

Exeter Heritage Commission
May 14, 2014
Final Minutes

Members present: Pam Gjettum, HDC Rep; Mary Dupre, Julie Gilman, Chairwoman, Kelly Bergeron, and John Merkle

Chairwoman Gilman called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm in the Wheelwright Room of the Town Office Building.

First Business: Minutes of April 9, 2014. After one amendment, Julie motioned to approve, seconded by Pam. Minutes approved as amended.

Copies of RSA79e were passed out to all members. In the package is an explanation of what it is, a flow chart and the application that the commission had devised for someone who would come in and apply for this. The map in this packet shows the three areas that are affected by this. Julie stated that what this does is if someone proposes to make changes to their property, they can apply to the town for tax relief during the time they are doing the rehabilitation. When someone comes in and applies for this, the selectmen will review the project and decide what extent the tax relief will be. Whether it is three years, five years, I think there is a limitation of ten years. Basically, it is kind of a loan. These people don't have to pay the improvement taxes until they are done with the improvements and are finished. Julie will get the actual language of the State Law for the members. Julie stated that if a property is being done in the historic district, the HDC has to review it provide their opinion. The Heritage Commission is there somewhere, but a lot of the law talks about the HDC. Given that we are working at three different areas, the HDC will not be involved in the Portsmouth Ave., or Lincoln St. area, but the Heritage Commission would be.

John asked if this was for non-residential projects and Julie stated that it was. She also stated that the Economic Development Commission is trying to get some interest over in Lincoln Street with some changes and upgrades. We are doing some structural work this year.

Pam stated that the train station area goes right across Main Street. Julie stated that it does that because that area was studied when the train station went in and they came up that far as part of the designation and considerations in that area. Pam asked if Exeter had really adopted this and Julie said yes, they did in March.

Julie stated that one of the hopeful outcomes of this is to have housing downtown because the State is trying to make sure the town is intergrading walkability and uses that are compatible because downtown we have lots of stores, but very few of the spaces allow residential in them, so it is all office space. John asked if multifamily residents would be covered and Julie stated they would be because what they are looking for is multifamily re-use. This all has to do with commercial properties. John asked if it would cover Portsmouth Ave., and Julie stated it would and Lincoln Street also. Julie stated that it would be really nice if the loka would join in. Pam stated that we could then make the loka into apartments. Julie stated that it does not have to have housing. It is a hopeful outcome. Commission will review RSA79e language at next month's meeting because Julie wants everyone to understand what their duties are going to be.

Julie stated that the Heritage Commission and the Historical District Commission are at the end of the RSA. Julie stated that the curious thing she finds is that if property in the historic district, they want the HDC to be involved and most of the projects to be done are going to be interior, which the HDC does not do. She thinks this is where the Heritage Commission will come in instead. Julie stated this is going to be tough especially if someone wants to gut the whole floor downtown. Julie thinks what they are looking for from the commission is agreeing with the estimate of the cost. Commission will read it and talk about next month.

New Business: Julie stated that two people from the Historic District, Patrick Gordon and Nicole Martineau and I have been working on a grant for the CLG round. The grant is for several things. One is to have a consultant come in to look at our preservation guidelines, zoning ordinance and application so that they work better. One of the things that we found in this last go-round with one Franklin Street is that we used the word financial hardship in our demolition things and in zoning and in preservation guidelines, but we have no actual definition to go by. Therefore, we don't know how much money is in a percentage or the maximum like it is in here, to look at to ask if this is a financial hardship. This is one of the things we want to get out of it. The other part of the proposal is to develop some different walking tours. Instead of having self-guided tours, have a volunteer that is going to lead on and not be extensive. Maybe just looking at four buildings downtown or doing a couple of lectures that are not really straight out of the Zoning Board guides that would interest people. We are trying to reach out to the general public that we are friendly people. Some ideas for these were, why is my house white, or the color of my house is white. Another one was window preservation, what style is it. We are still working on the money aspect of this because we don't know how much it will cost. The other aspect will be training the boards on what our application is and how we run our meetings. Julie suggested a how to book so that it sustains after the people who are currently on the commission give it to the next person coming on.

Julie mentioned there is this Camp put on by the National Alliance of Preservations of Commissions, which we are going to become a member of. They have a program of a day or a day and a half where they will come to your place and talk about what should be in an application and then talk about what he should be looking at as part of the HDC, or what he should be looking at as part of the Heritage Commission. This is also open to the general public. We are looking for the pricing of that and there are also pricing for hosting events like the walking tours or lectures that we want to do. There are not a lot of personnel or volunteer hours as the matching fund, and it is quite expensive so I think we will be cutting down on what we are asking for this year.

Pam stated that we already have walking tours at the Historical Society and Barbara does all kinds of programs. Julie stated she told Patrick and Nicole to look into this. We are not going to get into any particular topics. The ones that are on the application are just suggestions. Coming from not knowing anything about the Historical Society for one thing is a good opportunity for Julie to have them working on this grant application to find out what people do not know and this is what the grant application is about. Julie stated that they are working out the numbers and making this a combined thing so that when we come to the budgeting process, no one commission is being put down or asking for \$20,000. It might be that each commission ask for \$10,000. We are basing the volunteerism on the number of bodies we currently have and the volunteerism is really going to be simple things. We do not want one person doing all four buildings on tour. We want one person at each building and maximum time would be two hours. The events at the Town Hall with set up and food, it can get quite expensive and it is due Friday. This Friday it talks previously about alternating surveys with hands on kind of projects, so this year the HDC members asked if we could do the hands on type of projects and the three of us are

working on it and hopefully we will have a better idea by the end of the day on Thursday what we can present to the HDC. Julie stated that the Division of Historical Resources spoke to us early on about what we wanted to do for the grant and what they recommended. They are looking to see whatever we propose be sort of a template for other towns to do and have people come here regionally and then do like they did in Stratham, how you too can do this.

Pam stated that even if we do not get the grant, a lot of the things we can do ourselves. Julie agreed. She stated the technical things are what we are really going after, but in order to make it more attractive, we want to show what we are going to do with the information.

Mary asked if this gets set up would it include Doug Eastman and Julie said it would. Part of the grant is to bring the Planning/Building Department more actively into what we do. It would also bring in the Planning Board at some point. Julie stated that the grant is about education, consulting and expressing. Julie will keep the commission informed about the grant and she will not be in charge of it.

John mentioned that at the last river site meeting , he agreed to coordinate the efforts for the 106 with the Historical Society and Heritage Commission. He has call in to Nadine and she has not gotten back to him yet. Julie stated that the only thing she knows is that the HDC did their section 106 preliminary surveys. They did the individual surveys and the area surveys and the result was that individually the dam is not eligible for anything. Julie also stated that she is not sure what the next step is.

Julie mentioned that the All Boards Meeting is next Wednesday at 6:30 pm at the Town Hall. One thing she feels should be expressed is her disappointment in the process of Demolition Review Committee making its recommendation on those two properties and having a letter that was addressed to the Chairman of the Planning Board never gets to read it. Julie felt that it could have had an effect on their choice of the planning. They never saw it so they were not aware there was a concern. The meeting is all about communication between the boards.

Board Terms and elections of Officers. Julie stated that she should not be Chairwoman because she is Selectwoman. Mary made a recommendation for John to be Chairman. Seconded by Kelly. He accepted and all were in favor. Pam will be Vice-Chair, Mary will be Clerk and Kelly Treasurer. All were in favor and elections of officers approved.

With no further business, Julie motioned to adjourn, seconded by Pam. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary