

Peterborough Heritage Commission Minutes March 11, 2016, 5:30 p.m.

Present: Peggy Shaughnessy, Bruce Batten, Richard Estes, Debby Kaiser, Doug Ward, Tyler Ward, Mose Olenik

Absent: Sheila Kirkpatrick, Melissa Stephenson

Guest: Bill Harper

Preservation Easement

Peggy Shaughnessy called the meeting to order and introduced Bill Harper of West Rindge Builders. He was asked to address our concerns with the GAR Hall in reference to the Heritage Commission's need to present a revision of the Preservation Easement, particularly the building's siting. Peggy began the Q&A by asking if it was possible to move the GAR building. Mr. Harper said that it is a rather simple procedure creating a joist system in order to jack it up and move it to its new location on the lot. When asked about cost he said it is not as expensive as one might imagine. The greater expense comes when a building is moved to an entirely new location. Debby had asked about the building only having 3 original walls. Mr. Harper said it would not be difficult to create a 4th wall for the purpose of moving the building. A new foundation would take 28 days to cure before placing the building. Peggy said the current buyers had mentioned moving it brick by brick and Mr. Harper felt that would be unnecessary.

Mose Olenik asked if Mr. Harper thought the building could be re-designed successfully at its current location. She felt it important to view the building and its current landscape as one piece in considering its preservation. Other commissioners concurred. Mr. Harper mentioned the need for it to be brought up to ADA standards although there is leeway for historic buildings. Debbie Kaiser mentioned that Duffy Monahan had felt that it could be done in present location. Mr. Harper also talked about limited access, parking concerns and having to meet other seismic and hurricane codes and generally felt it would be difficult to re-build as multi-use. He was not aware of the new plans for downtown parking/park in reference to access. He said his own personal preference is to move buildings to street level.

Peggy said that many plans had been considered by the buyers that included both moving the building and keeping it in its current location. It is important for them to have a use for the building that would lead to a successful outcome all around. It was observed that they seemed to be at somewhat of a pause and will now, also, need to re-look at possibilities in light of the new parking/park plan.

Mr. Harper had not seen the actual foundation of the building except on the exterior. Tyler Ward described its viability and composition. He said, "Below grade level looks to have been dug out more recently in the building's history. Probably when the clapboard addition was added back in the 30's or 40's (not sure when that was built) random rubble retaining walls set in several feet from the original granite sill so as not to disturb it. Floor beams and subfloor sheathing in main floor in excellent condition considering it has been 'trapped' behind wood framed walls with no mechanical air handling to remove moisture."

Mr. Harper offered to share any references if needed in the future and was thanked before leaving.

Commission members continued discussion the Preservation Easement. Dick Estes discussed shoreline protection, protection of the landscape, birch and other trees, the importance of greenspace, protecting wildlife corridors and restoring habitat and generally protecting our environment in light of global warming.

The possibility of the town subdividing the lot was also mentioned.

It was agreed that for our next informational session would Peggy would make an appointment with someone from the NH Department of Historic Resources for their suggestions in revising the Preservation Easement.

Demolition Review Process

In light of the recent demolition of the Catholic Church, Debby Kaiser presented a written document *Problems with the Demolition Review Process* (in italics below)

The most recent case involving the Catholic Church has made the committee painfully aware of the inbuilt weakness in the process that work contrary to the original intention of those who worked to establish the Demolition Review Ordinance: to work with owners of historic structures to if possible save them from total demolition or when not feasible to help them properly repurpose and ecologically responsibly recycle as much of the materials, thus potentially saving the owner excessive cost of demolition.

Since we are a subcommittee of the Heritage Commission we also hope to fulfill its mission to at least document these historic places in word and image before they are gone forever and soon forgotten as part of Peterborough's development.

As the process stands we are given only one week to research and assess the historic or architectural significance of these structures. Most cases are relatively easy calls, but even then it is very hard to contact all the members of the committee and get them to at least drive by and give their opinion. We always contact the agent who has applied but it is often hard to reach the actual owner in that time frame. At very least we like to pass on our list of possible materials re-purposers and re-cylers. Experience has shown that though the agent asserts that he will look into these possibilities, contracts are already signed and leave very little leeway.

The simplest improvement would be to ask our code officer to pass out that list and recommend looking into these possibilities. Better yet would be to create a longer period before the review clock starts ticking, thus giving all parties a chance to find better solutions. This would, of course, involve a major campaign to increase awareness. Since, with the exception of sudden storm damage and such (possible exception to the rule), owners know well in advance of making the application that they would like to demolish the structure.

Since we are a voluntary committee, we really can't be expected to know of all possible major development plans that might entail demolition. Therefore, we would request that the town administration, in particular the Office of Planning and Development and the Planning Board inform us in a timely manner and let us be a part of the process. We have no power to stop any demolition but every possibility to help optimize the process to come to more ecological and economical solutions. We hope to support development that realizes that one of the most important drivers of economic prosperity—attracting appropriate, creative new businesses and people here in Peterborough is its historic street and landscape and all the quality of life that it brings.

Pete Throop suggested we be more pro-active and offer advice, options and a list of services before the demolition permit is issued. The problem seems to be how we can learn early in the process of a potential demolition project.

After some discussion it was decided that Debby would email the current Demolition Review to us and the item be put on our next meetings agenda for possible solutions.

Peggy brought up the concerns with Agway and it was decided that we should look into the approvals.

Photography Exhibit

The next exhibit by guest photographer Linda Greenwood will open First Friday, April first. Mose will send an email requesting help from the board in providing for the opening.

It was agreed that we would purchase a case of wine for this and future exhibits.

Peggy brought in the article in the Ledger-Transcript about our upcoming guest photographer Linda Greenwood recently named as featured artist by Light, Space & Time Online Art Gallery.

Mose said that Linda is doing almost all the work in putting this exhibit together. She bought 3 more frames to increase the size of the exhibit. The Commission moved to approve reimbursing her for the frames. Mose will get press out in the next few days.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:15