

NORTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes for Monthly Meeting
Thursday February 12, 2015

Present: Brian Smith, Norm Corbin, Bruce Chute, Amy White, Stephen Anderson, and Stephanie Stockman

Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:18.

Public Hearing regarding the demolition permit for White Cliffs.

Norm explained to the attendees how the demolition permit process works. There were about 50 people in attendance.

- The NHC has 30 days to hold a public hearing.
- The public is to bring additional information to the NHC regarding the property.
- The NHC is only able to prevent the demolition for 6 months.
 - During this time the NHC is to work with the owner to find alternatives to demolishing the property.
- In the middle of July (6 months after the permit application has been submitted) the demolition permit can be issued.

Norm Corbin asked the audience, “Does anyone have any additional information on White Cliffs to offer us?”

- No response

Steve Anderson posed the question – “Does anyone find the property not historically significant?”

- No response

Steve Anderson made a motion that the “Northborough Historic Commission determined that White Cliffs is historically significant and the 180 day delay remains in place”. It was seconded by Amy White. It was passed unanimously.

Norm discussed the NHC’s different options to preserving this property within the demolition delay time period.

Options:

- Preservation Restriction
 - It will cost \$400,000-600,000 to put a preservation restriction on the property.
 - To reduce the expenses, there is a possibility for CPA funding
 - CPA funding requires a 2/3 vote at town meeting.
 - There are federal and state tax advantages.

- The current owner has requested that the NHC ask the MHC if White Cliffs meets the criteria for a Preservation Restriction. MHC needs to agree that a preservation restriction is appropriate for this property.
 - MHC denied this because the construction from 1960s significantly altered the architecture.
 - The MHC stated that if architecture was put back, they would reconsider the application.
 - The NHC disagreed with the MHC's decision, and has hired a preservation consult to help appeal it, including more information about the history of White Cliffs.
- Local multi-property Historic District
 - This would have to include neighboring properties, and it would take much longer than six months to go through the application process.
- Single Property Historic District
 - This protects the street view
 - There are no restrictions for the interior of the building
 - This does not need the owner's consent
 - The NHC has decided to prepare a nomination.
 - This needs to be submitted by February 18th.
 - The NHC can submit a warrant so it can be voted on at town meeting.
 - In order for it to pass, it will need a 2/3 vote at town meeting.
- Preservationist Owner
 - Best case, finding an owner who is preservation minded and does not need preservation incentives.

Open Discussion:

- Many questions and comments from the audience followed Norm's presentation.
- Below is a general summary of the questions and comments.
 - Is the NHC moving forward to put in a warrant at town meeting?
 - Yes, the NHC is moving forward with this.
 - Could it be more difficult for the owners to sell the property?
 - It depends upon the buyers' interests.
 - Can the property have more than one restriction?
 - Yes, it can.
 - What are the pros and cons of a single home historic district?
 - White Cliffs will look the same from the outside.
 - Nothing else will be protected.
 - What is the current zoning for the property?
 - The front portion is zoned for commercial use.
 - The back portion is zoned for residential use.

Community Activism:

- Norm discussed the need for the community to become involved.
- There needs to be a buyer for the property with a preservation interest.
- On Facebook there are approximately 2,400 followers associated with the *Save the White Cliffs* page.

- Carol Chione and Amanda Millette are actively involved, but more people need to become involved.
- A community based committee needs to be created, so that there can be follow-thru for activism.
 - The committee could come up with a call and letter campaign.
 - The committee needs to be proactive and organized.
- The NHC can delay for 180 days.
 - The NHC does not want to see it demolished.

Open Discussion (Continued):

- Is it possible for the town to buy the property?
 - That decision needs to go to town meeting
 - A warrant would need to be created within the next 3 weeks.
 - Selectman Amberson commented that the town would need to have a purpose for the building, and that the property needs a lot of work to be brought up to code. He continued to say that no one wants to see it destroyed.
- Kathleen Polanowicz discussed the following.
 - In her experiences, there needs to be different people from the town to be on the committee. Examples include the following.
 - Economic development
 - Board of Selectmen
 - People with different expertise
 - This would have to be a very focused effort
 - One thing they could do
 - send out packets to historical preservation developers.
- A meeting to form a committee must be done sooner than later.
- Amy White offered to the audience that anyone interested in assisting the NHC could write his/her name and contact information. Eleven people signed up.

Norm Corbin made a motion to close the public hearing, and Bruce Chute seconded. It was accepted unanimously.

Norm Corbin made a motion to adjourn the NHC monthly meeting at 8:50PM, and Amy White seconded. It was accepted unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie Stockman