

Call to Order - 6:02 p.m.

Present – Barbara A. Search, Chair; Richard Volpe, Vice-Chair; William Smith

Absent – Sandra Fallon, Clerk

Quests – Cathy Zavistoski, Jim Zavistoski, Michael Suprenant

B. Search said since the Historical Commission (HC) made the determination at the Public Hearing on March 10, 2016 that the Exhibition Hall (EH) is “preferably preserved” the HC should designate a member to represent the HC in conversations with people, businesses, and agencies interested in options regarding the EH. Anyone interested in further conversations would be invited to attend a HC public meeting for a discussion with the membership of the HC.

R. Volpe moved that B. Search be the official representative for the HC. W. Smith seconded the motion. With no further discussion the motion was unanimously approved.

B. Search reported the Finance Committee approved a reserve fund transfer of \$1000 on March 10, 2016 to pay Jennifer Doherty, Westborough, MA, a historical consultant, to provide a historical, cultural, and architectural evaluation of the EH. Jennifer Doherty has been contacted to proceed with the evaluation which is expected to be completed in two months.

B. Search opened a discussion regarding the EH and suggested several options for the EH as follows: save the EH on site, save the EH off-site, lose the EH and establish a memorial pocket park on the site, lose the EH and have a memorial plaque on site; and asked for any other ideas. She offered other considerations - save artifacts from the EH to store, sell, or display i.e. flooring, molding, fieldstone, granite, or other items.

W. Smith spoke to Mr. Carrol (?) at the Sturbridge Host who was open to talking about the potential for using the EH. This would have to be further discussed with upper management at the Host. He also knows someone on Main St. who owns 22 acres including 5 commercially zoned acres who may be willing to sell if CVS wanted to change locations. He also suggested Mr. Robida may be open to a conversation regarding 1.9 acres he owns on Main St. close to the EH.

R. Volpe suggested the HC contact the building inspector to find out how viable the EH is and what are the basics it needs to be totally up to code.

There was a lengthy conversation regarding options for the EH.

J. Zavistoski presented several items; T&G article on a building in Tatnuck Sq., Worcester where a demo delay was invoked because the owner failed to make a compelling argument for why it should be demolished; T&G article on a building in Northboro, White Cliffs mansion, where the town is asked to lease the property for 3 years to temporarily prevent the owners from tearing it down while the town studies how much money is needed to make the building viable for commercial use; a photo of the Monson House of Art as an example of ways the EH could

become a vibrant addition to the community; Putnam, CT. example of the town offering a tax incentive to small businesses to encourage preservation of buildings.

J. Zavistoski pointed out that the Sturbridge Master Plan, the town bylaws, zoning bylaws, and the Community Tourist bylaws indicate that Sturbridge wants to attract tourists and retain historical and cultural values. Losing the EH doesn't fit those goals.

M. Suprenant said Old Sturbridge Village has informed the Selectmen that they are closing the Information Center next year. They will no longer be renting it to the Town.

He said his information indicated CVS has not filed for a driveway permit for access to the site. It has to be done when the use of the site changes. The application for the permit would initiate a review by the Mass. Environmental Protection Act where Mass. Historical Commission would also have to sign off. CVS may plan to wait to apply after the EH is gone. The State's wetland protection act is much less strict than how the Sturbridge wetland bylaw is being interpreted. The proposed CVS site on Holland Rd. was outside the buffer zone for wetlands. The local wetland bylaw is not prepared and based on sound engineering by a professional.

He suggested the HC consult with the CPC, Selectmen, and the Planning Bd.

R. Volpe proposed the HC regroup, evaluate the space in EH, and meet soon to put together a plan of action.

B. Search will contact the building inspector to get viability and code information

The next meeting is set for Thursday, March 24 at 6:00 p.m.

Adjourned – 7:24 p.m. moved by W. Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> by R. Volpe. Vote was unanimous.

Submitted by Barbara A. Search, Chair