

Historical Preservation Committee

Town of Gorham, Maine

Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2014 5:00p.m.

Committee members present: Councilor Bruce Roullard (Chair), Town Manager David Cole, Janice Labrecque, Janet Adams, Noah Miner, Marla Stelk and Dahlia Lynn (new member). Absent: Jane Bell and Councilor Sherrie Benner.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2014 Historical Preservation Committee meeting.

USM Art Gallery Update

Bruce attended a follow up meeting at USM with Dick Campbell in regard to the art gallery. Progress has been made. USM has met several times with Earl Shuttleworth from the Maine Historical Preservation Commission (MHPC). USM has agreed to scratch the vinyl siding and replace it with 3" white pine with a 3" reveal – trim will be stock trim. Front façade will remain as is and they will address rot. They will keep the existing blinds on front. USM claims that it will cost an additional \$40,000 above the original budget to use the white pine (\$86,000 was originally budgeted for vinyl siding). The committee was in agreement that \$86k seems really high for vinyl siding. Bruce will get a breakdown of what that \$86k includes. USM has agreed to reinstall 4 of the original windows – the ones facing the street. Remaining windows will go into storage for future restoration as money permits. They will put custom wooden closed shutters in other windows. USM also wanted to put railings in between the front columns – Earl commented that it is not typical for Greek Revival - USM is willing to renegotiate. There is no contingency set up so if USM goes over budget on one item, money will have to cut somewhere else. They will keep us informed of any other changes. USM also has developed a new policy that any plans for work to be done on other historical buildings on campus will be run by MHPC and Chip Gavin (facilities manager) and they are putting in a policy that their office will also have to be notified by the University of Farmington if any work is to be done there. Renovations to the art gallery are to be completed Nov. 28 and there will be a celebration.

The art gallery and the Academy Building are the only individually named historical buildings on campus. The academy building has major historical significance. There are a few others as well but they are not individually named. Adam Ogden fortunately sounded the alarm in regard to the art gallery and got everyone involved – the Gorham community is pleased the project got halted and that there will be no vinyl siding. The McClellan House is another important historical building at USM.

Dahlia Lynn has joined the Gorham Historical Preservation Committee as a representative for USM. Dahlia works at USM Gorham and lives in Gorham. She was asked by USM to help facilitate a better connection between USM Gorham and the town so she asked Bruce if she could join the committee. Bruce agreed and sponsored her addition as an item at the last town council meeting which was universally approved. Dahlia has sent an email to Bob Bertram to get a list of all buildings on campus that are listed on the historic registry and will share the list with Bruce. There is a historic district on campus called the "Gorham campus historic district."

Historical Preservation "Boot Camp"

Marla informed the committee that she followed up with Deb Andrews, the Historic Preservation Manager for the City of Portland, to thank her for coming to our last meeting. Deb informed her that the

Maine Historic Preservation Commission is holding an all-day training workshop for historic preservation commissioners from throughout the state on Friday, October 17th in Portland. It will be held at City Hall in Portland. Representatives of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions will be presenting on a variety of topics relevant to local historic preservation commissions.

Building Codes

Noah did research on building codes and spoke to Mike Johnson – a technical guy at the state level for historical preservation – and asked him how modern codes apply to historic buildings. He was informed that with the American Disability Act, allowances can be written in to allow exceptions, however, there needs to be some sort of historical recognition at the state or federal level, and then a separate set of rules. With life safety issues, it's a case by case situation. Towns can make exceptions for things like fire ratings, etc. if they have and use equivalency charts. Building codes are worked on case by case, e.g., we can make allowances for stair railings or stair rises. The committee should consult with the town council and fire department. Bruce asked David if the Code Department follows equivalency and/or allowance codes for historic buildings – Dave didn't know but will ask Bob. Bruce talked about the Center of Movement issue – will ask Bob to come to next meeting to discuss. It would be good to find out what leeway we do have. Noah asked Mike what defines historic and was told that the town defines what is and is not historically significant. Dahlia asked if there was a possibility that someone could apply for historical designation if they purchase a house outside of a historic district – could there be some kind of application and verification process? Is that something the town could think about? Otherwise we would have to expand districts. David said he thinks we could identify and could create some kind of requirement if the property is not on the list whereby the owner could go get certified via code officer or fire chief. Fire codes probably say that you have to have a one hour rating – doesn't matter if its sheet rock or horse hair – more importantly, does it meet that rating?

