

**Town of Center Harbor
Heritage Commission Public Hearing
May 19, 2016**

Corrected & Approved – 6/16/16

Minutes

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:00pm.

Present: Heritage Commission members: Chairperson Kim Baker, Roland Garland, Richard Hanson, Karen Ponton, Dave Reilly.

Members of the Public: Craig Baker (185 High Haith Road), Gwen Bronson (5 Wood Ridge Road), Jeannie & David DeGrace (159 McCrillis Hill Road), Mark Hildebrand (15 Singing Eagle Road), Amy Manfredi (41 Kline Road), Sheila Mohan (79 Bean Road), Mary Richardson (127 McCrillis Hill Road), Jan & Craig Showers (221 High Haith Road), Harry Viens (206 Coe Hill Road), Chris Williams (Windy Row Lane).

Heritage Commission Chairperson K. Baker welcomed everyone to the Public Hearing and introduced the Commissioners. She indicated the Commission's interest in listening to their comments and answering their questions about the proposed rehabilitation of the Center Harbor Town House. After presenting a brief overview of the proposed project, she opened the floor to public discussion.

The major points discussed were:

- Adequate parking& safe access: The Town House sits on about an acre of land, so there is room for additional parking. The parking area just below the Town House on Waukewan Road could be connected to the upper lot by a driveway through the woods behind the building, with some new parking spots along the drive. Parking could then be more safely accessed from Waukewan Road, and a split-rail fence could be installed along Route 3, closing off that access.
- Dangerous Intersection: The Town House sits on a curved section of Route 3 that makes entering Route 3 from either the existing upper parking lot (see previous paragraph) or Waukewan Road difficult and sometimes dangerous. This is a busy intersection of two high-traffic roads, and a motorcycle fatality occurred there a couple of years ago. One resident said she would like to see children's activities at the Town House, but is concerned about their safety on such a high traffic road. Others were concerned that additional insurance costs and liability issues may arise for the Town.

The very important question of how to improve the Route 3/Waukewan Road intersection needs to be addressed by the State of New Hampshire, as both roads

are state-owned.

The proposed future use of the Town House is as meeting space for small community groups, such as the Board of Selectmen and Town committees. These small meetings will not noticeably increase traffic. Even if a second entrance were added at the rear of the building, and the occupancy limit increased to 91 persons, it is rarely expected that the building would be filled to capacity. (With only the current front door, the occupancy limit is about 50).

- Taxpayer Funding: There was considerable discussion about the additional expense to taxpayers to rehabilitate the Town House. Some of the comments included:
 - "...it's a waste of time and money...It's seen its final days..."
 - "...there's no need since we just built the municipal building...only the barest should be done to preserve it...or it's frivolous."
 - "I love the Town House and want to see it preserved...and the Commission is doing a good job. But it's hard to ask taxpayers for money."
 - "I have no problem with preserving the building."

K. Baker stated several times that the Commission strongly believes any expense to the taxpayers (and Commission members *are* taxpayers, too) must be kept as low as possible. She stressed that the Commission is actively pursuing grants (for example, from the NH Preservation Alliance, Mooseplate (NHDHR), and LCHIP) plus donations of money, in-kind services and materials to fund the Town House rehab. She also reiterated that residents will have the opportunity *every year* at Town Meeting to vote on *whether or not to fund* each next step in the Town House rehab, which is expected to take at least 5 years.

It should be noted that the cost estimates contained in the *Historic Building Assessment and Feasibility Study* are based upon acceptable industry standards. They are not bids or quotes for the work. (Copies of the draft report dated 3/31/16 were available at the Public Hearing. The final report dated 5/18/16 will be posted online on the Town website).

- Exterior Painting of the Town House & Front Porch Repair: The Town House is in very good shape for a building of its age, as detailed in the *Historic Building Assessment and Feasibility Study*. Steps should be taken now to prevent further deterioration. The Commission's immediate focus is on the Town House exterior: some of the clapboard is rotten and the paint finish is in very poor condition on every side of the building; the porch floor and the wood columns have also rotted.

An RFP has been issued for the clapboard repair and painting. Unfortunately, volunteer painters cannot help because lead paint is present. However, the front porch repair may be a good opportunity to engage volunteers.

