

## HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, May 18, 2016  
Approved Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Susanne Walker Abetti, Roy Black, Robin Adair Logan, Pat Stark and chair Jonathan Schechtman.

**Staff Present:** Matt Osborn, Town Planner.

**Others Present:** Arthur Peale of Gardens of Stone and Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown.

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held in Meeting Room 2, Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Wednesday, May 18, 2016. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

1. Additions/Changes to the Agenda: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any additions to the agenda. There were none.
2. Minutes of the April 20, 2016 HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any corrections to the Minutes of April 20<sup>th</sup>. Pat Stark noted a correction. There were no other corrections or additions. Robin Adair Logan made a motion to approve the Minutes of April 20<sup>th</sup> with the noted correction. The motion was seconded by Roy Black and approved.
3. Town Cemetery Update: Jonathan Schechtman welcomed Arthur Peale. Arthur has a business Gardens of Stone that focuses on the repair of cemetery gravestones. He has a contract with the Town of Hartford to repair headstones in the following five Town cemeteries:
  - Center of Town, Center of Town Road
  - Russtown, Route 5 South
  - Simonds, Old Kings Highway
  - Delano Savage, Jericho Street
  - Tucker, Route 14

Arthur expressed concern that there is not adequate funding for tree maintenance in the cemetery budgets. Without proper tree maintenance, trees and/or limbs eventually come down and damage gravestones. He also expressed concern that there is not adequate oversight of the Town's cemeteries. Dennis Brown offered to talk about the subject with the Selectboard. Arthur reported that he recently met with Interim Town Manager Pat MacQueen to discuss the Town cemetery situation. Pat suggested looking into a cemetery commission. The HHPC liked the idea.

4. Advent Camp Meeting Grounds Historic District Nomination: Matt Osborn reported that consultant Brian Knight completed the first draft of the Advent Historic District Nomination. Jonathan Schechtman stated that the research and history section is fascinating. However, he stated that the architectural description could use more detail. Matt asked HHPC members to send him comments on the draft so he can forward comments to Brian Knight. Matt suggested holding a community meeting on the nomination in mid-June, possibly the evening of the June 15<sup>th</sup> HHPC meeting. Jonathan suggested holding the meeting at the Advent Meeting Grounds. Matt will inquire. Jonathan noted that he recently spoke with reporter Matt Hongoltz-Hetling about providing more stories on the work of the HHPC.
5. Update of the Downtown White River Junction Historic District Nomination: Matt Osborn reported that a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the project was released on May 6<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for proposals is May 31<sup>st</sup>. He noted that we already have received one proposal and he hopes to receive more. Matt stated that if interviews occur, they would likely be scheduled around the middle of June.

6. Certified Local Government (CLG) Program: Jonathan Schechtman welcomed Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown to the meeting and gave an overview of the CLG program. Hartford is one of fourteen CLG's in Vermont. CLG communities are eligible to receive annual historic preservation grants. Matt Osborn noted that since 1993, Hartford has received over \$125,000 in CLG funds that have been used for historic district nominations, oral history projects, design guidelines for Downtown White River Junction, historic district brochures, barn census and Historic Sites and Structures Surveys. Jonathan noted that the HHPC has been very effective leveraging \$2,000 a year in cash along with staff-time to match CLG grants.
7. Demolition Ordinance: Matt Osborn noted that he sent out to the HHPC examples of demolition and design review regulations relating to historic buildings. He noted that some communities require that the building be listed on the State or National Register, while others require that it be listed or eligible for listing. He also stated that some communities require a demolition permit for all structures, not just historic structures. Some communities also have standards prohibiting demolition by neglect. Pat Stark stated that she preferred the examples of Bennington and Montpelier, while Robin Adair Logan stated that she preferred the examples of Burlington and Shelburne. Jonathan Schechtman noted that Hartford adopted a Dilapidated Building Ordinance in 2011. Robin Adair recommended reading the Town's legal opinion on the demolition of historic structures section of the White River Junction Design Review District. Matt noted that the legal review was conducted in anticipation of the demolition of the Methodist Church and Parker Insurance Building and those projects did not go forward. Matt reported that the Planning Commission has scheduled discussion of historic buildings and demolition at its June 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting at 6:00 p.m. Matt noted that the discussion will be limited since it is on the administration portion of the agenda and the public hearings begin punctually at 6:30 p.m. Robin Adair Logan expressed concern that the Town does not have standards that require the upkeep of buildings. Jonathan Schechtman read from an Charlottesville, Virginia Ordinance regarding demolition by neglect. Robin Adair stated that she would like to avoid demolition by neglect and would like to see standards to prevent it.
8. Annual Historic Preservation/Downtown Conference: Matt Osborn reported that the Annual Historic Preservation/Downtown Conference is scheduled for Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup> in Waterbury. He noted that Susanne, Roy, Robin Adair, Jonathan and he are registered for the conference. The HHPC worked out carpool arrangements.
9. Methodist Church: Pat Stark reported that the Church has had regular meetings with developers Byron Hathorn and Brooke Ciardelli regarding the assisted living project proposed for the property next to the Church. Susanne Walker Abetti stated that she feels that the scale of the proposed building is too big for its location and that it doesn't fit in with the historic character of the village or the creative economy. She plans to attend the Planning Commission public hearing on the application.
10. Quechee Community Church: Pat Stark reported that the Quechee Church received an offer from another religious organization to purchase the property.
11. HHPC Membership: Robin Adair Logan noted that the HHPC needs to do more to expand its membership and bring in fresh ideas. Matt Osborn responded that at five members, the Commission is currently full and changing it would require amending the HHPC Ordinance. Robin Adair suggested that the Commission move the meeting time later in the evening in order to attract more interest from the public. She also noted that the public often confuses the HHPC with the Hartford Historical Society. Jonathan Schechtman suggested possibly moving the HHPC meeting locations around to the other four villages. Matt stated that the Commission might consider developing a historic preservation information campaign.
12. Next HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman noted that the next HHPC Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>. Susanne Walker Abetti reported that she will be out of town.
13. Adjournment: Roy Black made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Pat Stark and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m. Jonathan thanked Dennis for attending the meeting.