Mission Statement

Our first task is we need to develop a mission statement. Then we need to plan and create forward direction – 1st thing is to compile a master list of all historic buildings in town. Janice said the Historical Society identified any building 50 years or older and took photos about 25 years ago. We have a foundation for historic districts and buildings on the national register to include in our master list. Then once the list is established we need to decide what it is we want to do. Recognized districts at the local level? Individual buildings? Creating our own historic district would be a good starting point – how do we do that? Would that have to go to town council or the ordinance committee? We could start with a master list and then discuss adding new areas. What does it mean to be designated historic? What level of control with the property owner have? Janet suggested that we should start small as advisory committee as suggested by Deb Andrews at our last meeting and she shared Deb's advice about starting out as an advisory committee for tear downs. The committee liked the idea and really want to get people's buy-in.

Janice threw in a monkey wrench – N. Gorham is a town – houses there have been there a long time – definitely a potential historic area. However, all those homes have been renovated – none are what they were even 50 years ago. One thing that aggravates people is all the people they have to go see to get permits – do we have the authority and is it right? Bruce commented that if the owner is willing to come and meet with our committee and is willing to try and do their project as historically correct as possible, then possibly part of the life safety code could go into effect and eliminate the need to do other things. We could advocate on their behalf to ease restrictions to renovate parts of their house. Dave suggested that this kind of discussion might be better in another meeting or two. He commented that if there is a

benefit to be recognized under the codes then there could be a process to voluntarily sign up which could benefit the owner for codes but they must go through the process and ask for advice.

Janice intends to call McCallaugh and use some time at the next meeting of the Historical Society to let them know what is happening here. They have the say whether or not we can see their records and she would like to get their feedback. Dahlia is thinking about growth in Gorham and having that kind of assessment. We could provide prospective buyers with information and the committee could become a resource for new families as they move in and want to buy historic properties. Can we think of opportunities to educate the community about why it matters? Bruce talked about the wooden plaques on houses with the dates that they were built and said the plaques were done by students. Marla mentioned the Founders Festival history tours and suggested that maybe we could do that annually. Noah commented that why it matters is a great topic for the future forum. The committee agreed that the fault line is to not tell people what they have to do. We're here to provide information and advice for people who want to preserve their home's historical significance.

Part of the project needs to be compiling the resources for people to help them follow our advice. Janet commented that providing education upfront will be important. Bruce suggested we start by compiling a list to aggregate all lists. Dahlia volunteered to create an initial excel spreadsheet template to slice and dice the data. The building must be at least 50 years old to get on the National Historical Register but it must also have some other significance - so some homes on the Historical Society's list may not qualify. We can set our own standards for residential and commercial properties as well as monuments and graveyards. We should also consider naming our graveyards. Marla asked if the Assessor's office could do a search by date to create a list to cross-reference with? Dave will ask and find out.

Community Forum

Bruce suggested that we are not ready to have community forum next month – maybe after the 1st of the year. Then we can show them our inventory, mission statement, and a list of resources. Noah will work on developing a draft mission statement - email him your thoughts. Dave commented that the Town Council has created the purpose of the committee so we should be cautious with mission statement. Dave suggested that we go back to Deb and see if they have a mission statement so we don't reinvent the wheel. We have their "purpose" – Bruce read it. Dave suggested that we weave in why it matters and have other people taken a stab at that - Marla offered to find some of those arguments.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 11 at 5pm.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:20p.m.