not residential, and that is a piece of history too. We are not stopping history from continuing, we just want it to be done in a manner sensitive to what was there. Mr. Lampert is making an effort and we appreciate that.

Pat made a motion to approve the demolition with the condition that the walls hi-lighted on site plan o be preserved as much as they possibly can. Len stated that we approve the demolition with 1) having shadow box, and 2) making commercially reasonable efforts to preserve the walls outlined in blue and the other wall on Franklin Street.

Len asked for the motion to be repeated. We approve the demolition of 1 Franklin Street building with conditions, 1) shadow history box with one or two of the bricks, pictures and 2) there will be commercially reasonable efforts made to preserve the walls outlined in blue. Pam stated motion has been made and seconded. Pam asked if anyone else had anything to say to this. Nicole just wanted to put one thing on the table. I just want to make sure that this is just for demolition to get to the design phase because according to laws or guidelines here it says specifically here that we are suppose to have both at the same time just so that you are aware to make the decision to demo it and we are making an exception to the rule here. I just want to make sure that this is understood to get to the design phase to accept the next level. Fred then quoted one of the demolition guidelines regarding this. Pam thought

Exeter Historic District Commission
January 16, 2014

they were getting too complicated. Pam recommended an exception be made. Fred asked what the exception was going to be. It is to not require the proposed plans and proof of finance and move forward with the conditional demolition as stated by Len.

Pam again stated that they have a motion, seconded by Julie with two conditions which are 1) shadow history box and 2) commercially reasonable efforts to keep walls in blue, plus the wall on Franklin Street. Mr. Lampert stated that the items I think you have to consider on the motion depend upon structural engineer's assessment, architectural interior and exterior design and related costs involved. That's where the issues are. Len asked if that is the intent and Mr. Lampert said the intent is we are going to make our best effort, but we have to consider all these things. The engineer's assessment of the site and architectural exterior and interior design and related costs involved is part of the decision to keep any walls. We don't know yet.

Nicole asked for a motion for the exception to not need to submit complete plans for the proposed new construction, along with the application for demolition and to accept the fact that we do not need your scheduled timetable and budget for the demolition and new construction or proof of financing. Seconded by Len. Motion approved.

Nicole made comment about motion number 1. One thought is the engineer and architects are doing their best to try and do that. Question is that you come back in a month and you have not tried to save these walls at all. Where are we then? How can you prove to us that it was impossible to save without any kind of design plan? Mr. Lampert stated that when they have a new construction design/plan, they will have a better idea of what they would like to do. When it does come down to the building coming down, we will have a better idea of what we can save. I actually talked to them today and we will be walking through the building so that we have an idea of what we are looking at. Until he gets in there and start digging around, we won't know. Nothing is going to happen overnight.

Len revised the motion for approval of demolition subject to having a shadow box with historic relics on the site and commercially reasonable efforts to preserve the walls outlined in blue, as well as the wall on Franklin Street. Seconded by Fred. Motion approved.

Fred asked Mr. Lampert to let Barbara know when he would be coming back. Told him commission meets on the 3rd Thursday of every month.

Mr. House made a suggestion as it worked quite well in the past, and it might put your minds at ease, if we have a work session somewhere in between. All agreed.

Old Business:

Motion to approve amended draft minutes from December 19, 2013 was made by Fred, seconded by Nicole. Motion approved.

With no further business, Julie made motion to adjourn, seconded by Pam. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick