

DURHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Thursday, April 13, 2023-- 6:00
Durham Town Office

I. Call to Order and Establishment of Quorum - In Attendance: Candace Decsipkes, Emily Alexander, Lois Kilby-Chesley. Guest: Alan Plummer, Codes Officer

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Amendments to Agenda - None

IV. Acceptance of Minutes - Feb 2023 Moved and Seconded. Unanimous

V. Informational Exchange

1. Prior to this meeting Lois met with Jessica Landberg, Town Clerk, to review the membership of the DHDC.

2. Review of our Commission progress.

3. Corrections needed to Commission Membership lists. In the Durham Town Report Candy Decsipkes was left out. Page Atherton was included though she has resigned. Official notification of the resignation was sent to the Town Clerk.

4. There was a table at Town Meeting for the Commission.

5. Alan Plummer asked Lois to attend a meeting of April 18, 2023 with Jerry Douglass, the Town Planner, the Town Codes Officer. No time was given. Lois is to contact the participants with available times on Tuesday in the morning. (This was done by email on 4/14/23)

VI. Continuing Business

Ordinance changes to Article 12 and 5.14 - continuing discussion as time allows. No time was left after other items were covered.

VII. New Business

- 1. Review of Building Permit Application for continuing renovation of the West Durham Methodist Church at the request of Alan Plummer, Codes Officer.** Mr Plummer requested time to speak. Codes Officer, Alan Plummer, shared with the Commissioners some concerns about renewing a renovation permit dated February 10, 2023 for the West Durham Methodist Church. The Church has been in renovation for the past several years. However the present permit has expired. He is urging the DHDC to ask for a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission before moving forward with the permit. This is beyond the process that has been set up and followed in the past in Durham. But Mr Plummer indicated that he felt neither he nor the Commissioners have the expertise to move forward approving the permit. He asked the chair of the DHDC, to request expertise in this matter from the State. Lois agreed to contact the Maine HPC. It is important to note as possible conflict of issue and for transparency, that she also sits on the Board for the Friends of the West

Durham Methodist Church, who are using North East Housewrights (Craig Gilbert), an experienced renovator and on the list of recommended renovators by Maine Preservation in Yarmouth, a private organization, as the general contractor. The permit was submitted with maps, building layout, long-term plan for renovations and those already completed, and photos of the building and sections to be renovated in the next phase. Craig has prepared a proposal for the next phase for renovation of WDMC while following the guidelines from the Department of the Interior for a building on the National Historic Registry. The proposal was reviewed by the Commissioners. (That request was sent by Lois to the Maine HPC at 9 pm on 4/13/23).

The conversation led to continued recognition that all parties should receive training in Historic Properties and the Ordinances that govern Historic Properties in Durham.

Training money was requested and approved as part to the Town Budget, so the next step is to determine a time, place and who will participate.

2. **Begin to develop a plan for the Union Church renovation and use. We received an additional \$10,000 at Town Meeting. Together with the balance of \$21,457 (Jerry D on March 9, 2023) we now have \$31,457 available for the sill renovation. We need to determine the process to present to the Town to gather repair estimates (RFP) so the repairs can be done in 2023.** - The following ideas were discussed:

Getting a copy of the newest overlay map as described by Alan Plummer

Support system for District residents

RFP for sill repair

3. **Review the Durham Historic District Commission By-laws to determine if there are changes/amendments that need to be made (or followed).** -

The Bylaws were reviewed. Motion to accept the Bylaws, Seconded. Unanimous.

4. **Review and vote on the letter to residents within the Durham Historical District.**

The letter was reviewed, questions were answered. Motion to accept the letter, Seconded. Unanimous

We will also try to find a Lot Map to help District residents and include it with the letter.

5. **Calendar planning for 2023 Community Presentations and Education. Refer to the Informational Request to see what the Town has approved for our next 12 mo. for public presentations. DHDC had a restricted fund balance of \$1,330 and the Town allocated and additional \$2,000 in the budget, so we have \$3330.00 for our use.**

We would like to seek interesting presenters for community forums. Ideas are:

History of Durham

Len Fossil on old buildings

Maine Preservation on Union Church and West Durham Methodist Church

Royal River Conservation Trust/Chesley Meadows Preserve

Old Cemeteries in Durham

History of Schools in Durham

Tour of the Town

Tours of Old Homes and Important Buildings

6. **Review Definitions that apply to DHDC in Article 19 to determine that we agree with the definitions, or need to amend them at the 2024 Town Meeting.**

All Commissioners are asked to review the Definitions and be prepared to make changes if necessary at the May meeting.

7. Calendar dates for 2023/24. Second Tuesday of the month would be:

June 8 (already on the 2023 schedule)

July 13

August 10

September 14

October 12

November 9

December 14

January 11, 2024

February 8

March 14

(Town Meeting April 6)

April 11

May 9

June 13

Agreed that Lois will request these dates for meetings.

VIII. Other Business

1. Next regular meeting: Thursday, May 11, 2023. Can we set a date to reschedule? Shall I see if Maine Preservation has availability to meet with us regarding the future of the Union Church? - Agreed that we will look at another date in May. Lois will contact Maine Preservation to find out availability and will set up a date that meets their calendar needs.

2. May is Preservation Month! The National Trust for Historic Preservation says, “This May, our Preservation Month theme of “People Saving Places” will be a national high-five to everyone doing the great work of saving places—in ways big and small—and inspiring others to do the same.”

IX. To Do

1. All Commissioners are asked to review the Definitions and be prepared to make changes if necessary at the May meeting.

2. Lois will:

Contact the Maine Historic Preservation Commission on behalf of DHDC re: West Durham Methodist Church permit for renovation

Contact and find a date to meet with Maine Preservation.

Check on answers to the questions shown below

Request a copy of the newest overlay map

Request a map for inclusion with the letter to the District residents.

Share information with the Select Board

X. Adjournment Moved and Seconded. Unanimous. Adjourned at 7:51 pm

Questions to be asked of Town Officials:

1. Is the Committee to oversee the Union Church that was proposed and passed by the Select Board in 2021 ready to begin work? Will there be a Select Board member appointed to the Committee? Who will be the participants of that Committee?
2. What is the process for an RFP to be sent that will move the work on the sill of the Union Church so that it will be repaired/replaced in Summer 2023?
3. What dates are Town Officials available for training in Historic Resources?
4. At what point in the past (date of the Select Board meeting) was the care and oversight of the Union Church turned over to the DHDC?