

Durham Historic District Commission

Thursday, Oct. 22, 2015

Attendance:

Chair Candy deScipkes

Vice Chair Benjamin Love

Secretary Seth Koenig

Paula Erdmann-Purdy

Call to Order and Establishment of Quorum

Pledge of Allegiance

Acceptance of Minutes

Motion: Seth moves that we accept the minutes for the Sept. 17 and Oct. 1 meetings.

Seconded by Candy

Vote: 4-0

Moving forward with plan for HDC

Candy – In order for Certified Local Government Program (pathway to dissolve, pass on case-by-case applications to state) to apply to us, the town must apply for status with the state and Department of Interior

Candy – only 10 CLG program commissions in the state

Candy – Talked to Chris Closs; willing to come talk to us at Nov. 12 meeting, he just wants to get a sense for what our questions are ahead of time

Candy – Maine Historic Preservation Commission has sample ordinances from other towns on their website; I don't want to throw this body out, but I'm open to dissolving the geographic district and serving more as a preservation group overseeing historic properties statewide

Seth – We could accomplish what we had hoped to accomplish under the CLG; the ordinance still has language to ensure historic properties are protected, so we could dissolve the geographic district and then continue on as an advocacy/preservation group

Paul – Ordinance speaks to federal or state classification; State Historical Commission would be more than happy to work with us to identify historic properties and classifications worth preserving; we have four properties in the town on the National Register of Historic Places

Candy – (five) Both Closs and MHPC representative said the first thing we should do is survey the town

Paul – Robin (MHPC) didn't even know Durham had a HDC; she said Closs will be able to lay out our options

Paul – The ordinance does allow for the town to identify historic properties and that at least the outward aesthetics of those structures would have to be maintained, and have a larger buffer from other buildings; it doesn't go to the depth of our HDC ordinance, but I'm not sure we need to; Closs could tell us more about what the right fit is

Paula – Would we have to hurry to get an ordinance change?

Paul – Things have to be decided by the end of the December; But to what degree do we stay satisfied with the status quo because we can't figure out the best way to move forward; It may be a good idea to repeal the ordinance outright and then formulate a new direction forward

Paula – But would other local ordinance protections be enforced with a worse CEO

Seth – A bad CEO would undermine the HDC even in its current capacity

Seth – We can simultaneously ask the selectmen or town to establish a preservation committee or commission

Paula – How would we ensure the CEO continues to work with the newly formed committee?

Paul – Just make that part of the request

Candy – Do we want Chris Closs to come to our Nov. 12 meeting?

Seth – I think we do.

Ben – Do we want to brainstorm questions for him ahead of time?

Seth – I think we just need to lay out what our goals are (dissolve the district as it includes non-historic structures and then pivot the board toward townwide preservation)

Paul – An adoption or repeal of an ordinance will require a public hearing; the earlier you can get started, the more valuable it's going to be before the town meeting

Ben – Maybe we should put a note out to let people know Chris Closs is coming, just to get input from other boards

Paula – Would we want to highly publicize that? A lot of public conversation could sidetrack our conversation

Paul – But the public doesn't have to have free range to talk; the board wouldn't need to take copious amounts of public comment; maybe a more intimate first meeting with Chris Closs makes sense, though, just so you can get to know each other and figure out a basic pathway forward

Candy – Heard about Maine Community Foundation's Steeple's Project for rural churches; might be worth looking into

Carried forward from our Sept. 17, 2015: Terms for chair, vice chair and secretary

Motion: Paula I make a motion to leave our officers as are.

Ben seconded.

Vote: 4-0

Training

Candy – Do we want to table that until we know better how we'll be proceeding?

Ben – Probably not.

Candy – Do we want to invite anyone to our next meeting with Chris Closs?

Ben – Let's tell the selectmen, in case they want to know

Paul – The work you're doing is dovetailing with the Comprehensive Plan rework

Motion: Ben moves to adjourn

Paula seconded

Vote: 4-0