M. Hildebrand repeated the offer he made at Town Meeting to donate all the clapboard needed to replace all of the siding. K. Baker thanked him for his generous offer, but the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties* need to be followed: repair whenever possible, instead of replace.

- Building Upgrades: There is no running water and there are no bathroom facilities at the Town House. The “hanging chimney” has been taken down. As previously discussed, the Commission is focused on preserving the Town House and preventing further deterioration of the existing building. Decisions about any building upgrades and renovations, such as water, septic system or composting toilets, are down the road. K. Baker again stressed that residents will have the opportunity *every year* at Town Meeting to vote on *whether or not to fund* the next step in the Town House rehab.

Some other questions were raised and answered:

- Will the building be used for weddings? Use of the building is for the Town to decide, not the Heritage Commission. Town zoning ordinances also control use.
- How much taxpayer money has already been spent? None. The *Historic Building Assessment and Feasibility Study* for the Town House that was prepared by Christopher P. Williams Architects cost \$8,000: \$4,000 is the NH Preservation Alliance grant monies; \$4,000 is from private donors; and Chris Williams donated his own time.
- Does the State place demands on us if we accept grant funds? It depends on the grant, for example, having to adhere to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*, as mentioned earlier.
- Is a town-wide survey going to be done? Town residents always have the opportunity to discuss this project and whether to fund it at the Annual Town Meeting, as they did in 2015 (when the Town voted to establish the Heritage Commission) and in 2016. Also, members of the public are always welcome at the monthly Commission meetings and are encouraged to attend. Meeting agendas, minutes and additional information are readily available on the Town website.

- Can the Town House be taken over by the State? Can the building be moved? Because the Town House is listed on the *NH Register of Historic Places*, it is protected from being taken by eminent domain and it cannot be moved.
- Is the Commission aware that Waukegan is a state road and that the proposed access off Waukegan Road will require a curb cut? Yes.
- How does the bid process work? The Town's requirements and process for seeking bids was shared.

Some additional comments were:

- "...the Town House is not an historic building; it's just a little schoolhouse. Has selling the building ever been discussed?..."
- "We have a solid, attractive historic building that could be used...The alternative is to lose the building and we've already lost too much in this Town."

The Commission also received written comments by email from residents: one email from Mark Stearns and another from Janet & Seth Stearns, which are attached.

The meeting concluded at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen S. Ponton
Heritage Commission Secretary

atts (2)

Center Harbor Town Clerk

From: teamstearns <teamstearns@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 19, 2016 3:15 PM
To: CH Town Clerk
Subject: Toteamstearns <teamstearns@gmail.com>wn house

Sirs:

I am unable to attend tonight's meeting. Please accept this letter.

I represent the Stearns family and would like to voice our opinions about the Town house restoration project.

No tax payers funds or town bonds should go towards this project ever!

This personally reminds me of the long drawn out Sheaf Harbor House episode.

Private fund raisers only from people whom want to restore it.

Thank you

Mark Stearns

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device

Center Harbor Selectmen

From: Seth Ira Stearns <libertyhill@metrocast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 7:59 PM
To: Center Harbor Selectmen
Subject: Meeting to Discuss the Town House Renovation.

Because of our inability to be at the meeting to discuss the Town House Renovation, please review and make known our thoughts on this subject. This would be appreciated.

1. The town already maintains their town hall complex and the Historical Society building,
Do they need another building to add to the budget that needs much done before it
could be used for the public.
2. At town meeting it was made known of the need for new siding, presence of lead in the
paint presently there, and , new clapboards needed 3. inside there is a hanging chimney which would need total
rebuilding to be functional
and of value.
4. There are presently no bathroom facilities there, and adding this would necessitate
a septic field.
5. There is no water supply to this building thus an artesian well would be needed.
6. There will be added electric and heating bills in maintaining this building for
current activities.
7. This building sits on a very active state highway curve.....not an easy area to
readily access for parking., etc..
8. Parking space would be limited and would not accommodate a large gathering.
9. Liability and insurance charges would be added for the town to pay,.
10. The occupancy number should be considered to be in compliance.
11. The final question is if there is really a need for this Town Hall Renovation,
what will be the long term value and advantage, and of what cost will be added to
the town budget?

Please consider making our thoughts known in our absence, since
it is a public meeting for the town's people to add their thoughts and

] input.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet & Seth Stearns
116 Wood Ridge Rd.,
Center Harbor