

SOUTHBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

August 15, 2019 7:00 PM

Evelyn A. Petrelli Room, Southbridge Town Hall

1. **Call to order**: The Southbridge Historical Commission (SHC) met on Thursday, Aug. 15, 2019 in the Evelyn A. Petrelli Room of the Southbridge Town Hall. The SHC meeting was called to order by Secretary Amanda Richards at 7:07 p.m. This was due to the Acting Chairman Wm. Casey Jolin being unable to attend the meeting. In addition to Amanda, present at the meeting were Helen Boyle, Linda Langevin-Zonia, Helen Lenti, and Arthur Martin. Guests in attendance included Economic Development and Planning Director Rosemary Scrivens, CDBG Coordinator Peg Dean and Helen Boyle's son Joshua.

Amanda made a motion to discuss agenda item **4. Discussion of Letters for Historic Tax Credits for American Optical Co. Buildings 7, 60, 12, 5-15 Case Street; 70 Foster Street; & Hamilton Mills** before agenda item **2. Meeting Minutes of July 18, 2019** since Rosemary Scrivens was there to discuss the letters with the Commission and answer a few questions regarding certain properties in town. Arthur seconded the motion. Five were in favor. One absent. Motion passed.

4. **Discussion of Letters for Historic Tax Credits for American Optical Co. Buildings**

7,

60, 12, 5-15 Case Street; 70 Foster Street; & Hamilton Mills: Rosemary explained that the letters (listed above), which were to be discussed during that evening's meeting, had been signed by Casey the day before and mailed out earlier on Aug. 15th. This was due to the fact that Casey would be unable to attend the meeting and his signature was needed on the letters.

Amanda explained to the Commission that she had met with Casey the night before and discussed with him what was on the meeting's agenda, since he was unable to attend and she would have to conduct the meeting. They also discussed the historic tax credit letters that were to be discussed at the meeting. Casey informed Amanda that he signed off on them. Amanda explained to Casey that the letters that he signed had a few typos on them. Rosemary had sent Amanda electronic copies of the letters a week prior, to provide to the Commission for the Aug. 15th meeting. After reviewing them, Amanda noticed the mistakes and fixed them. She was going to bring those revised copies to the meeting, so they could be discussed with the Commission and Rosemary. Amanda had Casey sign off on the revised letters to bring to the meeting for discussion.

Rosemary said that she didn't know that there were typos and thought that since Casey signed off on the letters in her office, then the Commission was all set and she could mail them out, which she did. Amanda showed Rosemary the typos and Rosemary said that she would correct the electronic versions that she had, based off of what Amanda corrected, so the next time they are sent out, the letters don't have mistakes. As far as the letters listed above, Rosemary said there was no way of changing them since they were already mailed out.

After discussing with Rosemary why the Commission wants to review the letters each time they come up for review, it was decided on by all SHC members present at the meeting that when Rosemary receives any letter(s) for approval by the SHC, she needs to contact Amanda, the secretary. By doing so, Amanda will put the letter(s) on the agenda to be discussed during a meeting. Once the SHC has its' meeting and the letter(s) have been reviewed, discussed and/or signed off on, Amanda will contact Rosemary and give her the signed letter(s). Rosemary can then mail them out to the correct recipients. This will allow for the SHC to review projects each time they are presented and allows everyone on the Commission the ability to know what the Commission is supporting and doing.

Once that was decided on, Rosemary explained that letters are usually up for review every three to six months and she never knows exactly when letters will need to be reviewed. She said that there are rolling deadlines on the letters and explained that she isn't told when certain application deadlines for tax credits are due. Instead, when she receives the request for signatures on the letters she in turn contacts the SHC to review them.

Rosemary then discussed with the Commission the contents of the Hamilton Mills letter. She said that currently the owners of the Hamilton Mills building (the Jacques family), which is located on Mill Street, has many tenants in the building. Some of the tenants include A& M Tool and Die Co. and SJC Custom Drums. Rosemary said that the building is continuously being renovated to satisfy the needs of the tenants that rent out the building. The owners of the building are applying for tax credits to see if they can get some credits to help with the continual renovations being done in the building.

Rosemary then discussed the former AO property/Southbridge Innovation Center. Amanda asked Rosemary why the zoning to one part of the campus (building #12, 5-15 Case Street) was changing from manufacturing to residential. This question was one of the questions the SHC had regarding the property after Mr. Norton met before the SHC, back in the spring. Rosemary said that technically the zoning to the whole campus isn't changing, but instead Mr. Norton (owner of the property) applied for a special permit to change the building, 5-15 Case Street, into affordable housing. She explained that Mr. Norton had presented his plans before the Planning Board and notified the abutters of his plans for that section of the campus. In order for the Planning Board to grant him the special permit, which was done, there had to be a public hearing for the public to express their concerns and ask questions regarding the project. The hearing was held a few years ago around the time Mr. Norton began applying for tax credits. The Southbridge Innovation campus is zoned as manufacturing, not commercial.

