

Draft Minutes

TOWN OF GUILFORD
Historic District Commission
Minutes – 18th March, 2015

A regular meeting of the Historic District Commission was held on Wednesday 18th March, 2015 at 7:00p.m. in the Town Hall with Chairman John Cunningham presiding.

Present: Teresa Buchanan, John Cunningham and William Thompson. Excused: Randall McCartney and Reno Migani. Absent: Alternate Michael Sulzbach.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05p.m.

Delay of Demolition Ordinance – Discussion with Guilford Preservation Alliance: Shirley Girioni stated that she was president of the Guilford Preservation Alliance. She said an issue had been brought to the attention of the GPA concerning the house at 1 State Street. The interior of the house had been gutted with items being thrown in a dumpster and people had been removing some of these items from the dumpster. Mrs. Girioni said she had talked to the architect on this project who had said that was what the new owners had wanted to do. She mentioned that the GPA had written to Nantucket who had similar problems. Nantucket's response had been that the only protection instrument was to have an easement on the interior of a house. The GPA holds such an easement on the Kingsnorth-Starr house at 138 State Street and there is a similar easement held by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation on the Jonathan Starr house at 133 State Street. Mrs. Girioni said she was well aware of the onus this put on the property owners and the difficulties of selling such a protected house to a like-minded person. She asked if the Historic District Commission had any solutions to this problem. Mrs. Girioni added that she had spoken to the architect who renovated the house at 34 Broad Street and was told that as much as possible had been saved. Mr. Thompson pointed out that there could be several issues with regard to the building and energy codes. When renovating a house these codes have to be met and, in particular, the energy code was very strict. While an owner may wish to retain something this might not be possible under the existing codes. Mr. Thompson added that only the exterior of a house was within the Commission's purview. He also questioned how much one could ask an applicant to retain while doing renovation work. Mr. Cunningham said the Commission could only rule on what could be seen from the public street or way, and that it would review exterior changes thoroughly. Mrs. Girioni said the architect from 1 State Street had pointed out that houses from the 1800's had already been changed along the way as money became available to those owners. Ms. Buchanan pointed out that there may have been concern about the house at 1 State Street because it was very exposed so one could see what was going on. Usually renovations were not so visible and so one was not aware of what was happening inside a house.

Steve Van Der Maelen (709 County Road) and his son attended the meeting briefly as part of a Boy Scout project. Mr. Van Der Maelen agreed with Mr. Thompson that energy compliance was huge. Ms. Buchanan said everything had to be balanced in order to keep a vibrant, living community. Mrs. Girioni stated that the GPA had a list of 450 historic structures and that it had received a grant to add 230 more and 8 cemeteries, all of which would be documented. To assist Mr. Van Der Maelen's son, Mr. Cunningham briefly explained how the Historic District Commission worked.

COA#582-13 – Informational tourism kiosk at 32 Church Street: Mrs. Girioni made a verbal request to extend this Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Thompson made a motion to extend this Certificate for 18 months. Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously. This Certificate will now expire on 17th March, 2016.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Cunningham made a motion to accept the Minutes of 18th February, 2015. Ms. Buchanan seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Public Forum: An application was received today to demolish a building at 66 High Street. This application will be heard at a public hearing on 4/15/15. Following brief discussion Mr. Thompson made a motion to write a letter to the Building Department stating that if this building was found to be an imminent hazard to public health and safety by the town authorities having jurisdiction over it then the Historic District Commission would not oppose its immediate demolition. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Certified Local Government Issues: There were no CLG issues to be discussed.

Correspondence: Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation's newsletter "The Preservation News" for January/February 2015; monthly budget report through 1/31/15.

Public Relations: No report.

Commission Openings: No report.

Approval of Bills: Ms. Buchanan made a motion to approve the following bills: Shore Publishing, legal notices for 2/9 (\$26) & 2/18/15 (\$44.52) totaling \$70.52; Katharine Stewart, secretarial services. Mr. Thompson seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Other Business: 1) Town Center South Overlay Zone District: The Commission briefly discussed its concerns about acting as an advisory design review committee on projects which it would later rule on as a legal regulatory authority. Mr. Thompson felt the Commission should act in its regulatory capacity first before acting as an informal design review committee. It was agreed to seek an opinion from the Town Counsel on this matter.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10p.m.

The next meeting of the Historic District Commission will be held on Wednesday 15th April, 2015 at 7:00p.m. in the Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Stewart
Recording Secretary