

Approved 3/6/2025**Amesbury Historical Commission (AHC) Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: November 7, 2024

Location: Amesbury Council on Aging Senior Center, 68 Elm Street, Amesbury MA

Commissioners Present: Joe Finn - Chair, Chris Akelian, Dick Joltes, Steve Klomps, Jay Williamson, Malcolm Rutter

Meeting called to order at 7:05 PM

1. Review of past meeting minutes:
 - a. Minutes for the September 5, 2024 meeting were submitted by Chris for review. Steve made a motion to table the 9/5/24 meeting minutes review until the following meeting in December, to further review for typos/word changes to make suitable for submission to public record. Motion was seconded by Dick and passed 6-0.
2. 230 Main Street – Demolition application. (MACRIS Listing AME.200 - continued)
 - a. Joe explained that the structure was previously deemed historically significant, and the current question is to determine if the structure is to be preferably preserved or torn down. The commission had determined the decision couldn't be made on the sole basis of the original structural engineer hired by the applicant.
 - i. A peer review/secondary report was requested during the October meeting to validate the findings of the initial structural engineer hired by the applicant
 - b. Nick Cracknell of the Amesbury planning department engaged with Structures North of Salem to provide a peer review, copies of their finalized report were provided to the commission for review during this meeting.
 - i. Nick elaborated on the scope of the peer review, to review the prior submitted engineering report (included in the initial demo package) information provided by Amesbury Public Library, and photos provided by the AHC from a prior site visit.
 - ii. Nick also explained that Structure North was not allowed by the owner/applicant to physically enter the inside of the building while making their assessment. Their investigation was completed with an exterior inspection of the building, include the use of a drone to capture photos of the roof and general structure from above.

- iii. Nick provided a summary of the secondary report's findings, including that Structures North found no compelling reason to support wholesale demolition of the principal historic structure. The report did note that the recommendation to preserve did not extend to the freestanding structure (garage) at the rear of the property, due to overall current condition and separate historical significance.
 - c. Joe inquired whether Lisa Mead, representing the applicant, received a copy of the secondary report. Lisa Mead confirmed that they received a copy of the report and would provide to the applicant for their own review.
 - d. Steve made a motion that the principal structure (main house consisting of the Georgian and Victorian sections) be preferably preserved, but the motion does not apply to the freestanding garage due to its current condition. Motion was seconded by Dick and passed 6-0.
- 3. 80 Haverhill Road – Historic Preservation Special Permit Application (MACRIS Listing AME.492)
 - a. Lisa Mead, representing property applicant, introduced application for multi-family historic preservation special permit and scope for restoration. Requesting that AHC recognize the property as historically and/or architecturally significant.
 - i. In August 2023, the applicant was before AHC for demolition of an attached barn deemed unsafe by the building department. At that time AHC determined that the barn was not historically significant, but the original main house/residential portion was deemed significant and identified for preservation.
 - b. Lisa Mead presented renderings of proposed plans for the property, including new construction inspired by the original barn on the property that was demolished the prior year as additional dwelling units under the historic preservation special permit. Also provided several photographs and drone views with old barn and post demolition of that structure. The proposed restoration scope includes several measures to help preserve the historically significant elements of the original building and proposed new structure; applicant has engaged with Eric Dray to assist with the redesign to ensure that historical affect is maintained.
 - c. Lisa Mead provided in depth history of property/real estate transactions of this parcel dating back to 1877 through last sale in 2023.
 - d. Architect Eileen Graf detailed more of the proposed design to maintain original elements to historic main house structure and additional barn reconstruction to match/mimic the original barn design. This includes removal of any plastic/vinyl material in favor of original wood exterior, restoration of original exterior porch, and proposed connection / recreation of old milk house/kitchen area to connect to the recreated barn, to recreate the connected New England farmhouse originally built on the property.
 - e. The fully restored version of the combined historical home and recreated barn/carriage house and connecting sections would include originally designed wood/historical replica materials facing the street, with longer lasting composite materials to complete the backside / non-street facing portions to help extend the life of the reconstructed portions.

