

**Northampton Historical Commission
Minutes**

DATE: Monday, May 23, 2016
TIME: 5:30 PM
PLACE: Hearing Room, City Hall Second Floor, 210 Main Street

Members Present: David Drake, Martha Lyon, Barbara Blumenthal, Pauline Fogel, Bruce Kriviskey, Dylan Gaffney

Staff Present: Sarah LaValley

Chairman Drake called the meeting to Order, 5:30

General Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

January 25, 2016 and February 10 2016

Ms. Lyon moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Kriviskey, the motion carried unanimously.

5:30 PM, Public Hearing: Request for a Local Historic District Certificate of Appropriateness pursuant to Section 195 of the Northampton Code. Work to include demolition of the Galbraith Center, installation of parking area and related landscaping and site work; renovation of Gawith Hall including and rebuilding of the 'kitchen addition,' and a new addition to the structure. 1924LLC, 46 and 52 Round Hill Road, Parcels 31B-004 &006.

Tom Douglas, project architect, provided an overview of the work proposed. The Galbraith Center Gymnasium, which the National Park Service has indicated does not contribute to the historic character of the area, will be demolished along with the 1960's addition to Gawith. The parking lot to be installed in place of the gymnasium will be pulled back from the current gym boundaries. Gawith will include office space for one office tenant. The addition will include some historic elements from the existing structure, and will be separated by a glassed area from the older section of the building. LED fixtures with a historical appearance will be added to the new parking lot.

The former boiler house near the Bancroft Avenue side of the property will be converted to residential. The driveway from Bancroft exceeds slope limitations and will not be used. Bricked-in windows will be restored.

Chairman Drake noted that the project includes many different elements, not all of which are subject to Historical Commission review. Many concerns relating to site use and other aspects of the project can be addressed at the Planning Board site plan review hearing.

A Pratt House resident expressed concern about protection of their building during demolition. Mr. Douglas stated that the project will have a liaison on campus, and weekly meetings will be held to address those specific types of concerns.

Arvid Nelson asked about the timeframe for permitting. Chairman Drake stated that the Historical Commission deals with exterior changes to buildings within historic districts. Ms. LaValley added that the Commission has 30 days from the public hearing to issue a decision. Mr. Kriviskey stated that all property owners within the historic district should be aware of design standards for work within the district, and added that the Historical Commission also reviews proposed demolition. The applicant will be allying for federal historic tax credits, which carries strict standards for design review.

Andrew Batchelor asked about standards the Commission considers when evaluating demolition, suggesting that the relationship between all buildings on the campus should be looked at. Ms. LaValley replied that the Ordinance allows demolition of structures that have 'no significant historic merit or historic relationship to the District.

Jim Winston asked if the full 30 days for issuance is generally used. Ms. LaValley replied that decisions are generally issued the same day as the hearing.

Terrence Degendorf stated that the proposed parking lot seems inappropriate for the district, and suggested that it could be improved by moving it closer to Round Hill Road. Neighboring buildings are lower than the parking lot, so light will shine on those neighbors. Ms. Fogel asked if the parking lot will be recessed. Mr. Douglas replied that it will be graded to be three feet below the road elevation.

Ann Degendorf stated that adjacent residents will have a view of a parking lot. Ms. Lyon noted that the existing view is of the wall of the gymnasium, and that the parking lot is proposed to include plantings.

Mr. Kriviskey addressed the 'historic value' of the gymnasium, noting that the architecture is not significant, and the Park Service has also indicated that it does not have value from their perspective.

Anthony Gerzini asked about the Commission's role. Ms. LaValley stated that the Commission reviews external features, and does not review building use. Concerns about use, traffic, lighting, and site access issues are reviewed by the Planning Board as part of Site Plan Review, as that process includes specific requirements for many of those elements. City Councilor Dennis Bidwell encouraged residents to submit comments to the Planning Board.

Ms. LaValley suggested that the Commission continue the hearing until after the Planning Board hearing. Mr. Douglas requested that the Commission consider aspects of the project without concern.

Mr. Kriviskey moved to approve demolition of Galbraith, demolition of the 1965 addition to Gawith, and the addition proposed in the application, and to communicate to the Planning Board that their review should consider how to reduce neighborhood concerns regarding lighting, as well as parking lot screening. Seconded by Mr. Gaffney. Ms. Lyon commended the architect for thoughtful treatment of historic buildings. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Fogel moved to continue the hearing until June 27 at 5:30 PM. Seconded by Ms. Blumenthal, the motion carried unanimously.

