

HDC MINUTES

Special meeting November 3, 2016

The Exeter Historic District Commission met Thursday, November 3 at 8:45 in a special session with Dave Sharples to discuss a proposed bus shelter to be sited in front of the town office building.

Present: Chairman Patrick Gordon, Julie Gilman, Curtis Boivin and Pam Gjetum.

Dave gave us a rundown of the situation. Coast Bus (which is a semi government entity supported by local towns) approached the town manager about putting up a bus shelter downtown. This shelter would have a large advertising board (within the sign size limitations) and half of advertising profits would go to the town of Exeter to offset their annual funding request, which profit they guess would be around \$3000 to the town. Julie Gilman was at the meeting as selectwoman and said that this should go to the Historic District, even though the town does not actually need our approval nor does it have to abide by HDC rules.

Why right smack in the heart of the historic downtown? Dave says they did look at all the other Coast Bus stops in town. Lincoln Street and Portsmouth Avenue would serve many more riders – but they don't have a place to site the shelter. The town does own the grass verge in front of the town offices and does have the right of way. They could move it slightly up the hill but did not want to take away parking spaces or disrupt cable lies. Plus, they are trying to site it so the bus will be as handicapped accessible as possible so people will have an easy access to the bus with no curb or slope.

Patrick pointed out that any handicapped person had already made it to the bus stop, presumably navigating many far worse obstacles. The whole thing appears to be more about advertising revenue. Curtis felt that this would advertise that that was in fact a bus stop, which the small sign on the telephone pole does not really do very well. Julie felt that the town offices were pretty well obscured anyway by plantings. Pam felt that a planting is very different from a bus shelter and the whole point of a Historic District is to preserve the character of an area, and the bandstand area is the picture postcard view of historic Exeter.

Patrick pointed out that we already have plenty of problems with snow removal downtown and this is adding one more problem for the town crews. As well as

being historically inappropriate, is it actually serving riders, most of whom use other stops? Again it seems to be about advertising revenue. Julie reminded us that technology moves onward and the HDC moves with it by approving “inappropriate” additions such as solar panels and communications towers.

In the end, all we can do is recommend and the selectmen can do what they will.

Patrick called for a motion; Pam moved to disallow the shelter. Nobody seconded the motion.

Curtis moved to accept the location, Julie seconded. Curtis and Julie for; Pam and Patrick against. Motion failed.

Curtis tried again and moved that if the project goes ahead the Historic District Commission gets to review it in twelve months. Julie seconded . Curtis and Julies in favor, Pam and Patrick against, motion failed again.

So: The bus shelter application is tabled for review by the full board at our meeting on November 17th.

Pam Gjettum, Clerk