

Minutes of the Princeton Historical Commission
January 15, 2009

Attendees: Joyce Anderson, Sheila Dubman, Nathaniel Gove and Alex Fiandaca

New Business:

Virtual Town Hall

Sheila and Joyce met in December with representative of Virtual Town Hall to discuss the Commission's website on the new town hall website. The Commission's page has been started and can be populated over time with additional items. Members discussed adding the inventory of historic buildings and the National Register listings, both of which could be included in pdf-form rather than linking to the Mass Historic site.

Member voted unanimously to include a link on the new website to the Princeton Historical Society webpage, as requested by Bud Brooks.

Old Business:

Demolition Delay Bylaw

Members discussed basic points of a demolition delay bylaw using examples from Mass Historic, Concord and West Boylston in order to present an outline to the selectmen on Tuesday, January 20th. Dennis Rindone has indicated that the final draft for the town warrant must be received by town counsel by March 16.

Members agreed to a 6 month delay that applies to the total demolition of buildings and other man made structures 75 years or older. The delay period will allow the Commission to provide guidance on preservation tools such as grants, connect the owner with a possible buyer and allow the Commission an opportunity to document and photograph the structure before it disappears forever.

The bylaw would in no way restrict the building inspector from issuing emergency demolition orders.

The age cut-off may need to be revisited to capture works of prominent modern-style architects.

Partial demolition was also discussed and may be reconsidered. Most towns extend the bylaw to prevent demolition of a substantial portion. "Substantial" is defined by Concord as half the volume or half the value.

Mechanics Hall

Members will also approach the selectmen on Tuesday regarding Mechanics Hall and the need to begin public discussions toward a resolution. Considering the current activity in East Princeton (possible reconstruction of 140 and possible rezoning of the village); now seems like a good time to start considering the future of the building. The Implementation Plan makes vague reference to Mechanics Hall in an action scheduled for discussion in 2010. The Commission is open to the idea of selling with restrictions to preserve the external appearance. Members also discussed some basic maintenance issues which should be pursued in the short term, such as repairing the deteriorating driveway trimming/removing hedges and installing an outdoor light, all of which will give the building less of an abandoned look and should help deter vandals and overnight parkers.

Respectfully submitted,
Alex Fiandaca