6:00 PM, Public Hearing: Request for a Local Historic District Certificate of Appropriateness pursuant to Section 195 of the Northampton Code for reconstruction of the Smith College main entrance. Work to include installation of feature walls with sign panels and benches, sidewalk realignment and pedestrian lighting. Trustees of Smith College, 126 West Street, Parcel 31B-244.

Ms. Blumenthal recused herself from discussion.

Alison Richardson, project architect, provided an overview. The project will create a defined driveway entrance with curbs, and a brick wall with a granite base. Five parking spaces will be removed and replaced elsewhere. Ms. Lyon asked about pavers. Ms. Richardson stated that these will be installed alongside the sidewalk. Sidewalks will still be located on both sides of Elm Street.

Ms. Lyon moved to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. Seconded by Ms. Fogel, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Blumenthal returned to discussion.

6:15 PM, Public Hearing: to determine whether the structure at 55 Main Street, Florence, map ID 17C-204 should be determined "Preferably Preserved" pursuant to the Northampton Demolition Ordinance, Chapter 161 of the General Code.

Attorney Tom Reidy, Bacon Wilson provided an overview.

Chairman Drake disclosed that he is a customer of Bacon and Wilson but can act impartially.

Mr. Reidy stated that the existing building is a 1000 sf structure on a 4000 sf lot. It is proposed, along with the adjacent Cumberland Farms store, to be demolished and a larger Cumberland Farms built on both parcels. A Planning Board special permit is also required.

Mr. Gaffney stated that he was not able to find much historical information about the building. Chairman Drake noted that this structure is one of the few remaining small housing turned to commercial structure within the Village.

Mr. Reidy stated that there is no way to reuse the structure for the planned development. Ms. Lyon noted that the Commission's goal is to preserve context, and this structure tells a part of Florence's history. Mr. Kriviskey noted that the design has been compromised, but could be a good candidate for relocation. Ms. Blumenthal stated that part of the building's significance lies in its location. Chairman Drake asked if there is some way to utilize the building's façade. Mr. Reidy stated that the developer would likely wait out the delay period rather than reuse the building.

Ms. Blumenthal moved to determine the building preferably preserved, with a delay of 12 months. This can be reconsidered if an alternate plan is proposed. Seconded by Ms. Fogel, the motion carried unanimously.

Determination of Historical Significance Pursuant to Community Preservation Act – Smith Charities Building, 51 Main Street

Lydia Szych, Smith Charities President, stated that the organization is planning to apply for funding to conduct a historic study of the building. The Will of Oliver Smith is very restrictive on what funds can be used for, and do not allow for any work to the building. Mr. Kriviskey moved to determine the building significant in the history of the City and support any grant applications. Seconded by Ms. Lyon, the motion carried unanimously.

Review and Approve Historic Mitigation Memorandum of Understanding – Upper Roberts Meadow Dam Removal

Ms. LaValley provided a background on the project. As part of federal permitting, the DPW must prepare a plan for historic mitigation for removal of the dam, and is requesting the Historical Commission to be a signatory on the MOU for that mitigation. MassHistoric (MHC) and the Army Corps of Engineers must also sign. MHC has expressed concern over some aspects of both the project and MOU, including requiring an archaeological study and concern about moving blocks from the dam to Pulaski Park and will not be signing at this time.

Chairman Drake stated that he does not see the value in mixing the dam removal and park redevelopment projects, as that aspect of the MOU has created concern. Ms. Lyon added that the delay in the dam removal project may mean the blocks will not be usable for that purpose.

Members of the Friends of Upper Roberts Meadow indicated that additional comments on the mitigation plan should have been sought, and suggested that some documents implied that the Historical Commission had already endorsed that plan, though they had not.

Ms. Lyon moved to hold off on signing the MOU until the Army Corps of Engineers has addressed concerns raised by MHC. Seconded by Mr. Gaffney, the motion carried unanimously.

**Review plans for redevelopment of Male Attendants Building for Site Plan
Review Comment to Planning Board**

The Commission reviewed plans, and agreed to provide comment to the Planning Board to consider moving the parking lot from in front of the building to preserve historic views.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM