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UHDC minutes from March 14, 2018 meeting

Meeting commenced at 5:30 pm in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. Members present were Faye McCloskey, Travis DoRosario, Melissa Haskell, Mary-Pat Wickstrom Mike Cove, Jane Keegan, and Marian Baker.

Minutes were read from the Feb 10 meeting were read by Melissa and motion made to accept the minutes was made by Jane, seconded by Melissa. Unanimous vote in favor, Mary Pat abstained. The minutes were approved. Minutes were read from the Feb 14 meeting were read by Melissa and motion made to accept the minutes was made by Melissa, seconded by Faye. Unanimous vote in favor. The minutes were approved.

Old business:

Discussion of Mass DOT proposed roadwork in the coming couple of years, we spoke with Kevin Kuros and Ryan Fattman regarding our requests for buried electrical wires, brick pavers, granite curbing, etc.

Regarding the proposed expansion of the historic district:

Faye explained the objective of the district. Mike read the list of exclusions to the UHDC authority. Mary Patricia Wickstrom read a statement in support of the expansion. Jane motioned to include the entirety of her statement along with the minutes from the meeting. Seconded by Travis. Vote was 4 in favor, 1 abstain. Jane then read a statement in support of the expansion as well, and noted that the MHC voted on 2/14 to accept the report as sent in. Jane made a motion to attach the entirety of her statement to the minutes from the meeting. Seconded by Travis. Vote was 4 in favor, 1 abstain.

by Marian (circled) *by Marian*

Mr. Pasquich from 11 North Main St came to speak on the proposed expansion. He stated that he had not received the original survey from last summer, and had various questions on the survey results. He asked for the total number of properties in the proposed expansion (115) and the current size of the district (75 properties), and noted that this expansion will more than double the current size.

Fire Chief Kessler also came to speak regarding the new fire station project. He wanted to make it clear that the firemen had followed procedure and that demolition of the old fire station in order to provide parking was part of the original plan approved by the UHDC.

New Business:

Faye asked Melissa to look into grants, etc that may be of help to the residents.

Next meeting scheduled for the 11th of April, 2018 at 5:30pm in Lower Town Hall. Motion made by Melissa to adjourn, seconded by Mike, and a unanimous vote was taken to adjourn meeting at 6:12pm.

*Travis Ann DoRosario.
Faye Mc Closkey
Marian G. Baker*

Mary Pat

I'm Mary Pat Wickstrom and I live in the Robert Taft House at 6 Court Street. Our property was once the home of Effingham Capron, who was an abolitionist prior to the Civil War and vice President of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Friend and fellow abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison visited Mr. Capron in Uxbridge and stayed at the property. The property was also a stop-over for the Underground Railroad.

My husband and I purchased the property and invested in its restoration because of its historic significance and its location within the historic district. We live and work here. We appreciate the process of the historic district bylaw and support the work of the Committee to enhance the protection of neighboring properties within the district. A strong historic district is not an impediment to progress but an important planning tool that the Town of Uxbridge needs to ensure that "MacDonaldization" does not occur in the downtown business district, to the detriment of the businesses and homeowners that have invested in the preservation of Uxbridge's past. It would be a shame to lose the historic character of downtown Uxbridge.

Research points in favor of a strong historic district.

- 1. Local districts protect the investments of owners and residents of historic properties.** Poorly planned development can make an area less attractive to investors and homebuyers, and undermine property value. In contrast, historic district designation encourages people to buy and rehabilitate properties because they know their investment is protected over time.
 - 2. There are economic benefits within the District.** Properties within local historic districts appreciate at rates greater than the local market overall as well as faster than similar, non-designated neighborhoods. Studies on this point are consistent across the country. Historic districts are less vulnerable to market volatility and economic downturns.
 - 3. Historic districts are a vehicle for education.** They are a tangible link to the past and a way to bring meaning to history and to people's lives. They preserve the original character of buildings and streets, while welcoming growth and innovation within those spaces. They are a living, active record of communities and their residents. We have students ^{who} come annually to our house and around the historic district on "History Walks". These tours are a wonderful way to educate children about local history and instill pride in our town.
 - 4. Protecting local historic districts can enhance business recruitment potential.** Vibrant commercial cores and charming neighborhoods with character attract new business and quality industry. Companies relocate to communities that offer their workers a higher quality of life, which successful preservation programs and stable districts enhance.
 - 5. Local districts provide social and psychological benefits.** People living in and near historic districts enjoy the comfort of a mix of aesthetics and functionality; the opportunity to live and work in attractive surroundings; a recognizable and walkable neighborhood; and the galvanizing effect of community-based group action. We see this in our gatherings downtown at Memorial Day, July 4th, and on First Holiday Night.
 - 6. Local districts give communities a voice in their future.** By participating in the process set forth in the historic district bylaws, citizens can help direct their communities' path. Making
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these decisions together in a structured way—rather than at a developer’s whim behind closed doors or without public comment—gives everyone involved a stake in the community.

