

**MINUTES of the October 15, 2024, MEETING of the Commission
(via Zoom)**

Adopted 11/19/2024

Members Present: The meeting began at approximately 7:35 pm. Bob Booher, Bill Earl, Wendy Harris, David Stopak, and Samantha Suzich (alternate) were present. Barbara Raimondo (TC liaison) and Georgette Cole (Planning Commission chair) were present.

Approval of Agenda

The proposed agenda was unanimously approved.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the September meeting were reviewed and unanimously approved.

Review Session – 103 Brown Street

HPC received separate Driveway permit and Public Ways and Property permit applications for work at 103 Brown Street. Bill Earl, the applicant, explained the intent of the proposals was to use parking grids over grass to provide a green and water-absorbent surface which can be driven on without turning the grass to mud in wet weather. The driveway permit covers only doing the grass and grid surface in place of the existing gravel driveway where it crosses the Chestnut Road verge. The public ways permit covers installing the grass and grid surface along about 100 feet of Chestnut Road and 150 feet of Brown Street, where there have been problems with vehicles damaging the grass surface.

Georgette Cole said she felt that the public ways permit might best be reviewed by the mayor and possibly the Town Council, since the particular surface treatment has not previously been used in town.

There was some discussion of at least one previous application for a different surface treatment on a small part of an avenue.

Bob Booher suggested a condition that the grid be removed by the applicant if it fails in use, which was agreed. The HPC agreed to recommend the permits be granted, subject to that condition.

Signs to Commemorate Lost Buildings

There was a discussion of the possibility of posting signs where historic buildings, now lost, were located. Wendy Harris provided a photograph of an example. Wendy will ask Samantha Suzich to help in assembling a proposal and getting quotes for such signs.

Steatite Quarry

The site is recorded on a list of state historic sites. Wendy Harris reported that Caleb Fassett a NASA geologist had inspected the site, and felt the features were just natural forms, formed via erosion and water action, not a quarry, although they might have been exploited by Native Americans. Wendy will obtain a second opinion some of Caleb Fassett's colleagues.

Design Guideline Update

The sub-group met on September 24th in the Hall. The sub-group reviewed documents which Bob and Mimi had collected, as well as some of the historic survey documentation, and a previous design guideline document which Bob had written some years ago. The latter with updates might become the new design guideline document. One next step will be to consider how to provide guidelines for more of the design styles found in the town.

Corrections to Architectural Survey

David reported that Christine is working on pending corrections, but is progressing slowly. Bill discussed options for the house history and architectural survey area of the town website with Christine. Christine observed that traffic was low, and doing occasional manual corrections was not a large task, so we agreed to maintain the current arrangements.

Discussion of potential new subdivision at 330 Ridge Road

The property has been sold to a new owner, who would like to subdivide. Bob observed that the property is part of the historic district, and the one-story houses nearby are contributing structures. Georgette said she advised the owner that both houses (front house and second house on the flag lot) would need to face Ridge Road. Bill asked how the front of a flag lot is defined, and Georgette said it was defined as the road address (Ridge Road in this case). Bill asked why the front of the flag lot could be considered to be the access road, as in some of the other flag lots. Georgette said that houses on the flag lots which were the result of subdividing a lot in two, whereas the flag lot houses on the property which was divided into four parcels face their access road. Georgette said that currently there is no active subdivision proposal; the owner was asking for options. She also reported she had advised the owner that a forest preservation area would require a professional forest stand evaluation. There was discussion of ways it might be possible to avoid having the garage facing the street, which Bob, David, and Bill would prefer.

Bob will write an email to the owner giving some idea of how the guidelines would apply, and invite him to join an HPC meeting for a discussion.

Meadow Restoration Plan

The HPC was invited to provide comments on the plan. In reviewing Robinson Associates report on the viewsheds for the historic district. David observed that the trees were much smaller at that time, and Wendy agreed that it really looked like a meadow. She noted that report considered the meadow a contributing resource for the historic district. While the county does mow the meadow, they have not mowed the cedars. David related some of the history of how the meadow came to be preserved as such, on the basis of historic preservation. He observed that failing to preserve the meadow as a historic resource might well undermine our continuing ability to preserve other historic features. David also observed that an open field of native wildflowers provides support for a greater variety of insects, birds, and small mammals, as distinguished from a forest.

Planning Commission Meeting Report

Bill attended the September meeting. There was discussion of the meadow. There was discussion of Bill's parking grids proposal, which was referred to the HPC. There was discussion of the commercial corner, where progress is being made, but HPC input is not yet required.

Town Council Meeting Report

There was parliamentary procedure training recently. MC DOT sent a 30% plan for the shared use pathway, but they are still working on details with other entities and on getting permits. On storm water management, the town will be working with SMI on determining the order of projects. Bob asked if there were considerations of archeological resources being affected by the excavation. The projects do not affect the West Woods, but that area will be the subject of future work.

Bob asked about the "Grove Gatherings" book; the TC decided not to pursue it, as the town does not publish books. Also, someone asked the TC whether some of the RASEC documents could be removed; the TC declined, as it is our policy to maintain all documents on the website as a record.

Planning Commission Meeting

The agreed schedule of PC meeting coverage is as follows:

November – David
December – Mimi
January – Sam
February - Bob

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 pm. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 21, at 7:30 pm via Zoom.