

**MINUTES of the December 20, 2022 MEETING of the Commission
(via Zoom)**

Adopted: January 17, 2023

Members Present: The meeting began at approximately 7:30 p.m. Bob Booher, David Stopak, Mimi Styles, Marilynn Frey (alternate) and Wendy Harris were present. Jeff McCrehan was absent. Rob Gilmore, recently appointed to the Town Council following Darrell Anderson’s resignation from the Council, participated as the TC liaison.

Approval of Agenda

There were no changes to the proposed agenda, and it was unanimously approved.

Adoption of Minutes

Minutes of the October 18 meeting were unanimously approved, without changes. There was one change to the Minutes of the November 15 meeting, and they were unanimously approved.

Review of Projects - 404 4th Avenue –Van Nostrand/Ambrose Request to Purchase Two Parcels of Property.

The Planning Commission’s December 7 letter to the Mayor and Town Council was discussed. It was the PC’s opinion that the 1988 ordinance authorizing sale of the strip of land adjacent to Acorn Lane was not an agreement attached to the property but rather it was an agreement specifically with Judy Banachowski (the home’s previous owner). The PC recommended that sale of both areas (Acorn Lane and Fourth Avenue) be governed by Article XVII (limited to encroachments on Town property) and the PC emphasized that homeowners would be required to provide a boundary survey detailing the encroachments.

Bob had attended both recent TC and the PC meetings where 404 4th Avenue was reviewed, and he summarized the homeowners’ arguments why the Acorn Lane strip should be sold to them. As of the December meeting, the TC had made no final decision.

Rob Gilmore said he recommended that the Mayor seek the opinion of the Town attorney regarding the Acorn Lane strip. The homeowners can initiate their request to purchase the land under their Fourth Avenue encroachments pursuant to Article XVII while they await final decision on the Acorn Lane land sale.

HPC’s recent photographs of the property were reviewed, and Bob related information gleaned from Phil Edwards’ book about how these “connected cottages” (and others) were affected by Acorn Lane roadwork. Bob will put together a list of the home’s features and will get back with Pat Patula, who agreed to research the archives for any relevant information about 404 4th Avenue.

150th Year Celebration

Bob will be a co-chair of the ad hoc committee that Mayor Compton wants to establish. Marilyn has also volunteered to be on the committee. Gail Littlefield has already volunteered to be the Town's contact person for the Railroad's 150th anniversary celebration, so it will be valuable to have her involved as well. The anniversary celebration can be an opportunity to work with RASEC to acknowledge the Town's racial history. Indeed, Wendy related that the "Jim Crow" aspect of the Railroad's history is a significant part of Gail's research undertaking. Wendy reminded of her own archive research about blackface minstrelsy and the erection of a fence around town. Bob will speak with John Compton to see how he wishes to handle the racial component.

RASEC Resolution

The RASEC resolution and footnotes were reviewed. Wendy reminded that while the footnotes contained excellent information, as a practical matter, often footnotes either are not read or they are merely skimmed. She spoke to the advisability of educating townsfolk more directly about the town's "racially exclusionary past" in order to gain fuller acceptance of the resolution. She recommended that supporting documents be attached to the resolution, including a brief narrative of the Town's racial history, which RASEC should be able to easily prepare. Providing a larger context about how Jim Crow affected the county and the entire nation would be beneficial. Slowing the pace to include education may yield a better outcome of acceptance.

David Stopak introduced a motion, unanimously adopted, that HPC's comments in support of the RASEC draft resolution along with a suggestion of a greater emphasis on education, be sent to Dick Cavicchi and John Compton.

Preservation/Demolition Ordinance

Bob reported on work that the Planning Commission has undertaken at their work sessions/second meetings of the month. Most recently they have reviewed setbacks in the RR2 zone. The PC already had information based on their previous work cataloging non-compliance issues of properties in Town (their "house files"). However, PC had not taken into consideration the correct interpretation of the ordinance which stipulates that if an existing structure is out of compliance with required setback, the setback for that particular structure will be considered to be the built site. PC will update their non-compliance list to accurately reflect the correct interpretation of the ordinance.

Other topics of interest to PC:

- Limiting the shape and the footprint of houses. (The PC may be trying to develop a numerical solution, and HPC will want to participate in the discussion)
- Disincentives for demolishing houses
- Demolition by neglect (PC is looking at the Washington, DC ordinance)
- Improving definitions, e.g., what is a "half story"
- Coordinating with BZA about relaxing variance conditions in certain circumstances.
- The issue of combining lots in order to build a large house.

Bob and David will make a summary of HPC concerns and interests and send it to the PC.

Corrections to Architectural Survey

HPC reviewed the draft that David had prepared and distributed before the meeting. David will distribute a draft of the entire document to all eleven homeowners for their concurrence or further comments.

Wendy clarified that the Architectural Survey was compiled by Robinson & Associates as they prepared the National Register Nomination form, but the Survey itself does not form a part of the Nomination. The only house with homeowner comments/corrections that is specifically called out in the Nomination seems to be 315 Grove Avenue, and the point of correction (vinyl siding) is not mentioned in the actual Nomination document.

Bulletin Material

The series of articles based on excerpts from Robinson & Associates' Historic Context Report continues. January's article tells of practical complications during the Camp Meeting Association era ("leaseholders without stock, Stockholders without lots, and lots without leases") and the subsequent order afforded by the Lang and Maddox plans. Links to the full Historic Context Report will be included for those who wish to read more, and readers will be directed to Figure 8 to see the Lang Plan and Figure 12 for the Maddox Plan.

Planning Commission Meeting

Bob attended the December PC meeting. The PC approved and sent along comments to the Town Council on the Public Ways Permit for the EV chargers. The 404 4th Avenue request to purchase land was reviewed (as covered above). The PC considers the sale of the Higdon/Kershaw property to be a "triggering event" for the apartment above the 3-car garage. This is part of a larger conversation about how rentals should be handled in Town, whether they should be licensed, etc. 201 Washington Grove Lane is also on the market, and there have been issues with the number of people living in the home, of particular concern since there is inadequate egress for basement bedrooms.

TC Meeting Report

Bob reported on Rob Gilmore's appointment to the Town Council, and liaison the HPC, planning for the 150th Anniversary celebration and approval of corrections to the WG Welcome Signs.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45 pm.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 17, at 7:30 pm via Zoom.