

East Haddam Historic District Commission
P O Box K East Haddam, CT 06423

MINUTES: Meeting of May 15, 2007

PRESENT: Will Brady, Christian Miller, David Nelson, Karl Stofko, Steve Rossi
Brian Keereweer, Carl and Jane Vigiani, Sara Rahn, Debra Brickey, Robert Babicz
Dan McMahon [Goodspeed Marketing Director], Hattie Kittner [Goodspeed Gen Mgr]

ABSENT: Steve Shaw

After attendance, Chairman Brady asked Dr. Stofko, alternate, to serve in Mr. Shaw's absence. Dr. Stofko agreed.

Public Hearing: C-03-07 - Driveway re-surfacing, 66 Main Street, District # 1
Property Owner Janet Kelly
Brian Keereweer Contractor representing Ms. Kelly

Mr. Keereweer presented a letter from property owner Janet Kelly authorizing that Mr. Keereweer serve in her stead as her representative on this project and application.

Discussion of project with Mr. Keereweer presenting sample of brick pavers that shall be used when resurfacing driveway to 65 Main Street. Neighbors, including Mr. and Mrs. Vigiani, Ms. Rahn, Ms. Brickey presented verbal approval of project. Letters from neighbors Kate Swift and Mr. and Mrs. Chris Walsh, also supporting the project, were read into the record.

A motion was made by David Nelson and seconded by Steve Rossi to approve the project as presented. The motion passed unanimously. Certificate of Appropriateness shall be awarded pending signature from East Haddam Tax collector.

Informal discussion: C-04-07 Deck Addition, 65 Main Street, District # 1
Property owner: Sara Rahn, Debra Brickey
Also Present: Contractor Robert Babicz

Ms. Rahn and Mr. Babicz discussed the proposed dimensions of the deck, which would be approximately 12' x 18' and would be constructed on the western side of the house, at a level approximately 1 foot below the grade of the street level floor.

Mr. Babicz described that the deck would be built from pressure treated wood. The deck rail would be constructed to match the rail currently on the porch of the house. The deck and rails would be painted to match the colors of the house.

Letters of approval were presented from Kate Swift, Christopher Walsh, Mr. and Mrs. Johnston. Mr. and Mrs. Vigiani, who live across the street from the Rahn household, expressed approval and support of the project.

A vote on the project application was scheduled to May 29, 2007 at River House at 7:30 due to circumstances beyond our control. While all adjacent property owners were notified of this proposal, and some arrived to express support for the project, the legal notice was not published in time. The property owners were notified of this prior to the meeting, with apologies extended.

Motion to table further discussion until formal hearing was made by David Nelson, seconded by Steve Rossi. Motion passed unanimously. The May 29th meeting shall be held at the River House at 7:30 as a special public hearing.

Goodspeed Opera Foundation: A proposal to build new actor's housing units for the Goodspeed Opera Foundation was discussed. Patrick Pinnell, principal planner for this project was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. Dan McMahon and Hattie Kittner provided background information about the need for the housing. Ms. Kittner indicated that Goodspeed wants "...to work with the town and the process of looking at the big picture. "

Some preliminary conceptual drawings as to what the housing might look like. The housing would be constructed off of Route 82 and off Hem Street.

Actors' Union regulations require that actors live within ½ mile from the Opera house. The organization is also looking to increase available actor bed space from approx 80 to 110 housing spaces. Goodspeed representatives noted that the actors for both Opera House and Chester theatres live primarily in East Haddam. The properties currently used for housing are old and the Foundation acknowledges this is not the best use of the properties for either the town or the Opera Foundation.

Housing design for new structures is based on Hattiesburg cottages ["shotgun houses"] currently being built in New Orleans. Mr. Nelson made note of "bachelor housing" typical of mill town development.

Questions were raised about parking for actors housing. There was mention of some parallel parking that could be available in back of the housing, but also an acknowledgement that most of the actors do not drive when they are in East Haddam.

Some questions were raised about flooding, since the proposed sites include land adjacent to Succor Brook.

Separate but related was a brief discussion about possible alterations of Route 82 between the Gelston House and the Town Offices. The idea proposed by Mr. Pinnell would serve to slow down traffic coming off the bridge and have a "traffic calming" effect. All recognized that such changes would require state approval from the Department of Transportation [DOT].

Goodspeed sees the project evolving as a phased approach of development. Some new housing would be constructed, the old "tech house" [a non-descript structure built in or around the 1960s] would be torn down and additional housing constructed. As new housing is completed, properties close to the Opera House [and in the business section of the village] would be freed up for sale to the market and/or rented to retailers, as office space or for other businesses that "fit" within the district. Another phase would be to move offices from the Opera House to under-utilized buildings on Route 82 near Ray Hill Road.

Opera House Foundation staff looked forward to coming back to meet with the Commission as the project plans develop but hope to do this sooner rather than later.

Other business:

Signage: Chris Miller reported that signs for the first district have been completed and are to be delivered Town's Public Works Department for completion and eventual installation. The sign maker has begun the second group of signs, for the Millington Green district.

Still Pending:

- Acquiring sign posts [4x4] and getting them to Public Works

- Installing Historic Register plaques on each of the signs. It was agreed that each sign have a plaque on only one side. These must be purchased from the History Division of the Connecticut Commission on Commerce and Tourism [CCCT]
- Approval from the Department of Transportation to place the signs along state roads. Fred [Public Works] will work with DOT

New plaques are now \$35.00 each. After some discussion Mr. Nelson made a motion to purchase all the plaques needed for the entire project [13 plaques] before the costs goes up again. The motion was seconded by Dr. Stofko. Passed unanimously. Mr. Nelson agreed to speak directly with staff from CCCT about ordering these before the end of the fiscal year.

It was agreed to pay bills submitted to the Commission for new signs for District # 1, and to reimburse Ms. Miller for expenses incurred related to that project.

Capital Projects:

Signage: costs estimated for fiscal year 2007: 692.50 - East Haddam District; 692.50 – Millington Green District; 455.00 - plaques

Photo project: Dr. Stofko provided a CD of photos from all districts except District # 1. This project is going slower than the Commission had hoped but continuance of the project had been approved in the budget submitted to the town for next year.

Hayden House: Signage is still temporary, a new window has been put into the storefront, and part of the building was painted. At least one town resident has called asking for the Commission’s thoughts on these changes.

Ms. Miller reported speaking with the owner of the building who indicated he wants to come before the Commission to discuss signage, changes made and to present to the Commission informally at the next meeting. Chairman Brady agreed to speak with the owner before the next meeting.

William’s Chevrolet: Martin Witowski plans on having a classic car dealership, it’s a 3 year lease. Approval is still needed from state agencies and the owner is aware that any changes to signage, lighting, exterior structure require an application before the commission. Chairman Brady agreed to speak with the owner before the next meeting.

National Register Website: Mr. Nelson provided commission members with National Register list for all designated historic properties in East Haddam.

Project extension: A request was made by Mr. Brady to extend approval for one more year for an addition proposed at 4 Landing Hill Road project. Dr. Stofko made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Nelson. Passed unanimously.

A Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Nelson, seconded by Dr. Stofko.