

Historical Preservation Committee

Town of Gorham, Maine

Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2014 5:00p.m.

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

Bruce Roullard opened the meeting with a welcome to the committee members and a round of introductions. Marla Stelk volunteered to take minutes for the current and future committee meetings. The committee reviewed the official Town Council Order which appointed the current committee members to Gorham's first Historical Preservation Committee.

The committee reviewed documents sent to them ahead of time as well as some new documents. These documents included:

- An information sheet on Historic Districts from the National Trust Resource Center – very useful resource.
- A listing of National Historic Landmarks in Maine from the National Park Service – there are none listed in Gorham.
- MISSING: National Register of Historic Places (National Park Service) information sheets on buildings listed in the Register from Gorham. David Cole will send this document to all committee members tomorrow (June 13). There are currently 4 districts in Gorham and 6 buildings listed.
- NEW: Spreadsheet listing properties in Gorham that have been identified as being potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The committee reviewed the list, commented on properties they were familiar with and identified ones they were not familiar with.
- NEW: A letter from the Maine Historic Preservation Committee dated July 26, 1990 describing some of the potential areas in Gorham for historic districts and buildings that could possibly be individually eligible for listing in the Register.
- NEW: The Portland, Maine Ordinance for Historic Preservation – very lengthy but may be a good resource for the group.

Bruce informed the committee that we will be getting a map of property locations and photos for Gorham listings in the Register. David Cole offered to send out the missing document listed above for buildings in Gorham currently listed in the Register. Janice does not communicate via email so David will mail documents to her in the future.

Bruce facilitated a discussion on what the scope of work should be for the committee. He outlined 3 primary areas for the committee to focus on for now:

1. Should there be more historic districts in Gorham? Should we add additional buildings or districts?
2. How do we preserve what we have now? How far do we go to preserve them?
3. Are the current local building codes and policies too restrictive? If so, how do we make them more functional?

Noah asked about how other towns handle issues such as accessibility to be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Marla requested that the committee look into developing financing options (e.g., low-interest revolving loan account for local historical preservation or tax incentives) for residents and business owners. David commented later in the meeting that in Maine, local government cannot develop tax incentives other than TIF. A discussion ensued about the state of Gorham Village historic properties. Janice has lived in Gorham the longest and was able to describe how the village center has changed.

A discussion developed around what it means to be on the National Historic Register. Bruce commented that we don't really know right now – we need to find out specifics. Are there any restrictions? What are the benefits? Jane commented that she doesn't think being on the Register conveys either. They have recommendations but no real jurisdiction. Jurisdiction and enforcement is only on the state and/or local level. David commented that if a grant is being used for preservation, that the grant might place restrictions on what the property owner can do or a local ordinance may as well. Janice commented that the national level used to have restrictions but that they do not now.

The discussion then turned to identifying what the committee goals should be. Noah asked if there is any way to stay historic and not lose charm when doing updates for building codes. He also suggested identifying more properties in Gorham as a goal. Janet suggested that a goal should be how to manage financial barriers to preservation. Marla asked the committee to consider how to identify "historic" – where do you cut off the date for listing? Janet also suggested that a goal for the committee should be to educate the public and local business owners – they may not know that their home is historic. It will be important to do active outreach to owners of identified properties.

Bruce divided up tasks among the committee members:

- Janet: Do research into the National Historic Register to find out what it means to be on the Register. How do you identify an historic property?
 - Janice: Be the liason with the local Historical Society.
 - Noah: Focus on building codes – what does the state require?
 - Jane: Think about the business perspective. Speak to some of the local business owners about concerns/interests. Noah suggested that Jane speak with Tim O'Neil (owner of the Richardson Place) because he's done a good job balancing historic character with modern building codes.
- Sherrie: Talk to business owners as well – particularly Rob Coppola, owner of the Mason Building, to get his perspective.

- Marla: Talk to Portland Planning Dept. to see if someone who does historic codes/ordinances in the City can advise our committee. Jane will put Marla in touch with someone. Marla will also contact Hilary Bassett at Greater Portland Landmarks and identify someone from the Town of Yarmouth. Marla will find someone to meet with and/or present to the committee's next meeting in July.

Bruce suggested that we should prepare to hold a public meeting by September to discuss the scope and goals of the Historic Preservation Committee in order to be fully accessible and transparent to the Gorham community. He emphasized the importance of full public participation and transparency.

Future meetings will generally be held every 2nd Thursday of the month at 5:00p.m., unless there are scheduling conflicts. Our next two meetings for the Historic Preservation Committee will be held on July 10 and August 14.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30p.m.