

From: Lois Laczko September 7, 2010 9:52:20 AM
Subject: Historic District Commission Minutes 03/04/2010 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_HistComm
Cc:

ADOPTED

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING
March 4, 2010

I. CALL TO ORDER

Elizabeth Woollacott, Chairman, called the Historic District Commission to order at 7:33 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. The following members were also present: Evan Woollacott, Marc Lubetkin, Kenneth Feder, and Paul Lanza. Also in attendance were Lynn Charest, Zoning Enforcement Officer and other interested parties.

II. APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Woollacott appointed Mr. Lanza and Mr. Lubetkin to serve in the absence of Mr. Freitas and Ms. Mead.

III. PUBLIC AUDIENCE

Mr. Lubetkin stated that this Commission has the ability to apply for Federal and State grants, which they have done. They would like to document some of the historic character throughout the Town. Their intention is to determine which houses of a significant age have a significant value to the Town and should be recognized as such as being historic. He stated that this will be a five to six year process; they are only able to apply for several grants per year.

Mr. Lubetkin stated that this Commission went through the process and received two grants; the grants were in the amounts of \$30,000 and \$3,000. The second grant is to provide the funds to put this information that has been gathered onto a Google Earth type site. A proposal was put out for professionals to do this work. Mr. Karmazinas was hired and began his inventory several months ago. This project is so the Town can better understand the community that they live in and to preserve the history.

Chairman Woollacott stated that this is also giving the Town a history of Ensign Bickford, which helped create Simsbury.

Dr. Feder stated that he feels it is an honor for these houses to be part of this inventory. This is a recognition within the community. These houses are worthy of celebration as is the story of Simsbury.

Mr. Woollacott stated that this designation will also raise the value of these houses.

Mr. Jasminski stated that he works for EB Realty. He stated his concerns regarding a project in Avon, which started off in the same way as this project in Simsbury has. He stated that a resident in Avon did a survey in her Town. When she sent it to the State, someone filled out a very short form and the houses immediately became part of a National Historic District. He stated that there are many restrictions in a Historic District. He understands in certain areas of Town, there may be cases that the value of the houses will increase. He stated that commercial properties have been targeted for this inventory; when there is commercial and residential in a district, things get confusing.

Mary Donohue from the State Historic Preservation Office of the Commission on Culture and Tourism stated that the National Register of Historic Places is separate from a Local Historic District. The Historic Resource Inventory Program, which is this survey program, has over 130,000 in its inventory. It is an inventory; it is collecting information and data on properties. There is no connection of either a Local Historic District or a Nation Register of Historic Places. She stated that private property owners are not restricted in their use by the National Register of Historic Places.

Mary Donohue stated that there is not an automatic process between the inventory and the National Register. This District designation has to be requested. This process includes draft nominations, a legal notice and individual notification sent to property owners; a public hearing; and then it is sent to Washington. She stated that there is no short form to fill out; it is a long process.

Mr. Jasminski stated that this grant was issued to Simsbury in May. He stated his concern that this inventory has been going on since May although the residents are just finding out about this now. Chairman Woollacott stated that the inventory was not started in May; the properties for consideration were selected in January 2010.

Matt Cook, 3 Maple Court, stated that many private roads are included in this inventory. He stated that the State Statute states that Historic

Districts are in charge of exterior architectural features, such as the exterior of a structure or building as open to view from a public street, way or place. He stated that some of the homes in his neighborhood are on private roads. He questioned if these could be included in a Historic District because of this. Ms. Donohue stated that she cannot speak for Simsbury, although the State Statute does state this. In some communities where private roads are prevalent, these have been considered, in some communities, ineligible for a Local Historic District designation because they are deemed to not be visible from a public roadway.

Dr. Feder stated that when this grant was applied for, the homes on the inventory list were not in their minds. The homes that are on this list are from Mr. Karmazinas working on this project for several months. He stated that there is no hidden agenda. There was money available from this grant and a specific plan has evolved over the last several months.

Mr. Karmazinas stated that this project is not to get these houses on the National Register. This is an information gathering exercise only.

Mr. Lubetkin stated that the Historic District Commission is beyond just approvals. They know that the approvals are important, although they are looking further into the community and how they can partner with other places in the community to provide more value and community understanding and appreciation. He feels that this inventory will be a benefit to the community.

Mary Donohue stated that the National Register process is different than the inventory process. She also discussed the differences between the National and State Registry, the processes for both, and included some advantages and disadvantages for each.

Mary Donohue discussed the Local Historic District. She stated that there is a vote required of the property owners for this designation. The vote must pass by a 66 2/3 vote. Property owners can also request not to be included in this district. A local historic district is driven by the wishes of the property owners.

Mr. Lubetkin suggested having an informational meeting for residents. The residents in attendance stated that they would be very interested in attending an informational meeting in order to get more understanding of this issue. Mary Donohue stated that she would be happy to participate in these meetings also.

Chairman Woollacott stated that there will be an informational letter going out to all of the homeowners in the study.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of February 4, 2010 meeting

Mr. Woollacott made a motion to approve the February 4, 2010 minutes as written. Dr. Feder seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

V. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ELECTION OF OFFICERS

This item was tabled until the next meeting.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Scenic Road Signs

Ms. Charest stated that a quote was received for the three wooden signs. She stated that she has forwarded the invoice to the Finance Department.

Historic Resource Inventory – Draft Letter to Property Owners for Commission Review

The Commission members agreed that this draft letter was acceptable as written.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS AS MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Ms. Charest stated that Ms. Jung has submitted a letter requesting that 59 West Street, 105 West Street, 107 West Street and 12 Bickford Street be removed from the inventory.

Ms. Jung stated that she submitted this request with an attachment of a petition to show this Commission all of the work that has been done by many homeowners on West Street. This came about because the Chamber of Commerce worked diligently on looking at zoning in downtown. There are businesses on West Street that are on R-40 property that have been in business for many years; there are a lot of difficulties with zoning in this area. She stated that it also affects their homes; it is difficult to improve their historic homes in this area because everything they would like to do would need a variance.

Mr. Lubetkin stated that several months ago, it was decided that this Commission should communicate this inventory project with the other historic associations in Town. He stated that he has met with them and discussed partnering with these groups in putting together some kind of historic association in order to understand what everyone is doing and to share resources and to share and extend the understanding of the historical

cultural impact on Simsbury.

Mr. Lubetkin stated that he has also been in contact with Main Street Partnership. He stated that there is some momentum going in order to get all of these groups in Town together to meet. He suggested that they meet in April; each group can give a small presentation. Mr. Lubetkin suggested that this Commission support this type of event in April.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Feder made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Mr. Lanza seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.