Rosemary explained that the zoning in the town has changed and there are three levels in terms of residential dwellings. The first is R1 which is single family homes. R2 refers to two family dwellings and R3 refers to multi-family dwellings.

Linda then asked what the progress was for 80 Marcy Street (Mary E. Wells School). Rosemary said that the project finally received some tax credits and state funding. She isn't 100% sure exactly where the architectural company is as far as engineering plans, but expects them to begin construction on the project shortly. She said that since the apartments will be

offered to people 55+, she put the architect/owner of the property in touch with the Senior Center.

Linda then asked about The Vienna (14 South Street). Rosemary said that since the fire the property has changed ownership twice. The first owner had purchased it in hopes of fixing it up and possibly creating apartments and maybe a restaurant. That person then sold it to a type of LLC company, located out of Oxford, and was thinking of turning it into a multiple housing dwelling, which would include an apartment on the first floor.

Linda then asked if there is a way for a property owner to get grant money to have the exterior of their property painted and Rosemary said yes. Property owners can apply for a CDBG grant and her office had been advertising the Commercial Rehab/Façade Improvement Program, which includes the updating of awnings and signs. The property owner only has to fund up to 25% of the total cost of the project, the rest is funded by the grant. Another program she explained was if a property owner keeps the property for “x” amount of years, once improvements have been made by using funds from her office, then 100% of the loan used to make those improvements is forgiven. But if the property is sold before the “x” amount of years, then the owner has to pay the town back the money that was given in order to do the project. It’s an incentive for property owners to keep and maintain their properties. This program isn’t used for churches, but for merchant type properties and has to be located within the “target area” of the town.

Helen B. then asked about the small little storefront on lower Main Street, before the Rotary, which was called Ida’s Market. Amanda said that it was once Town & Country Florists before they moved across the street. Rosemary said that she believed it was going to be a party planning/supply store.

Helen B. then asked if Rosemary knew what was going in next to the laundry mat across the street from Trinity Catholic Academy on Hamilton Street. She had noticed the building being painted white and wondered if the property owner had contacted Rosemary. Rosemary didn’t know of any plans for the storefront next to the laundry mat.

Helen L. asked about the vacant lot on Main Street, which had been the site of one of the brick buildings, which had been lost to a fire in Aug. of 2016. Rosemary said that Mr. Rick Clemence owned the property and was working on 70 Foster Street before working on Main Street. She thought he was planning on building a combination restaurant/office building at the Main Street site.

Helen L. then asked when the lease is up for the DOD at the AO. Rosemary said that the contract ends in 2021. Currently the DOD reserves 120 rooms at any given time at the Southbridge Hotel and Conference Center. Rosemary also explained that Mr. Norton wants to fix the two bridges and the pedestrian bridges on the Southbridge Innovation campus.

Linda asked about Sacred Heart Church campus. Rosemary said that she wants to meet with the property owner, David Rivera, to discuss plans for the property, since nothing seems to have been done to the property since he purchased it back in Oct. of 2018.

Rosemary then explained that a new Fire Station site is being considered. She said that it looks like the committee, which is overseeing the plans for the project, is leaning towards the Central Street area, since the other proposed locations for the new fire station weren't plausible. Currently, the town and the committee are in talks with Gov. Baker's Administration about funding the project. Gov. Baker is looking to help communities that need new public works buildings (i.e. police and fire stations). The town is trying to figure out how to finance the project, which would cost a few million dollars to complete, and then see if Gov. Baker's Administration could come up with legislation to financially help out the town. Rosemary explained that the whole proposed project has been an ongoing thing.

Once everyone was done discussing the current state of the town and all questions were answered, commission members thanked Rosemary for her time and for the information. Rosemary left the meeting. At that time, Amanda had Peg Dean present the information she had regarding agenda item **5. Central Street Parking Lot & Kiosk/Map Discussion with Peg Dean, CDBG Coordinator.**

5. Central Street Parking Lot & Kiosk/Map Discussion with Peg Dean, CDBG Coordinator: Peg Dean explained that Phase II of the project includes the design and construction of the pedestrian plaza, concrete drainage, and concrete footings for the lights. After much negotiating, the plan is now to have stamped concrete to look like pavers since actual brick would have been too costly to have installed. The initial project was designed 3 to 4 years ago so there have been many changes to the plan. Phase III will include street plantings, landscaping, and signs. Peg explained that the SHC should aim to have the kiosk completed and ready to be installed by April. She said that she would attend the next SHC meeting in September to see what the SHC has decided on. She also said that it would be a good idea to have Councilor Dave Adams informed about the kiosk and he could champion the idea for the SHC with the Town Council.

