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TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

OFFICE OF THE

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

ELIHU THOMSON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
22 MONUMENT AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT, MA 01907

HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MAY 9, 2012

Time: 7:15 – 9:10 pm

Location: Swampscott Town Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room

Members Present: D. Anderson, S. Belkin, M. DeChillo, J. Jurma, W. Sawyer, P. Kane (Town Liaison)

Others Present: Richard Malagrifa (Board of Selectmen, Chair)

First meeting of the Historic District Study Committee called to order at 7:10 pm.

INTRODUCTIONS

To open the meeting and allow the members to become familiar with one another, each provided a brief introduction about themselves and why they applied to be part of the committee:

- Dana Anderson – *The American Institute of Architects (AIA) nominee to the committee.* He's an architect with Perkins & Will in Boston. He does university work (Harvard, Babson, etc.) and has also worked on historic and modern buildings. Feels that the town has a wonderful asset which should be preserved for generations to come. Feels the Olmsted District is a good example. Gave info on his personal history in town.
- Jer Jurma – *Historical Society nominee to the committee.* Background in architecture. Has done large-scale design to retail to residential work. Works independently on residential historic renovations. He was introduced into community historic preservation by working for his hometown historic society. He recently worked on the Hadley 100th anniversary event.
- Warren Sawyer – Has lived in town for 50 years. Worked in real estate development since college. He founded the Caleb Foundation and does historic restoration. Just finished the adaptive reuse of an old mill building in Maine that has now become the thriving center for town. Really appreciates what many towns have done to preserve their history/character. Wants to make sure there's a lot of community meetings and input.
- Mary DeChillo – Social worker by training. Teaches at Salem State. Her specialty is group dynamics. She teaches a course on community organizing (has for 17 years). Worked in NY and NJ prior to that doing social work. She looks at world with a systems perspective and how it works/interacts. Moved to Swampscott 17 years ago. Feels it's important to invest in the town (such as volunteering on committees).

- Sylvia Belkin – *Board of Realtors nominee to the committee*. She has been a realtor for the past eight years. Prior to that, she owned a successful retail business for 15 years. She feels strong about retail and see the potential here in Swampscott for small business. Her undergrad degree is in urban planning. Her work in the community started by doing a project for one of her college courses. The project she decided to work on was to apply for a grant for the neglected Town Hall. She was successful in also getting Town Meeting approval to provide matching funds to this project (\$40,000). As part of the requirement to receive the grant, she helped to establish the town’s Historical Commission. She feels this study being taken on by the committee is important for Humphrey Street.
- Rich Malagrifa – He’s been a Selectman for two years; no prior government experience. Prior to that (and his current role as an airline pilot), he was in the air force. Through his military experience he learned how to take on new tasks and responsibilities quickly. He is focused on moving things forward; very organized. Originally from Lynn – related his history in Swampscott. Stated that Glenn Kessler will most likely be the Selectmen liaison to the Committee.
- Pete Kane – Started in December as the Town Planner & Energy Efficiency Manager. Comes to the position out of grad school at Tufts University. While in grad school, worked for Mass. Association of CDCs as well as New Ecology (a sustainability consulting firm to affordable housing developers). He’s interested in working on the committee as one of the first things he noticed after starting in his position was that there was a lacking cohesiveness to the look/feel of the town – wants to see how and if that can be achieved through a Local Historic District.

OVERVIEW OF COMMITTEE AND OPEN MEETING LAW STANDARDS

Kane then provided the group with an overview of committee standards and the state’s Open Meeting Law. Members signed off that they had received these materials from the Town Clerk. Kane noted that all committee meetings are open meetings which requires 48 hours public notice (Saturday and Sunday do not count). It will be the responsibility of the Chair (unless delegated otherwise) to set the meeting agenda and submit it to the Town Clerk within the time requirement. All committee discussions between members on topics directly related to its work must be done in open meetings (this includes restrictions against two members discussing items outside of the meeting as well as an email exchanges). Malagrifa noted that emails should only be used to send information (such as agenda) but responses should not take place and wait until the next open meeting.

Kane stated the committee would be electing a chair, vice chair and secretary later in the meeting. Aside from the agenda, the chair will also be responsible for opening each meeting. The secretary will be responsible for taking minutes and filing the minutes with the Town Clerk after the committee has approved them.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY PROCESS

The group briefly discussed the study process as they had read from the book provided by Mass Historical Commission (MHC) – “Establishing Local Historic Districts.” Kane said the key first step would be the committee’s meeting with MHC. He then passed out a concept project schedule that uses the milestones and actions as defined by MHC along with timing contingencies between certain parts of the project. The schedule will help the committee determine how to time each step and prepare for future actions. It is currently scoped to allow for a May 2013 Town Meeting presentation of a Local Historic District Overlay zoning bylaw proposal (if the committee determines one is feasible and appropriate).

Jurma asked if the committee should look at just one area or multiple areas, maybe three areas in town. Belkin noted that the amount of work (examples were provided in the materials from MHC) required for just one area will

be a lot. She then stated that back in the 1980s, a consultant was hired to do an inventory of the historic buildings in town (this inventory is not complete however as it did not include buildings in the Humphrey Street area). Anderson said he would like an historic overview of the town, maybe from Belkin, and a planning perspective from Kane.

Kane gave an overview of the Town's current zoning by-law and how the work of the committee relates to that. The establishment of a local historic district is essentially creating an overlay district on top of the current standard zoning established. He pointed out that the Town's currently bylaws create the standard zoning districts (business, residential, and industrial). Within each of those, this is further clarified such that there are three grades to the business and residential zones. These grades establish minimum parcel size, street frontage, setbacks, and lot coverage. The local historic district overlay would essentially be an added level of guidance and review – it would not replace the current zoning already in place for the parcels that would become part of the district. The primary function of the historic district overlay would be to provide design review for the building facades as seen from the public ways – it cannot regulate or restrict the use of the land/buildings within the district. That is the function of the standard zoning regulations.

ONGOING MEETING SCHEDULE

The group then discussed what it would like to set as its ongoing meeting schedule going forward. Kane explained that at the onset of the committee, it would be necessary to meet more regularly as the group is working to develop the report. The group deliberated as to whether weekly or biweekly meetings would be appropriate and agreed to biweekly meetings for at least the first six meetings. After further discussion, it was agreed that the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays (in some cases the 5th as well) of every month would work – as the Board of Selectmen and School Committee meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays.

Kane will provide a listing of the first six meetings based on this agreed schedule format. He will also speak with Chris Skelly, of MHC, to schedule him as soon as possible to meet with the committee. The committee would like to meet with him next week and offered Wednesday or Thursday evening.

Sawyer requested that the committee agree to a close time for each meeting. The committee agreed that with a 7pm start, meetings should close by 9pm.

ELECTIONS

The committee then discussed the elections of chair, vice chair, and secretary. Nominations for chair were discussed for both DeChillo and Belkin. Although many members suggested Belkin due to her role with the Historical Commission, Belkin was concerned that her other responsibilities with that commission and on the Planning Board would make it difficult to chair this committee. She recommended DeChillo; after further discussion the committee voted unanimously for DeChillo as chair. Jurma stated that he was interested in the role of vice chair which was then unanimously approved by the committee. Belkin offered her services as secretary; unanimously approved by the committee.

Sawyer inquired whether it would be necessary to establish a treasurer as the committee had been offered \$5,000 by Bruce Paradise during negotiations with the Historical Commission. This money has not yet been received by the Town. The committee agreed to table the vote of a treasurer until money was in hand and the need arose.

Sawyer motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by DeChillo. Meeting closed at 9:10pm.