

**TOWN OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Calhoun-Ives, Sunny Ridge and Washington Green Historic Districts**

Minutes – April 15, 2019 – Regular Meeting

Members Present: Tom Hollinger, Susan Averill
Members Absent: Jane Boyer, Phyllis, Mills, Sally Woodroofe
Alternates Present: Bill Fairbairn, Dimitri Rimsky, Louise Van Tartwijk
Clerk: Joan DeLuca

Mr. Hollinger called the regular meeting to order at 7:04 p.m., and seated Mr. Rimsky for Ms. Boyer, Ms. Van Tartwijk for Ms. Mills, and Mr. Fairbairn for Ms. Woodroofe.

Consideration of Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes from the March 18, 2019, 2019 and made no corrections.

A motion to accept the minutes as written for the March 18, 2019 meeting of the Washington Historic District Commission was called by Mr. Fairbairn, seconded by Mr. Rimsky and passed 5-0.

Unfinished Business

Delay of Demolition Ordinance – Mr. Fairbairn reported that he and Mr. Hollinger met with two of the town’s selectmen to discuss a delay of demolition ordinance in Washington. They provided examples of 3 from the 55 current examples of such ordinances in Connecticut, and discussed the pros and cons of creating such an ordinance in Washington. The three examples offered were chosen because they provided a wide range of possibilities to consider (e.g. time frames, the application process, square footage, length of the waiting period).

The selectmen seemed amenable to the idea, but suggested that there be an initial informational meeting to help residents understand the benefits of such an ordinance, as well as to clarify that the goal is not to prohibit homeowners from proceeding with necessary work, but to slow the process down a bit to allow the town to determine whether the structure at hand could be preserved.

Commissioners then briefly discussed the 2000 Historic & Architectural Resource Survey by Cunningham Preservation Associates, wherein approximately 150 structures in Washington were

identified as having significant historical or architectural significance. These are the primary structures of concern, and such an ordinance might discourage their loss.

Mr. Fairbairn intends to draft language for the proposed ordinance, and will submit something to the Board of Selectmen for its review and suggestions. Once everything is finalized and formalized, the matter will possibly be voted on at a town meeting.

Conservation Commission Meeting re: New Preston – Mr. Hollinger attended the April 3, 2019 meeting of the Washington Conservation Commission. He made a brief presentation regarding the concerns of the Historic District Commission regarding New Preston. He hoped that the Conservation Commission might have some insight regarding the willingness of merchants in that area to join the preservation cause, or the possibility of the two land use commissions aligning intentions to preserve the appeal and draw of the area.

Mr. Hollinger explained to conservation members that it is within the jurisdiction of the zoning commission to create what is known as a village district. The distinction is a bit more restrictive than historic districts, but has proven to be successful in other Connecticut towns (viz., Ridgefield, Woodbridge and Essex), and he wanted that commission to be aware of its benefits.

Mr. Hollinger further explained to the conservation commission members that these concerns were prompted by the sale of the Pavilion, as well as the recent worry that some old ice houses in the area might soon be lost. As the process to become a historic district requires residents to request a study on the matter, and since this can take quite some time, the idea of a village district appears to be a sensible way to protect the lure and beauty of the commercial area.

Members again discussed the difference between the two district distinctions, and Mr. Rimsky suggested creating some type of simple comparison chart of what it means to be a village district versus a historic district. He thought it might help area merchants determine what they are (or are not) in favor of, which might help either process along in the future.

Ms. Van Tartwijk questioned the energy being expended, especially since merchants and residents in the area are not sounding any alarms. Members then discussed the Judea Cemetery area again, as those residents have expressed a willingness to pursue protecting that area. All commission members heartily supported the idea of being able to conduct a study of the area, and hope that the town is approached with such a request.

Mr. Hollinger closed the subject by reminding members that both of these commissions serve in an advisory capacity to the Washington Land Use Department, and that preserving worthwhile structures in town should be of concern to both Historic District and Conservation. Mr. Hollinger plans to meet with the chair of the Conservation Commission to have a more informal discussion about how the two commissions might work together going forward.

New Business

Request for Extension at 18 Sunny Ridge – A formal request for another extension of the Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a pool house at 18 Sunny Ridge was recently received. The request clarified that the owners are prepared to proceed according to the “same plans previously approved by the historic commission.” With that understanding, commissioners voiced no objections.

A motion was called by Mr. Fairbairn to extend the Certificate of Appropriateness to Simon Kneen and Paolo Secchia for the construction of a pool house at 18 Sunny Ridge, with the stipulation that the plans are the same as those previously approved by the historic district commission in the original application, entitled The Barn Yard Design SK-1 and SK-2 dated 11/23/16, and the plan entitled Pool House Interior. This extension shall expire on April 15, 2020. Seconded by Mr. Rimsky, and approved 5-0.

Correspondence to 8 Parsonage Lane and 97 Calhoun Road – Two violations were made known to the historic district commission recently. Mr. Hollinger was notified that a new metal roof was installed at 8 Parsonage Lane in the Washington Green District, and a basketball court has been installed at 97 Calhoun Road in the Calhoun-Ives District. Neither installation was granted a Certificate of Appropriateness, as no applications were submitted.

Mr. Hollinger told members that both properties were visited by the town’s zoning enforcement officer, with an accompanying letters sent to each resident, advising them of the violation. A letter was also sent by Mr. Hollinger on behalf of the historic district commission. In each letter, residents were advised to submit applications at their earliest convenience, adding that an application did not guarantee approval. As of the start of the meeting, one application was received. Members were asked to review the application for completeness, so a public hearing can take place at the May meeting.

There was a consensus among commissioners that this is not a trend they would like to see continue. There was concern that prospective buyers are not being made aware of the regulations and procedures associated with having a home within a historic district, though Mr. Fairbairn pointed out that this is clearly stated on each warranty deed. Mr. Rimsky suggested that a letter be sent to residents within each district, apprising them of the expectations and procedures that need to happen before outside work commences, but Mr. Hollinger reminded members that such a letter was sent to everyone last year.

To avoid future violations, members discussed possible options. All agreed that a simple option might be adding a line item to the various land use applications, asking whether the property lies within a historic district. This should alleviate confusion, because homeowners will be reminded of their responsibility to determine whether this is or is not the case, while town officials will also follow up with the historic district commission before approving any permits. Mr. Hollinger intends to meet with the land use administrator to discuss adding such an item to current applications.

Other Business

A motion was made by Mr. Hollinger to discuss business not on the agenda. Seconded by Ms. Van Tartwijk and approved 5-0.

Mr. Hollinger informed commissioners that the current clerk's last day would be in two days, and that a replacement has not yet been hired. Members offered words of encouragement and thanks to Ms. DeLuca, praising her excellent work and exceptional composition skills. Ms. DeLuca gratefully replied that the historic district commission was a pleasure to support, that she would miss working with them, and very much appreciated the well wishes.

A motion was made by Mr. Fairbairn to formally acknowledge the exceptional work performed by Ms. DeLuca as the Historic District Commission Clerk. Though sad to see her move on, the Commission wishes her all good things in her future endeavors. Seconded by Mr. Hollinger and unanimously approved.

Mr. Hollinger then asked if there were any other matters that required discussion, and Mr. Fairbairn asked whether there was a need for an update on the Washington Club's application for a paddle tennis court. Mr. Hollinger recapped what had happened prior to the last HDC meeting, but confirmed that he had no other news to report.

With all matters concluded, a motion was made by Mr. Hollinger to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Averill and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan DeLuca

Joan DeLuca, Historic District Commission Clerk
April 16, 2019