In closing, my husband and I love living and working in downtown Uxbridge. Our office and house restoration has been a labor of love. We support a strong historic district bylaw and it’s expansion.

Jane Keegan

Comments for March 2018 UHDC Meeting on HD Expansion

After reading this statement, I will move to file it with the minutes of this meeting when approved...

For those who follow local politics, it is obvious the Commission's transparency has been evident throughout this year-long journey. Wrongly applied to our actions, the word 'disingenuous' was used last month. Literally, it means "not frank or candid; deceptively simple". Considering the hundreds of volunteer hours involved so far, the effort has been far from 'simple', and since fair notice has been given to property owners, updates given at monthly meetings, and with recent newspaper articles, a cable presentation and 'virtual tour' video forthcoming, there is nothing either 'not frank or candid' about the process and its intent to date. But there is still ample time to look, listen and learn about the expansion article before the vote on May 8th. Having met all legal requirements, no legitimate grounds exist on which to delay a town-wide decision as has been suggested.

The Mass. Historical Commission voted on Feb. 14th on our submission and sent a letter, dated Feb. 20th, making this advisory recommendation to "encourage the town of Uxbridge to expand the Uxbridge historic district."

The reasoning behind this article is based on a realistic view of where Uxbridge stands today and likely may stand in tomorrows to come. A well-researched, well-explained warrant article has been produced for consideration on May 8th. It has been famously said, "Read my lips" so reflect on these facts. Unfounded rumors must not be permitted to take root either in gossip or social media, because there is **categorically no intent**:

- To stop new business development;
- To impose unreasonable restrictions on either residential property owners or their commercial neighbors in regard to renovation or expansion;
- To abridge property rights of homeowners or business;
- To change zoning;
- To change Bylaw exemptions over which the Commission has no control

As to comments in a recent news article that the UHDC should not "broaden its horizons" by expansion, because it has not been able to "effectively protect and preserve much", there is hearty disagreement. These points may put that criticism in perspective: 1) the UHDC would happily offer preservation support to any citizen making such a request, but targeting houses or businesses in disrepair through 'out-reach' to owners is a gross over-reach of our powers; 2) as to the Unitarian Church where four Town clocks reside, multiple letters sent registering concern may produce progress soon, but again we have no legal authority to 'order' corrective action; 3) about the fire stations, if Uxbridge boards functioned cooperatively instead of in vacuums, the UHDC would have had a seat on the Building Committee so our input would have been heard from the very beginning, not end, of the process to replace the 1938 station.

In truth, UHDC did raise several objections but those points were moot, because decisions already were set in a modern, 'box-like' structure of concrete and brick. Admittedly, while it offers well-deserved 21st c. comfort and efficiency for our gallant safety personnel, the station hardly 'blends in' cohesively with its historic neighbors. Furthermore in the can't-win-for-trying category, when UHDC voices were raised more strenuously on this subject, accusations flew that somehow we were "causing unnecessary delays and expense". While it will be debated forever if the old fire station could actually have been 'saved', this compartmentalized way-of-doing-business in Uxbridge should be recognized by all for what it is... yet another example of 'opportunity missed'.

Voters can judge on May 8th whether adopting this article is a forward-thinking step in the town's evolution or poses some vague 'threat'. With YES, citizens, through the UHDC, have a 'voice' to suggest the 'look' Uxbridge projects when welcoming its future growth.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I move that the UHDC accept this statement to be filed with the minutes of this meeting. (Vote: 4 Yes 1 Abstain)