

HARTFORD HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, July 21, 2021

Approved Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Susanne Walker Abetti, Robin Adair Logan, Pat Stark and Chair Jonathan Schechtman.

Selectboard Liaison: Dennis Brown.

Staff Present: Town Planner Matt Osborn.

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on Wednesday, July 21, 2021 in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, Vermont. Chair Jonathan Schechtman called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. Matt Osborn noted that with the end of the Governor's Emergency Declaration on June 15th, a physical location for commission meetings is now required. The Planning Department is currently holding hybrid meetings to provide an opportunity for commission members and the public to attend remotely if they prefer to do so. Robin Adair Logan stated that she appreciates the remote option.

1. Additions/Changes to the Agenda: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any additions to the agenda. There were none.
2. Minutes of the May10, May 19, June 3 and July 8, 2021 HHPC Meetings: Jonathan Schechtman asked if there are any changes or corrections to the minutes of May10, May 19, June 3 and July 8, 2021 HHPC meetings. There were none. Pat Stark made a motion to approve the minutes of May 10, May 19, June 3 and July 8, 2021 HHPC meetings as written. The motion was seconded by Robin Adair Logan and unanimously approved.
3. Taft's Flat Intensive Level Survey: Matt Osborn reported that in June, he submitted the CLG closeout packet to the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and the Town was reimbursed for the project. Matt noted that we still need to have the community meeting to present the findings. He suggested holding off until after Labor Day since many folks are on vacation in August. The HHPC agreed. Matt will coordinate a date with consultant Brian Knight and monitor the Covid-19 situation to determine whether it will be a remote or in-person meeting.
4. Demolition Standards: Matt Osborn reported that there was a joint workshop with the HHPC and Planning Commission on July 8th. He noted that there appears to be consensus to move forward with demolition delay approach. Matt reported that consultant Brandy Saxton is no longer working on the project. He stated that \$3,000 remains unspent on the contract and he hopes that the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation will allow the Town to direct those funds for the additional town staff time spent on the project. Matt noted that the project has been time consuming and that in addition to Lori Hirshfield and Matt's time, Zoning Administrator Jo-Ann Ells has worked on the project from the beginning.

Matt presented an updated draft based on comments made at the July 8th workshop. Matt proceeded to go through the changes. Matt noted that Pat Stark requested including partial demolition. The HHPC agreed that partial demolitions should not be exempted.

Matt noted that there is an exemption for buildings smaller than 400 square feet and less than 15'. Robin Adair Logan stated that there are many historically significant buildings with a height less than 15' including some single-family residences. She suggested removing the height exemption. The HHPC agreed.

Matt Osborn presented photographs of accessory structures from the Terraces and West Hartford Historic Districts. Robin Adair Logan noted that there are several historically significant buildings smaller than 400 square feet. The HHPC agreed to eliminate the small building exemption completely.

Dennis Brown stated that he thinks the exemption for buildings less than 100 years will miss many important buildings. Matt Osborn responded that the HHPC can still request photo documentation of those buildings. Jonathan Schechtman added that a cut-off date had to be selected and the 100-year date was acceptable to the Planning Commission.

Dennis suggested naming the section “Demolition Delay” instead of “Demolition”. The HHPC agreed.

Dennis also suggested changing “HPC” to “HHPC”. The HHPC agreed.

Matt noted that staff will be reviewing the HHPC recommended changes and decide whether to hold another joint workshop with the Planning Commission. Matt also noted that the scope of work for the project includes presenting a draft of the standards to the Selectboard to get their input as well as providing another opportunity for public input. Matt reported that the project needs to be closed out by the end of September per the CLG grant agreement.

5. 160 Gates Street Application for Demolition: Matt Osborn reported that an application for demolition of the house and barn at 160 Gates Street in the Downtown White River Junction Design Review District was submitted to the Planning Department. Both buildings are listed as a contributing resource in the White River Junction Historic District. The application will be reviewed by the Design Review Committee who will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and act on the application. Matt noted that it is uncertain at this time when the application will be scheduled for the Design Review Committee and Planning Commission. He will keep the HHPC apprised of the application status. He noted that the primary structure sustained severe water damage from a water pipe break, but was unsure of the condition status of the barn. Matt asked if it would be possible for the barn to be taken apart and reassembled at another site. Robin Adair Logan responded that if it is post and beam construction, it could be taken apart and reassembled.
6. Announcements: There were no announcements.
7. Next HHPC Meeting: Matt Osborn reported that he will be on vacation for the regularly scheduled August 18th Meeting. He noted that the HHPC has often cancelled the August meeting and asked if the HHPC would like to skip the meeting, hold the meeting without Matt or reschedule to another date. The HHPC agreed to skip the August meeting unless the 160 Gates Street application is scheduled to go forward with their development application in August. Matt agreed to let the HHPC know.
8. Adjournment: Pat Stark made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jonathan Schechtman seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.