- f. Lisa Mead clarified that the structure needs to be deemed historically significant at this meeting, so the planning board can review and request any changes before the Historic Preservation Special Permit can be granted.
 - i. Chris Akelian offered further questions on the order of historical significance designations of the original main house during last year's meeting when the original barn was deemed separate and not historically significant. It was clarified during subsequent discussion that the most important portion of the property was deemed historically significant and meets qualification for a Historic Preservation Special Permit once the planning board signs off on the restoration proposal. The AHC still needed to find the house is historically significant and with the additions in place, the house will remain historically significant to qualify for the preservation restriction.
 - g. Dick made a motion to recognize the property as historically significant, based on current MACRIS designation and research/discussion provided during tonight's meeting. Motion was seconded by Chris and passed 6-0.
4. CPA Committee – nomination for representation of AHC on the Amesbury Community Preservation Act committee under formation
- a. Joe explained that the AHC is requested to have a member of the commission represented for
 - b. Steve explained he could be party to applications for funding based on his positions with several historical organizations in Amesbury, and requested that he not be considered a candidate for this position given potential conflict of interest.
 - c. Jay mentioned that he has attended similar meetings in Newburyport and volunteered to avail himself for the first year to attend as AHC representative.
5. City of Amesbury Bill no. 2024-133 – surplus of city owned properties at 5 School Street (a.k.a. “Orlando-Bagley House”) and 9 School Street (a.k.a. “Ordway School”)
- a. Nick Cracknell presented on behalf of the city council a mayoral and council sponsored bill to surplus/sell the 2 properties from city to private ownership to convert/update to most likely residential or mixed use
 - i. Both properties currently in significant disrepair but are historical in nature and would be preferably preserved/restored.
 - ii. 9 School has been city owned since 19th century and 5 School was bought in 2001 originally earmarked for expansion of Amesbury Library that never moved forward.
 - b. Nick remarked that at this point, 5 School is in worse state than 9 School, needing significant repair to several structural systems including roof and foundation. He has engaged with city inspectors, mayor Gove and the city council to pursue preservation instead of demolition of both buildings, both as a method of maintaining historical preservation and minimizing cost to the city for demolition.
 - i. 5 School Street: proposed single family unit
 - ii. 9 School Street: proposed up to additional 8 residential units

- c. Once surplus/sold, new owners will come before planning board and AHC to present/apply for historical preservation special permits; any proceeds of sale of these 2 properties to be earmarked for restoration of Amesbury Public Library
 - d. On the city council's behalf, Nick requests the AHC's support of bill no. 2024-133 to earmark the 2 properties for surplus in an expedient period to ensure minimal additional deterioration while the properties continue to sit unoccupied.
 - i. Steve questioned if it would be 1 or 2 separate developers to take on restoration and preservation, Nick replied that it would be preferable for 1 buyer/developer to take on both properties.
 - e. Chris made a motion to acknowledge AHC support of bill no. 2024-133 to the mayor and city council, seconded by Dick. Motion passed 6-0.
 - f. Jay volunteered to draft preliminary letter of support to Mayor's office and city council.
6. Massachusetts Historical Commission – grant application submittal for fiscal year 2025
- a. Meghan Fahey mentioned that grant applications were pending for additional surveys in two areas: Clarks Pond – Congress Street development and Lake Attitash cottages toward the Merrimac line. These areas were not included in prior surveys.
 - b. Nick mentioned that in the interest of time, a letter of intent for applying to the 2025 grant should be drafted, vetted and sent to the Mass. Historical Commission for consideration of funding.
 - c. Meghan clarified to request a motion for AHC support drafting letter of intent to apply for MHC funding to finance these surveying efforts.
 - d. Motion made by Dick, seconded by Jay. Motion passed 6-0.
7. Correspondence - Jacobsen engineering application for weigh station on I-495
- a. Joe mentioned that this is merely procedural notification on behalf of Jacobsen to qualify for federal funding and to ensure no historical impact to proposed installation of weigh station on I-495, south of I-95 interchange.
 - b. No significant historical implication to consider.
8. Correspondence – Jay noted additional communication regarding 142 Main Street
- a. Peter Riddle had continued concern over 2nd Congregational Church not meeting obligations for the sunburst door design restoration facing Nayson's court to match original side facing Main Street
 - b. Additional grievance noted over condo association blocking light in the entranceway. Jay contacted Lisa Mead representing the condo association over additional grievance.
9. A motion to adjourn was made by Steve and seconded by Malcolm. Passed 6-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectively submitted,
Malcolm Rutter