

HHC Minutes 6/3/08

June 3, 2008

Members present: D. Coots, J. Feist, R. Minar, R. Saalfield S. Frechette

Members absent: C. Cutler, , J. Martin, R. Sprague

Minutes of the special meeting of Friday, May 16 were accepted.

The Unitarian Universalist Church has filed an Application for Certificate of Applicability regarding proposed work on the second floor of the church building. D. Coots proposed that he meet with D. Durrant, the designer hired by the church board, to discuss the church's program and his proposed solution prior to the church board filing a formal Certificate of Applicability. Members of the HHC voted unanimously that the proposed work is substantial and requires HHC review. D. Coots will contact the Church's petitioner, G. Frederick, directly,

J. Feist notified the committee of the resignation of J. Breslauer, the Harvard Conservation Commission's appointee. We do not have a new appointee from the HCC at this time.

J. Feist wants to wait until realtor R. Sprague is in attendance before taking further action on the flyer that has been designed to accompany the commission's new design guidelines.

S. Frechette reported that she has spoken with personnel at Mt. Auburn Cemetery regarding craftspeople who work in wrought iron. J. Feist has also spoken to a specialist, also. His contact estimated a cost in the neighborhood of \$15,000. A site visit by a specialist would cost about \$500 for an initial review of the project. R. Minar suggested Fruitlands Museum might be able to provide some help. Frechette will contact the director of Fruitlands, Maud Ayson. Frechette feels strongly that the unique and special nature of the painted iron headstones in the Shaker Cemetery requires that a professional conservator be used for this job. J. Feist thinks that student help, however, could be useful in helping with the necessary administrative work that is a key part of this project. Feist noted that CPC proposals will be due by late September and indicated he would like us to file an application for funding for an evaluation of the project, at the very least. S. Frechette will contact Maggie Stier, a former Harvard resident who is a specialist in historic preservation. Feist also suggested that Frechette contact Higgins Armory Museum in Worcester.

J. Feist spoke briefly about a number of projects on the HHC's to-do list: these include
The flier associated with our new Design Guidelines
A sub-committee has essentially finished writing the HHC's new rules and procedures

The Shaker Herb House has a new roof, new chimney and newly built, secure wooden doors on the first floor. The next project might be repair of the various types of mortar used on the building. Alternatively a new window be put in place of the door on the second floor above the new double doors he has built. He feels a hood should be installed above the double doors just built on that same wall. A less expensive project would be to buy \$500 of gravel and spread it where needed along the foundation. Do we continue working on the Herb House.

Maps of our two historic districts are done.

We have discussed applying, again, for CPC funds for the design and creation of historic district signs. We have the promise of at least \$500 of funding from the Harvard Women's Club toward this project.

The markers in the Shaker Cemetery all need to be restored. Careful research needs to be done on this sensitive project.

We do not have a demolition delay bylaw in our town. Does this expose historic structures to unreasonable threat and risk? A bylaw that protects these structures would require that any building of a certain age, say 50 years or more, that is going to be demolished be first made to go through a notification process with the HHC before the owner proceeds with his/her plans. Harvard is among the few towns that do not have a demolition delay bylaw. Feist believes there is support for such a bylaw among town boards. Such a bylaw would require a town vote to be put into effect. Such a vote would thus require a public relations effort on the part of the HHC.

We have discussed the possibility of creating a Historic Preservation Trust, a mechanism that would hold funds to be dedicated to an effort to preserve historic buildings, in the manner of the CPC. How would we use this money? What specialist could we find to help us structure such a trust? Where would we find out trustees?

It has been suggested that a financial impact study should be performed regarding the potential development of the Shaker Hills Golf Club as a housing development. Such a study would cost approximately \$2500.

Some among us believe it would be wise to create a new historic district in the village of Still River. Without a demolition delay bylaw the village may be considered especially threatened. A large public relations effort might accompany such action.

The Hildreth House is not in the Harvard Common Historic District. If it were it would be afforded certain protections which it does not now have. Is this a step we want to take?

The view west over the Fruitlands Museum land – and toward the mountains of New Hampshire – is edged by a stone wall in some serious disrepair. It has been suggested that we promote the improvement of this wall and perhaps even request CPC funds for the project.

Feist surveyed the members present regarding their thoughts about the priority of the projects listed above.

The four members (not including chairman J. Feist) prioritized their votes as follows:

Shaker Cemetery restoration: four (4)

Still River Historic District : three (3)
Historic District Signs: three (3)
Historical Preservation Trust: two (2)

Those items on the list which were deemed not to be priorities on the work list include: demolition delay bylaw (Feist will write a letter to the Planning Board asking them to take responsibility for writing this bylaw as we do not have sufficient time and resources to devote to this project at this time); Fruitlands scenic overlook; Herb House restoration (no more work needs to be done until we determine a program use for the site. The laying of gravel at the foundation is a good job for a willing volunteer, such as an Eagle Scout in need of a project. D. Coots thinks energy should be expended in finding a use for the building that is educationally appropriate. Feist will send a letter stating this to the Town Administrator, and also asking the town to take over maintenance at the site and other town structures. Coots suggests that the letter stress the amount and scope of the work the HHC has done to benefit – even save – these buildings and to stress the need for the BoS to make the town’s stewardship of these buildings a priority. Also not voted for action at this moment were the effort to have the Hildreth House placed in the historic district, not are we working on the creation of a financial trust for historic preservation funds. Members present have also voted not to take action on the creation of a historic district for the village of Still River.

S. Frechette will attempt to find a conservator for the Shaker Cemetery head stones before our July meeting. D. Coots volunteered to help her calibrate the scope of the work involved in this project. We should also receive a minimum of three bids from conservation specialists. The first Tuesday in September is to be considered the deadline for receipt of these bids. Frechette will contact T. Bragan, Town Administrator, to discuss process.

Committee members reviewed a selection of historic districts signs, and voted on their preferences. D. Coots offered to use the two designs that scored highest among voters and sketch a sign design inspired by these. He would be prepared to present these designs to the committee at its July meeting. (The signs receiving the most votes were Sherburn and Williamsburg.)

Park & Rec contacted J. Feist to say that they are prepared to place 8 tables on the land between the General Store and the Congregational Church. Members of Park & Rec asked for the HHC to help Park & Rec make an appropriate choice of table design. (They are aware that we do not have jurisdiction in this matter as the tables are not ‘fixed structures’.) R. Minar feels that 8 tables is too many; two would be both useful and not too onerous in terms of the space taken up. D. Coots feels that this is not a historic commission issue. He feels that two tables is too few, however. One issue of concern is litter, particularly behind the stone wall. The consensus is that rectangular table is better than hexagonal tables, which Park & Rec has suggested as an option. Nor do we feel that the umbrellas that Park & Rec have said they would install are necessary and that wood, rather than metal, is the preferred material. Four tables is considered plenty, as a start, and while we acknowledge we do not have jurisdiction over this decision we are

delighted to have been asked. Feist will send a copy of this letter to commission members for review before sending this on to the BoS.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.