**Town of Norwell Local Historic District Study Committee Minutes July 8, 2013**

**Call to Order:** 7:35 p.m.

**Acceptance of Minutes:** Minutes were accepted with a change to the reporting of Janet’s description of Pembroke’s LHD to clarify that the Local Historic District is \*not\* the zoning by-law which controls commercial development.

**Conclusion of Survey:**

1. Susan Donahue of 580 Main Street brought in a letter in lieu of her survey and indicated that she would provide a completed survey shortly.
2. Stephen handed out a matrix of the survey results for the committee to review.
3. Stephen made a motion to close the survey, motion was seconded and passed.

**Discussion of survey and historic districts by committee members:**

1. Kim – Some residents of High Street have approached her in the past 2 weeks about learning more about LHDs due to the signage and building height issues in the new commercial construction abutting the neighborhood. At least one person asked for an informational meeting via the survey.
2. Gerry – Disappointed in response to survey, sees no great interest, feels it was misinformation about LHDSC mission and regulations attached to LHDs. Does not see enough interest to proceed.
3. Janet – In reading surveys from High Street she saw that there were concerns about the neighborhood in light of recent economic development proposals. We should let the town know what we have learned about their development concerns. When LHDs are successfully implemented in a town it is because the effort comes from residents in the affected neighborhood. Usually they see a problem looming. Would favor a low regulation LHD, but wouldn’t recommend at this point.
4. Jay – Would like to compare results of the survey at the outset to the final results to compare rates of response. Would not vote to go forward with a recommendation but would like to include unbiased information on other towns in our report.
5. Jon – Heavily involved in the Historic Society, helped to set up the National Register District in Norwell and very much for historic preservation, but doesn’t see a lot of outpouring of interest for LHDs in Norwell.
6. Katherine – The surveys and meetings have not shown a clear enough mandate from residents to support a recommendation.
7. Stephen – 3 questions critical to a proposal for an LHD: 1) Clear definition of the problem in each area that needs to be addressed; 2) Whether local residents are willing to show leadership in support and 3) Whether a clear majority of residents support the idea following a fair and balanced consultation. Feels the process of the committee suggests that there is insufficient support for an LHD at this time.

**Public Commentary:**

Several residents attending the meeting shared their views, suggesting an LHD would deter business investment and add substantial costs for residents intending to make changes or additions. Residents also commented that the survey appears to have had an extraordinarily high response rate.

The committee agreed on the following language to determine how to proceed for both Norwell Village and High Street:

***IN FAVOR****:  The Committee recommends a town vote for establishment of a local historic district on Norwell Village/High Street and will proceed with the drafting of a bylaw at a future meeting.*

***OPPOSED****: The Committee does not recommend a town vote for the establishment of a historic district on Norwell Village/High Street at this time.*

Norwell Village:

A motion was made by Stephen, seconded by Jon to vote on Norwell Village. The vote was unanimously opposed (7-0) for Norwell Village and the committee did not recommend a town vote for the establishment of a historic district in Norwell Village.

High Street:

A motion was made by Stephen, seconded by Jon to vote on High Street. Discussion by the committee followed. Kim reported that in recent days a group of High Street residents had renewed interest in an LHD due to the economic development proposal recently voted down in town meeting but reportedly will be reintroduced next year. The group discussed at length whether an LHD would have an impact on such a rezoning proposal and whether public commentary would alter the findings of the committee. The group discussed postponing the vote until an additional public hearing could occur with High Street residents.

Jay – Moved to postpone High Street vote to Monday, July 22 following a discussion with concerned residents. Give residents 15 minutes to arrive, listen to residents, then vote. Agenda would be to vote on High Street. Seconded by Kim. Motion failed 4-3.

Jon – Moved to vote on High Street. Seconded by Katherine. The vote was opposed 4-0, with 3 members (Jay, Kim and Janet) abstaining for reasons discussed in the preceding paragraph and the committee did not vote to recommend a town vote for the establishment of a historic district on High Street.

Stephen – Moved to meet with High Street residents on July 22 and have an open forum to hear their concerns. Motion was seconded and passed 7-0. Jay noted that a member of our group would obtain the email distribution list of concerned High Street residents from Kim and notify these residents of our upcoming meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.**