

# July 7, 2008

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. Chute, Ms. Gilchrist, Mr. Kerr, Mr. Smith, Mr. Talbot

**ALTERNATES PRESENT:** Mrs. Mills

**ALTERNATES ABSENT:** Mrs. Boyer

**STAFF PRESENT:** Mrs. Shade

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mr. Boling, Mr. Markert, Mrs. Canning

## **SPECIAL MEETING**

Ms. Gilchrist opened the Special Meeting at 7:35PM and seated the members. She welcomed Mr. Boling and Mr. Markert and thanked them for coming to give their ideas to the Commission about how to strengthen their ability to control what goes on in the Historic Districts and also to coordinate with other Town Land Use Commissions.

The members showed Mr. Markert and Mr. Boling copies of their Rules and Regulations, the Guidelines, which describe each of the three districts and contain advice regarding scale, massing, architectural design, building sites, etc. In addition, the members showed them the actual application which is handed out together with that portion of the Rules and Regulations explaining what is required to receive a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Mr. Markert brought handbooks from a few other towns describing their historic districts and left them for the members to read. He especially liked the one from Old Lyme because not only was there reference to Planning and Zoning but also to the citizens of the town and how they want their guidelines enforced. They are using every resource they can find to reinforce their jurisdiction over the historic districts.

Mr. Markert said he found some information on the Washington website, but there was no cross reference between Planning, Zoning and HDC. He asked the members if they ever get referrals from other commissions. Mr. Talbot noted that typically applicants will come to HDC before going to ZBA, but if they do apply to ZBA first, they are told not to proceed until they have HDC approval. He added that the Building Official is aware that work in historic districts requires approval before he can issue a permit. Mr. Smith agreed that cooperation is important and coherence among the different sets of regulations would be a good thing and would strengthen the commissions with one another.

Mr. Boling commented on a specific idea he had for the Calhoun-Ives District: If someone wants a large 10,000sqft house, perhaps they could construct two smaller buildings connected by a breezeway. In addition, if they require a lot of room for entertaining, perhaps they could be encouraged to build a structure that has the outside appearance of a barn. That would look much more appropriate in the rural farming district. Ms. Gilchrist said the Commission would need to consider what all of those separate smaller buildings would mean aesthetically. Mr. Smith commented that over the years the issue of needs or “programs” has been important. Mr. Chute recalled that when some of the members went to a meeting in Redding, the most common question asked by other historic district commissioners was – can square footage be limited. The answer was, no. Mr. Talbot stated he would like to see the height of buildings in the historic districts limited to 30ft. The 30ft limit was on the books for years, but was changed by Zoning.

The members discussed their interest in pursuing new zoning for the three districts; which would impose

new standards for height, square footage, etc. Both Sunny Ridge and Calhoun Ives are considered rural. Ms. Gilchrist noted there were few historic districts in Connecticut, like Washington, that have so much open space relative to development. Whatever is built here is so easily seen and HDC has no jurisdiction over siting. Mr. Boling commented that is where Zoning comes in and Planning is also sympathetic with this. He suggested HDC develop some standards and present them to Planning, Conservation and Zoning.

Mr. Talbot said he has tried to encourage people to restore their old barns. It is the role of HDC to protect and he would like to have the old barns accurately measured and documented for the record. Mrs. Canning offered to contribute to this project. It was noted that Wethersfield has a blight ordinance to go after properties that are being allowed to run down.

Mr. Markert said educating buyers is important. He encouraged the Commission to read all the publications he brought from other towns as a way to present issues to prospective applicants and said he would be happy to work with the Commission. He said some of the other towns take a rigorous approach. Mr. Kerr observed, those towns also have better newspaper coverage which helps in getting the word out. The members also discussed the importance of getting cooperation from the realtors in town.

Ms. Gilchrist said she thought this meeting was a great start and thanked Mr. Markert and Mr. Boling for sharing their information.

Ms. Gilchrist adjourned the meeting at 9:35PM.

**FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL**

Respectfully submitted,  
Martha T. Shade, Clerk