

Heritage Commission

February 15, 2022

Draft Minutes

Members Present: John Merkle, Vice Chair, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep., Pam Gjettum, Clerk Bill Campbell, Maura Fay, Treasurer

Call Meeting to Order: John Merkle, Vice Chair, called meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Wheelwright Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

New Business: Public Hearing: First is the review and approval of the January 19, 2022 meeting minutes. After discussion and some changes, Bill made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Julie seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved.

Next is the discussion of the Certified Local Government Grant discussion. Julie said it is this time again and the commission needs to put in a Letter of Intent if we want to get a grant from the Division of Historical Resources through the Certified Local Government process. Julie said one of the questions is, do we want to do a survey of more of the town or her other thought was redoing the Waterfront Commercial District survey from the 80s because so much has changed. We have lost a couple of buildings that are actually in our Zoning Ordinance. All of the owners have changed also. The survey is on a National Register and you can see how different everything looks, which is kind of nice, but maybe we need to update it. Julie said she is not sure if it was the National Park Service or DHR that actually added on to the National Register extent of the district and it crosses the water from Jady Hill to Swasey Parkway. Julie said we should probably update our Zoning Ordinance to match that and update the National Register Publication.

Julie said the other choice is choosing the next part of town that we might want to extend from our mapping survey.

Bill asked Julie how definite do we have to be in proposing this. Julie said it is a Letter of Intent that she has to have in by the 20<sup>th</sup>. Pam said she thinks updating the survey for Water Street is more important than stretching out to a new area. John said we could do both really and Pam said it depends on how much money we have. Julie said that the work is free and we figure out a number which includes meeting time, our time as volunteers and we would put a number out saying this project would cost \$20,000 and we do not have to match those funds.

Julie made a motion to apply for a CLG Grant to update the National Register Survey of the Waterfront Commercial District with an extension from Water Street and up Green Street. Bill seconded. All were in favor and motion approved.

Maura talked about the post card that will be sent out to the people in the neighborhood. It is just a simple post card with a return address on one side and a check box on the other side saying whether I am for the idea or I am opposed to the idea. This will be included with the letter that has been finished. Maura then told the commission that she got an email from Anna who lives on Warren Street which she forwarded to all the members and Anna had a couple of items that she had concerns about. One was the boundaries of the district and that they did not reflect what sort of is the neighborhood as it exists per say in a way like Locust and Hale and Warren Street all sort of interconnect. Also, we did not have a clear idea of what we were trying to do. Maura said she would like to talk about this and she wanted to publicly talk about it. Maura said her thoughts about the district boundaries was mainly a focus on architecture. The Park Street area being a settling area and then the expansion of the Oak Forest neighborhood and the Cass/Main Street area also being a similar age to the Park Street area. Maura said it was a process we went through to gain public input on this project. Pam thanked Maura for taking this on and said she thinks it is a marvelous letter.

Ben Morse from the public spoke and said he lives on Cass Street. He stated he was here because he has some questions about the proposed neighborhood area and what might happen if this comes to be and he is a little concerned.

John said it is a unique piece of town because almost everything is non-compliant and it is a neighborhood.

Ben said it is a lovely place to live and he really enjoys living on Cass Street. When the snow comes, there is more than one of us out there and we often help each other out. Ben said he knows all the people who live on his street and it is a very small one. He then said he is a little bit concerned about his lack of understanding of what might actually be the power of this new committee that is made. So far, Ben said he hears all of the things that it might be and he is not sure why they need a committee that just talks about what can be demolished and what can't. Ben said if he does not know what the committee has the power to do, and those things might change in the future, he is not sure why he would support that. He said it would have his support for a committee to improve rules in my neighborhood that he does not know it is going to propose. Ben said he has more reservations than positive things about it. He does not want someone to have the ability to say what he can and cannot do just because there is a small group of people who decided they should control these factors in this part of town. Ben said his neighbors at the end of the street, knocked down their barn and replaced it with something beautiful. Ben said he is really concerned about the purpose of this new committee and if it is really necessary and he is hesitant to support something that he does not know what it is going to change.

Maura spoke and thanked Ben for being here. Maura said the reason this was pursued is because as a commission, we realized for the last number of years, we do not have the power to stop a building from being demolished because we only have advisory capacity. In the end, people can decide to tear down a house because it is in terrible condition like that barn. There

are other cases where it is not about the condition of the house but about the ability to turn it into multi-units. Maura said it has been the hope to preserve some of these homes, especially the ones that are older so that we do not lose the crucial elements of this town's history.

Ben said he lives on a lovely little street that is right off the main road and he just does not think that on his street in his area that he is at risk of someone putting up a town house because they feel like it so it is hard for him to buy in on this.

Bill said the house at 110 High Street was declared unbuildable and had to be demolished. Even the town building inspector said that is terrible. Drive by and take a look at it now. Someone has taken it and done a very nice job with it and it is an 1850s house. Bill said he would rather have that there and not a more modern structure.

Julie said when we started talking about this, it was really wide spread looking at the State's guide for what to do and this one group that would manage it, would come from the neighborhood. First there is let's think about it and get it together but it all answers to the Planning Board.

Ben asked what the group can and cannot do in the future. Pam said it is all said in the letter she had. Ben said he did not recognize that letter and Maura said it has not been sent out yet and that is why Ben has not seen it. Maura said the plan is to send the letter and post card out. Ben said he would feel a lot better about putting his support behind this commission if he knew what it was going to do precisely and what it was going to be.

John said the committee that is going to be formed for the Planning Board will make up those boundaries because that is the process.

Julie said a group has to be formed to recommend making a Heritage Area.

Ben said if it changes and he learns more and thinks it is going to support the neighborhood, he would be more supportive of it.

Julie said the other thing about this is this group has to present to the Planning Board and the Planning Board has to buy into it. If the Planning Board doesn't, then it does not happen.

John said, we are not trying to force this on anybody. If the results come back and it does not have enough support, it is going to get dropped.

Ben asked who shows their support and how does this happen. Maura said, we are sending this letter out that details the proposed restrictions and regulations with a post card. The post card will have a box to check off in favor of or opposed to it. Maura said with a tally of the checked boxes, we will know how many are in favor and how many opposed.

John thanked Ben for coming tonight.

Bill made a motion to send the letter and post card out. Maura seconded. All were in favor and motion approved.

Julie then talked about what is going on with the HDC. There is a big project going on at the Baptist Church on Front Street. The owners are proposing to make it all residential and remove all the stained glass and replace it with modern thermal glass. Julie said the HDC can make some recommendations as to what to do with the stained glass. The owners are proposing to make eleven units. Julie said the materials so far are in keeping with the church.

There is also the application of PEA for 8 Gilman Lane. Julie said the HDC will not give permission to tear it down until we know what is going in its place. PEA's original plan was to replace this with a triplex but this was really massive. They have now broken down the triplex and will make a single and a two family.

John then asked if Julie was successful in getting the consultant. Julie said yes. PEA got a consultant and Julie also got one. She wanted one who could date the house and also the foundation. Both consultants wrote letters and they both said the exact same thing. That it was a mish mash of pieces of buildings. Some of it might be original and some could have come from a house that was torn down. There were additions that were different than was on the maps. Both letters agreed there was not enough of the original parts there and they agreed on the dating of the basement early 1820s to 1850s. Julie said it has not been approved for demolition yet.

With no further business, Bill made a motion to adjourn. Pam seconded. All were in favor and meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick

Recording Secretary