

## **Harvard Historical Commission**

### **Meeting Minutes – November 3, 2008**

Members present: D. Coots, C. Cutler, J. Feist, S. Frechette, L. Horowitz, R. Minar, R. Saalfeld

Members absent: J. Martin, R. Sprague

- Meeting began at 7: 35 pm

- Minutes of the October meeting unanimously approved

- J. Feist reported that the members of the Planning Board are crafting a Demolition Delay Bylaw and have asked for our input. Feist introduced the idea of “demolition by neglect” and suggested any Harvard bylaw that treats a demolition delay address this issue. He feels that a 12 month delay is appropriate, although he acknowledged that towns with such bylaws require delays of anywhere between 3 months and 2 years. We have also been asked to determine the criteria for identifying “structures of relevance” under such a bylaw. One guideline we might use, for example, would be to identify any building built before a certain date as a “structure of relevance.” Alternatively, we could create an inventory of buildings of extraordinary historic relevance and refer to this list when owners filed permits to demolish these buildings. (S. Frechette knows that such a list was created in the early 1980s and is on file in the town library.) The adoption of any such bylaw would require a vote at Annual Town Meeting. R. Minar suggested we study the guidelines already created by the Massachusetts Historical Commission before submitting suggestions to the Planning Board. D. Coots suggested that we encourage the Planning Board to submit a draft of the bylaw for our review.

- L. Allard (Land Use Administrator/Conservation Agent) has notified us that she is working on a ‘five year action plan for open space and recreation’ and asked if we are now – or soon will be – working on such a plan for the HHC. Feist noted that one long-term goal might be the establishment of a Historical Preservation Fund. Other goals might include the completion of signing our two historic districts, the renovation of the markers at the Shaker burial ground, a guide to historic structures and spaces, the designation of Still River as our third historic district, the inclusion of the Hildreth House in the Common historic district.

- S. Frechette reported that she led a group of volunteers in a survey of the markers at the Shaker burial ground in September. She compared the list generated by her group with a list created in 1984 and found that the cemetery is more intact than she had anticipated. One of her major concerns is the presence of a number of very large white pines within the burial grounds, and the involvement of some of the markers in the trees’ roots. The markers made of marble are significantly more degraded than the iron markers, though the iron markers also need to be conserved. Brother Arnold Hadd (a Shaker in residence in

Sabbathday Lake, Maine) has offered to help fund the restoration project. Frechette is ready to advertise for a conservator who could be hired to oversee the restoration project.

- Feist has asked Chris Skelly to attend our January meeting. (Skelly is Mass Historical Commission's liaison to the towns.)
- C. Cutler and J. Feist presented the HHC proposal for historic district signage to the CPC and Cutler, the HHC designee to the CPC, feels that we will know their disposition toward our project within the next month.
- The establishment and funding of a Historical Preservation Fund was discussed. (A cache of \$1005 is already at our disposition though \$500 of those funds have already been gifted to the sign project by the Harvard Women's Club.) The existence of such a fund would enable us to make a stronger case, Feist feels, for our fair share of CPC funding (which also supports, by law, open space and recreation and affordable housing) and allow us to act quickly, Feist said, "outside of the cycle of Annual Town Meeting" for projects that required immediate action. Saalfield suggested that the Commission might be more successful in petitioning for funds by following the already-prescribed route of applying for CPC funds for substantially larger – and adequately detailed – projects. Other members agreed with this latter route. Feist therefore diminished the priority of establishing such a fund for the time being.
- S. Frechette suggested we hire a graduate student to update the 1984 survey of historical houses. She agreed to write a description of the project in anticipation of recruiting a professional to create this "baseline of information," which could be used in a number of different ways.
- D. Coots said that his son had distributed our new *Design Guidelines* to all residents of both historic districts. The Design Guidelines have also been posted to the town's Web site. Feist will be sure that the Mass Historical Commission's Web site also received them.
- C. Cutler is nearly finished fixing the new door at Town Hall.
- Feist asked the group to elect a Vice Chair, someone who will lead meetings in the Chair's absence. "Best practice assumes that the Vice Chair will not assume the role of Chair but that all officers will be nominated and elected on a yearly basis," Feist said. The nomination of Doug Coots was seconded and unanimously approved.
- Our next meeting will be Tuesday, December 2 in the Hapgood Room of the former library. That room is now our new venue.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Roseanne Saalfield*