

From: Carrie Vibert April 10, 2012 10:00:10 AM
Subject: Historic District Commission Minutes 02/02/2012 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_HistComm
Cc:

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 2, 2012
REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

Commission members present were HRH Chairman Ken Feder, Betty Woollacott, Mark Lubetkin and Denise Alfeld. Chairman Feder called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. Also in attendance were Lynn Charest, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Janis Prifti, Commission Clerk, and other interested parties.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Commissioner Lubetkin was appointed to serve as an alternate for Diane Mead.

III. PUBLIC HEARING(s), DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE VOTE

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of January 5, 2012

Commissioner Lubetkin said the December or November minutes contained discussion of the revised Application and a one-year time frame and making it more fluid so Ms. Charest and her team would have the ability to renew without having to come before the HDC. He thought a motion to that effect was made, but it actually was not completed.

Commissioner Alfeld made a motion to approve the January 5, 2012, minutes as written. Commissioner Woollacott seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

V. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Discussion of Addendum page for application for Certificate of Appropriateness

The Commissioners discussed with Ms. Charest developing a one-page sheet to accompany the COA stating intent and purpose for the Historic District, guidelines, and bulleted checklist. Ms. Charest clarified the guidelines follow the Secretary of Interior's standards. The Commissioners discussed oversight of the length of COA renewals. Ms. Charest said she will ask the Administrative Assistant to develop a spreadsheet of approved COA's for the past several years so she can follow up with a letter; if they have not been closed out, she will first bring them to the Board for a recommendation on the next step. She can coordinate with the Building Office also.

Commissioner Lubetkin made a motion to grant the Planning and Zoning Department the ability to renew for one year Certificates of Appropriateness under the direction of the Historic District Commission. Commissioner Woollacott seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.

b. New Money for Old Places: Revenue Sources for Gap Funding seminar

Ms. Charest attended this conference at the CIGNA campus, held by Connecticut Preservation Action, highlighting tax credits for historic buildings and homes. Chairman Feder discussed the preservation of the CIGNA building, its history as a significant architectural and historic landmark, and that it was saved by community pressure. Ms. Charest stated it is a beautiful building and she plans to obtain and provide to the Commission the write-up for its nomination to the National Register. She said they designed the building to be maintenance-free for 50 years with very little paint on the outside and with courtyards throughout the building, so that no desk or office is more than 30 feet from natural light; it is open with a floating effect; the campus effect was a first of its kind and opened in 1953. Chairman Feder said there are also many sculptures and it was designed as a whole new concept in office buildings by a major architect. She said speakers included Chief of Staff for John Larson, John Rossi, who was not positive on historic tax credits continuing, due to budget problems; after being versed on the importance of the building and the benefits of tax credits, they moved people up from Philadelphia to that building and were among Governor Malloy's first five firms creating new jobs and receiving tax benefits.

Ms. Charest learned of a change for historic tax credits in the adoption of new definitions of what "certified historic structure" means; now it includes historic, industrial, commercial, institutional, former municipal, state or federal government property, cultural building, or residential property of more than four units, or mixed residential and nonresidential property. She said it has greatly expanded what can be considered for tax

credits and gave the example of mixed use buildings in Town with retail on the first floor and residential on the second floor.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS AS MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Chairman Feder discussed a workshop he attended with Ms. Charest a few years ago where a study of real estate market analyses of homes across the U.S. was presented and it was concluded that homes in historic districts almost always are worth more - in Connecticut, the study used Canton, Norwich, Milford, and Windsor and found a 2-4% home value premium within an historic district. Ms. Charest provided members with a copy of Connecticut Preservation News for January/February 2012 with a report entitled "Local Historic Districts Protect Property Values." Chairman Feder read from the report that "The study concludes that the difference is the greater level of stability with a regulatory historic district. As the authors point out neighborhood character is an important component of property value, and the reason for having LHDs [Local Historic Districts] is to maintain the character and quality of neighborhoods." The study states, "sophisticated buyers may consciously pay more simply due to having the confidence that the character of the neighborhood they are buying into will not be subject to dramatic, adverse changes because there is a public body that reviews and then approves or denies proposals." He said if other areas of Simsbury are considering creating a historic district, it is important for them to know the positive effect on home value. Chairman Feder stated Lucas looked at the Ensign Bickford homes for historic district consideration; for federal consideration, it is a coherent neighborhood that tells a story in the Town and revolves around working class residents; previous consideration resulted in controversy, but it may be time to reconsider.

Regarding the book, Ms. Charest confirmed the book is available as an online PDF and she will develop the one-page summary; applicants will receive the book, COA form, one-pager summary and the article - Ms. Charest will also look into getting permission to have the article as an online PDF.

Chairman Feder suggested doing an Historic District Newsletter every two months or quarterly as a one-page PDF with Commissioner Woollacott's reminiscences of the Historic District. The Commissioners agreed a newsletter is a good idea and could provide contact phone numbers, emails, and a regular method of communication; the members agreed to provide potential newsletter names at the next meeting. Commissioner Lubetkin suggested some of the budget funding could be used to hire the Simsbury Historic Society to do interviews inexpensively and capture these stories; ideas were discussed for interviewees. Chairman Feder volunteered to put a newsletter template together for the next meeting for Commission review.

The Commissioners agreed to put the Historic District event on the March meeting agenda. Commissioner Alfeld suggested Rosedale as a good location within the Historic District to hold an event and it may be possible to co-sponsor with Simsbury Land Trust for something simple, like a taste of Simsbury.

Ms. Charest stated Liz Banco will attend the March meeting to provide an overview of the cell phone walking tour.

Commissioner Woollacott asked about signs; Ms. Charest stated it is in the budget.

Regarding the SCLG grant, Ms. Charest said it will be presented for signature to the Board of Selectmen next Wednesday and returned. She said there are two methods to put a referral out for qualified historic consultants, one is what they did last time, an RFP; and the other is an RFQ which provides more choice based on qualified consultants - with Mr. Peck's help, she is looking into the RFQ.

Ms. Charest posed the question if a new building permit comes in for a vacant parcel of land in the District, how does the Commission assess new construction. Commissioner Woollacott clarified this has happened before and agreed with Chairman Feder that the procedure is to follow the guidelines. Ms. Charest stated her concern that there are varied styles of buildings in the District. The Commissioners agreed on the importance of applicants coming in and talking to the Commission before breaking ground; an archaeological survey may be required for an undeveloped property. Chairman Feder stated the Commission can provide applicants with guidance on what will move through the process smoothly.

Regarding the porch COA for Douglas Merrifield (?), Ms. Charest stated they have not moved forward and she will follow up with a letter.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lubetkin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. Commissioner Alfeld seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously.
