

Newburyport Historical Commission
Minutes of the April 15, 2010 Meeting

1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Newburyport Historical Commission was called to order by Chair Linda Smiley at 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were members Linda Smiley, Tom Kolterjahn, Ned McGrath, Leah McGavern, Stephen Feige and Margaret Welch.

3. Advisory Review

Arrowhead Family Farm

129 Ferry Road

Dick Chase distributed copies of his proposal to preserve and operate the 1789 farmhouse and barn at Arrowhead Farm. He said he has been discussing a possible preservation restriction with the Trust for Public Land and the Essex County Greenbelt Association.

He has requested that the CPC consider his application although it will be submitted after the deadline. He asked for a letter of support from NHC for obtaining a bridge loan. Linda Smiley said the Commission would need to know that the money would be spent on preservation before such a letter could be written.

Whittier Bridge/I-95 Improvement

Mr. Harris said that under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and section 4(f) of the National Transportation Act of 1966 projects may not result in a net harm to historic resources. If the Whittier Bridge were declared a historic resource, its demolition would have to be mitigated. This might be an opportunity to create enhancements at Maudslay State Park with federal funds. Mr. Harris is proposing that a small portion of Maudslay be rededicated and granite blocks from the bridge be used to display selected poems and writings of John Greenleaf Whittier. He also said the State is attempting to avoid having to complete a full environmental impact statement. If the effort were successful, it would mean that there would be no federal coordination for traffic flow or emergency evacuation. Stephen Feige said a finding of historical significance must be based on the architecture, history and cultural aspects of the bridge and not on some other agenda.

4. New Business

• **Essex National Heritage Scenic Byway**

Leah McGavern updated the Commission on the Essex National Heritage Scenic Byway. She has attended two meetings and was impressed by the process that is being used to produce a plan for a scenic byway that would follow Route 1A. The meetings will result in a corridor management plan that would allow for the application for federal funds for signage or brochures.

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- **Stretch Code**

Leah McGavern attended a meeting on the proposed stretch code. Historic homes in the national register district would be exempt from the requirements of the code. Leah is concerned that not all historic structures in the district have been listed or surveyed. Margaret Welch said that any structure built before 1934 would be contributing unless drastically altered. Stephen Feige said the Massachusetts building code defines historic structures.

- **Update on the Meeting with the ZBA**

Bill Harris said he attended the ZBA meeting at which the plans for 33 Market Street were presented and believes the Commission did all it could have. The sentiment of the community was in favor of allowing the applicant to add a third floor to the structure. He recommended that NHC discuss with the ZBA the types of situations in which adaptive reuse might not be successful and approach the Mayor about appointing someone with a background in historic preservation to the ZBA. Commission members said they could have better communicated to the ZBA NHC's efforts to work with the applicants in exploring alternatives. Margaret Welch said communication with the ZBA could be improved. The ZBA does not see the minutes from NHC meetings and is not fully informed about the reasoning behind its decisions. Stephen Feige suggested there be a checklist with each demolition application that indicates before which boards the applicant has appeared and which boards will be reviewing the project after the Commission.

- **Forrester Street**

Tom Kolterjahn visited Forrester Street. He said the proposed towers will have an obvious impact on the neighborhood and the area is more open than it appears in the photograph. There does not seem to be a forum through which the neighbors may express their views on the project. Linda Smiley said this is not NHC's purview, but she will contact the planning office about conducting a public hearing.

- Tom Kolterjahn displayed photographs of the bottom of Inn Street from the 1970s. He said if a developer would propose to fill in that space, it would be appropriate for the historic structures to be replicated. He said current guidelines could call for the building being stepped back or the roofline lowered. Margaret Welch said the guidelines are different for commercial districts than residential districts. Tom said it is unusual for an applicant to be willing to spend the time and money to replicate a structure and NHC should support the applicant who is, as was the case for 28 Green Street. Stephen Feige said it is never appropriate to mimic the original structure.

5. Minutes

Tom Kolterjahn moved to approve the minutes of April 1. Ned McGrath seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Stephen Feige moved to approve the minutes of March 18. Margaret Welch seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.