

TOWN OF HARTFORD  
THE ADVENT CAMP MEETING GROUNDS HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATION  
COMMUNITY MEETING  
JANUARY 18, 2017 MEETING MINUTES

A community meeting for the Advent Camp Meeting Grounds Historic District Nomination was held at the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, Vermont on Wednesday, January 18, 2017 at 5:30 p.m.

Attendance: Joe Trottier, Dennis Brown, Susanne Walker Abetti, Roy Black, Robin Adair Logan, Pat Stark, Jonathan Schechtman, Brian Knight and Matt Osborn.

Matt Osborn welcomed folks to the meeting. He noted that this a community meeting to present the final nomination for the Advent Camp Meeting Grounds Historic District and solicit public input. He noted that property owners were mailed notices about this meeting. In addition, there were several mailings over the course of the project to property owners. A legal ad appeared in the Valley News. There were notices posted on the town website, Hartford Listserv, the libraries, Bugbee Senior Center and the Town Hall. In addition, copies of the nomination were made available to the public. Matt also noted that the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation sent out a letter to property owners regarding state review of the nomination and provide an opportunity for comments.

Matt informed the audience that the process for approval of a National Register Historic District Nomination includes a decision by the Hartford Historic Preservation Commission whether to endorse the nomination, a public meeting with the Hartford Selectboard whether to endorse the nomination and a public hearing with the Vermont Historic Preservation Advisory Council whether to endorse the Nomination and pass it on to the United States Department of Interior for their review and determination whether to list the District on the National Register or not.

Matt distributed the following handouts:

- National Register Criteria for Evaluation
- Results of National Register Listing
- Frequently Asked Questions about the National Register of Historic Places

Matt introduced architectural historian Brian Knight who prepared the Nomination. Brian gave a Powerpoint presentation of the Advent Camp Meeting Grounds Historic District Nomination and the history of the camp and religious camp movement in New England and the United States. Brian noted that the camp meeting movement had its roots in the feast of booths from biblical times. The first known religious camp in the United States was held in Kentucky in 1799. The first known religious camp in White River Junction was in 1868 at an unknown location. The first camp at the Advent Lane site was in 1887. Brian noted that there was very little written about the camps in local newspapers. Joe Trottier noted that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, religious camps were a form of entertainment. He also noted that the railroad companies promoted the events as a means to sell train tickets. The Advent site had a platform for passengers arriving and departing by train on the Passumpsic Railroad.

Brian noted that a fire occurred at the camp in the 1890s that destroyed several buildings. Since the buildings were so close together, the fire spread. This resulted in the decision to move the remaining buildings farther apart. Brian noted that there are 33 buildings in the District of which 21 are classified as contributing buildings to the District and the remaining 12 buildings are classified as non-contributing. There also is a contributing structure (baptistry) and a contributing object (gravestone). He stated that the Advent Camp Meeting Grounds is significant for its community planning, architecture and religion. The period of significance was 1887-1930.

Brian went through photographs of the buildings noting whether the building is categorized as a contributing or non-contributing resource.

Joe Trottier asked if there will be any restrictions on what property owners do with their buildings. Jonathan Schechtman responded that there are no restrictions from National Register Historic District unless there are federal funds involved.

Joe Trottier noted that he has been attending Advent Camp meetings since he was 7 years old. Matt Osborn asked Joe if he had many fond memories of his childhood visits to the Camp. He responded yes noting that it was a wonderful experience. He stated that multiple generations have been attending the Advent Camp and that properties are transferred from one family member to another.

Matt noted that the Selectboard will be holding a public meeting on the project and that the meeting will be scheduled in the coming weeks. Notices about the meeting will be sent to property owners. The Nomination is scheduled to go before the Vermont Historic Preservation Advisory Council in April.

Jonathan Schechtman thanked Joe Trottier and Brian Knight for attending the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m.