

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Joint Workshop with the Hartford Planning Commission
Monday, July 8, 2021
Draft Workshop Minutes

HHPC Members Present: Robin Adair Logan, Pat Stark, and Selectboard Liaison Dennis Brown.

PC Members Present: Toby Dayman, John Heath, Robin Adair Logan, John Reid and Chair Bruce Riddle.

Staff Present: Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield, Zoning Administrator Jo-Ann Ells and Town Planner Matt Osborn.

Others Present: None.

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held in Room 1 of the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street White River Junction. HHPC vice-chair Pat Stark called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. She noted that this is a joint workshop with the Planning Commission.

Lori Hirshfield noted that following the May 10th workshop and the June 3rd community meeting, it was clear that there was consensus to move forward with demolition delay standards. The standards would require the submission of a review form for all buildings proposed for demolition throughout Hartford. In some cases, a zoning permit would be required. Lori reported that Consultant Brandy Saxton will not be working on the project anymore since she doesn't think she can provide the Town with anything more going forward.

1. General Comments: Lori Hirshfield presented the flow chart and asked if there were any comments or questions about the process. Dennis Brown stated that he wasn't sure 30 days was needed for photo documentation. Lori responded that it would likely be done much sooner. Dennis also expressed concern about a comment made by a developer at the community meeting about the potential cost to developers. He indicated that the figure was \$50,000. Matt Osborn responded that he believes the figure was related to the typical cost of the development review process such as hiring an architect, engineer and/or surveyor to put together an application not the cost to apply for demolition. Lori noted that the proposed process is streamlined. Dennis asked if this process allows a developer to obtain approval of the demolition first. Lori responded yes.

John Reid expressed concern about how the new standards will impact staff. Lori Hirshfield responded that staff discussed it and concluded that the new standards can be easily incorporated into staff's workload. Jo-Ann Ells agreed stating that it is a simple process and there are several exemptions. She noted that she is not overly concerned about the impact on staff.

Bruce Riddle stated that the timeline worst-case scenario for the process is 60 days. Jo-Ann Ells agreed noting that the clock begins once a completed application is submitted. If a structure is not exempt, a publicly warned meeting is required within 30 days. The HPC is required to submit findings to the Administrative Officer within 15 days and the zoning permit appeal period is 15 days. Jo-Ann noted that the process is similar to the five-week application process for development applications.

Bruce Riddle suggested including a definition of documentation. Robin Adair Logan agreed and suggested including measurements of the building as well.

Dennis Brown asked about alternatives to demolition. Matt Osborn responded that the Historic Preservation Commission could put together a brochure about it.

Bruce Riddle stated that he is concerned about the public health issues related to demolition and the impact on neighbors particularly air quality. Lori Hirshfield responded that staff looked at it, but it isn't included in the scope of work for this project. The standards relate to historic resources and documentation. She added that the Planning Commission could pursue that separately if it would like to. Bruce stated that he would like to consider such rules at some point. Jo-Ann Ells suggested putting together information on state requirements for demolition. The Committee agreed.

2. Specific Comments: Matt Osborn stated that we will review the proposed draft demolition delay standards section by section.

Section A, Purpose: There were no comments.

Section B, Historic Preservation Commission: There were no comments.

Section C, Applicability: Pat Stark suggested that partial demolition should be included. John Heath agreed. Jo-Ann Ells noted that staff wants to make sure that the role of the Historic Preservation Commission is not design review, but only looking at alternatives to demolition. Lori Hirshfield stated that she would like to evaluate the impact that the change might have on staff's workload.

Robin Adair Logan stated that a pause opportunity allows time to document a building and look at options to demolition. It doesn't prohibit demolition.

John Heath asked who will make the decision whether to photo document the building or not. Matt Osborn responded that the Historic Preservation Commission will develop a procedure for it.

Section D, Review Procedures: There were no comments.

Section E, Exemptions: For the last sentence of Section E., Dennis Brown suggested changing the word "request" to "require". Staff will review it.

Section F, Review of Historic Significance: Under F.(1), Bruce Riddle suggested rewording. The committee agreed. Under F.(4), John Reid suggested including language if the alternatives are not acceptable to the property owner. Lori Hirshfield responded that staff will look into it.

John Heath asked about addressing the dangerous conditions of an empty cellar hole. Jo-Ann Ells responded that it is addressed in the Zoning Regulations.

3. Next Steps: Matt Osborn noted that the next step will be to discuss the draft with the rest of the Historic Preservation Commission at their July 21st meeting. In addition, staff will be taking another look at the standards and discuss comments made this evening.
4. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.