

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Approved Meeting Minutes

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

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: Department of Planning and Development Services Director Lori Hirshfield and Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown. Architectural Historian Brian Knight participated via conference call.

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held in Room 312, Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Wednesday, March 15, 2017. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

1. Additions/Changes to the Agenda: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any additions to the agenda. Dennis Brown requested that the Downtown Banners and Quechee Pocket Park be added to the agenda. The Commission agreed.
2. Minutes of the January 18, 2017 HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any corrections to the Minutes of January 18th. Roy Black noted a correction. Susanne Walker Abetti noted a correction. Roy Black made a motion to approve the Minutes of January 18th with the noted corrections. The motion was seconded by Susanne Walker Abetti and approved.
3. Annual Downtown/Historic Preservation Conference: Lori Hirshfield was present to talk about the June 8th Downtown/Historic Preservation Conference which will be held in Downtown White River Junction. The Conference will be held in several venues including Barrett Center (Northern Stage), Hotel Coolidge, Newberry Market, Briggs Opera House and the Engine Room. Lori noted that the Barrett Center will be used for the conference opening and the Engine Room for the closing reception. Lori noted that a caterer will be selected, but a location for lunch hasn't been selected yet. Pat Stark suggested considering the Methodist Church and/or the Catholic Church. Lori noted that the Vermont Division for Community Planning and Revitalization and the Preservation Trust of Vermont are working on the program, but we have an opportunity to have input. Lori noted that staff is trying to work out parking arrangements in order not to disrupt downtown businesses. Lori noted that sponsors expressed the need for a display location that draws attendees throughout the day. Jonathan Schechtman suggested making sure there are sufficient restrooms. Pat Stark volunteered to put together a Downtown Walking Tour for the event. Jonathan suggested volunteer t-shirts to help people identify volunteers. As an alternative to t-shirts, Susanne Walker Abetti suggested aprons. Lori noted that as the host community, there is a lot of work ahead. She stated that a conference committee is being formed. She asked for help from the HHPC. The HHPC agreed.
4. Update of the White River Junction Historic District: Brian Knight was present via conference call to discuss the White River Junction Historic District Nomination update. Brian reported that he has revised Section 7 descriptions, completed most of Section 8 and has worked on the analysis for expansion of the District. He noted that he really likes the three multi-family buildings on the east side of South Main Street. He stated that expansion of the district boundaries down South Main Street is more compelling than crossing Maple Street to include three building on the north side of Maple Street. Brian noted that he would like input from the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. Matt Osborn suggested that Brian invite State Architectural Historian Devin Colman to White River Junction to look at possible expansion. The HHPC liked the idea and Brian agreed to contact Devin.

As for the community meeting, Brian suggested a before and after presentation about changes that have taken place in the Downtown over the years. The HHPC agreed. It was noted that the tentative date of April 12th conflicts with an event at the Hartford Historical Society. The HHPC agreed to change the date to later in April. Matt Osborn noted that in the past, we have had a fairly low turnout for historic district community meetings. Jonathan Schechtman suggested involving the Hartford Chamber of Commerce. Matt will come up with possible dates for the meeting in the second half of April and get back to the HHPC & Brian.

Matt Osborn reported that Vermont Division for Historic Preservation agreed to incorporating oral history interviews into the project. Brian will conduct interviews and prepare written transcripts. Pat Stark suggested including individuals who have been responsible for much of the revitalization of the Downtown that have not been interviewed. They include Bill Bittinger, Mike Davidson, Michelle Ollie, Byron Hathorn or possibly someone from Northern Stage. The HHPC agreed.

5. Village Center Application for Hartford Village: Matt Osborn reported that the application was submitted to the State in February. Richard Amore of the Vermont Division for Community Planning and Revitalization reviewed the proposed boundaries and suggested modifications to meet the statutory requirements of the program. Richard met with Matt and walked through the Village. Revisions were made to the boundaries including removal of the north side of Summer Street and Elmwood Court since both areas are primarily single family residential. Matt noted that multi-family residential and commercial properties are eligible for tax credits, but single family residential are not. Staff modified the boundaries, discussed with Town manager Leo Pullar and Martha Knapp of the Hartford Historical Society. The application is scheduled to be reviewed by the Downtown Board at their March 27th meeting. Matt will be attending. Roy Black volunteered to attend. Pat Stark suggested inviting Mary Nadeau as well.
6. 2017 CLG Grant; Public Outreach and Education: Matt Osborn reported that the Town received the 2017 grant agreement from the State. He will ask Town Manager Leo Pullar to sign the agreement. Matt suggested that we carefully think about and plan the project. Jonathan Schechtman suggested involving P.J. Skehan from the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce. Jonathan agreed to invite P.J. to the April 12th Meeting.
7. Dinsmore House & Upper Valley Waldorf School: Matt Osborn reported that a contractor contacted his office about the demolition of the garage and breezeway of the 1850 Dinsmore House.
8. Upper Valley Waldorf School Addition: Pat Stark reported that she attended a meeting at the Upper Valley Waldorf School to hear about the proposal to build an addition to the School. The School was interested in historical information about earlier days of the school when it was a public school. Pat noted that there were folks who attended the meeting that went to the school as a child. Pat noted that as the school expands, the Upper Valley Waldorf School staff is trying to retain as much of the core of the school as possible.
9. Advent Camp Meeting Grounds Historic District Nomination: Matt Osborn reported that the Advent Historic District Nomination is going before the Selectboard on Tuesday, March 28th. Brian Knight will be present at the meeting. The Nomination is scheduled to be reviewed by the Vermont Advisory Council on Historic Preservation on April 19th.
10. Fire Department Demolition Permit: Pat Stark reminded the Commission that they agreed to invite the Fire Department to a HHPC Meeting to discuss the Dilapidated Building Ordinance. Matt Osborn suggested scheduling it when there is a meeting without other guests. The HHPC agreed.

11. White River Junction Parking Study: Matt Osborn reported that a parking study of the Downtown began last summer. The Town hired RSG and Vital Communities. Matt noted that the Department of Planning and Development Services has been doing parking surveys since 2005 of town parking spaces. With redevelopment, parking occupancy has been increasing particularly in the last 2-3 years. According to RSG, excess parking will be used up once several large projects are completed. Matt noted that a community meeting was held last summer and an on-line survey completed with most people opposed to pay for parking. A draft report was completed. A community meeting will be scheduled in the coming weeks with recommendations. The project will then go before the Selectboard.
12. Downtown Banners: Dennis Brown commented that the Hartford 250th anniversary banners have been up several years and are beginning to look worn. He asked if there are plans to replace them. Matt Osborn responded that the HHPC had planned to talk to the Chamber of Commerce about ideas for replacement banners. Susanne Walker Abetti noted that banners are expensive. He also suggested discussing with Lori Hirshfield.
13. Quechee Pocket Park: Dennis Brown reported that the Quechee Pocket Park will be going out to bid soon. He presented photographs of the site from 1970 prior to construction of the Quechee Covered Bridge. The photos were provided by Jack Heavysides.
14. Next HHPC Meeting: Jonathan Schechtman noted that the next HHPC Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 12th.
15. Adjournment: Roy Black made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Pat Stark and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 p.m.