Helen B. said that she would contact and meet with Bay Path to see what their suggestions are regarding the design and construction of the kiosk and possibly give the SHC a quote for the project. With that information, the SHC can make decisions regarding the details to the kiosk and map and then present it to Peg and Councilor Adams. By the end of September/early October the construction of the kiosk could begin and the map could be designed in detail.

Peg then asked who/what organization would be in charge of maintaining it and whether it would be double sided or single sided. Amanda said that she sees it as being a double sided kiosk with the SHC's map on one side and possibly announcements and events in the town on the other. Amanda said that the SHC could maintain their side and doesn't know which committee, board or department would be required to maintain the other. Other commission members agreed that the SHC could maintain the map side, but possibly the other side could be under the Recreation Director's jurisdiction. Amanda asked Peg if the Recreation Director would be in charge of the "grandstand"/ "pavilion" area. Peg said that she didn't know, but it

could be since it could be used for public gatherings and someone would need to coordinate that, which in turn would be the Rec. Director.

Helen L. then asked whether it could be lighted. Peg said that she didn't know, but would talk with the engineer about the kiosk to see what his thoughts were and where it could be placed. She'd ask him about whether or not there was enough infrastructure to have lighting installed for it. Helen B. suggested that maybe it could use solar lighting to illuminate it. Amanda said that maybe some of the students at Bay Path could put a solar panel on it.

After lots of discussion, Peg said that she would speak with the engineer about the kiosk before the SHC's September 19th meeting. Peg asked Amanda if she could provide her with another copy of the kiosk sketch she designed, in which Amanda said she would get it to her within the week. The SHC and Peg decided on the following timeline regarding the kiosk and map for the Central Street Parking Lot:

September

- Peg will speak with the engineer on feasibility to install kiosk (location, size, lights)
- Helen B. will speak with Bay Path on thoughts and suggestions regarding project (woodworking/cabinetry, metal fabrication, electrical, graphic design, etc.)
- Sept. 19th**-SHC meeting with Peg Dean and Councilor Adams to discuss the project and details from the engineer and Bay Path

October

- Location of kiosk will be mapped out
- construction of kiosk and design of map will begin

November

- Plans of kiosk and map ready to be given to the committee, Planning Board and Town Council

April

- kiosk and map are completed and placed and installed in the parking lot

Once everything was decided on, the SHC thanked Peg for meeting with the Commission to go over the details regarding the project. Peg soon left the meeting.

2. **Meeting Minutes of July 18, 2019**: The meeting minutes for the July 18, 2019 meeting were read. Helen L. made a motion to accept the meeting minutes with corrections. Linda seconded the motion. Five were in favor. One absent. Motion passed.
3. **Treasurer's Report**: Helen L. said that she did not receive anything from Karen Harnois the town accountant regarding how much the SHC had in its FY 2020 budget. Linda said that she did not have a chance to find out how much the SHC had, but would visit the Town Accounting Office to find out. Amanda said that she was paid the \$153.10, which came from the bill she had submitted in June for all of the office supplies purchased from Staples.

6. **Discussion of Historical Commission Bylaws & Cover Letter**: Linda provided all members with copies of the updated version of the bylaws, which were read and discussed. All members present agreed with what was written in the Demolition Delay Bylaws and the Cover Letter. Members signed the cover letter and Amanda said that she would send it to Christopher Skelly from the Massachusetts Historical Commission for his perusal and suggestions.
7. **Discussion of Ashland Ave/Quinebaug River Bank Stabilization Project**: Amanda told the Commission that she mailed out all the letters regarding the project and brought an article about the project to the meeting. It was published in the Southbridge Evening News on July 25th, 2019, which gave a summary of what the project entails and explained that there would be a public hearing that same evening (July 25th) at the Town Hall, conducted by the MassDOT. Amanda said that she would put the article in with the SHC's meeting minutes and also put a copy of it with the application folder for the project.

No one from the Commission attended the public hearing, but Amanda said that she watched the Public Cable Access Channel's recording of it, which streamed a few days after the hearing. She explained that some members from the Conservation Commission attended and asked good questions regarding the materials that would be removed during the construction of the project. She said that she believed that there would be one more public hearing regarding the project, but wasn't sure since the deadline to begin was sometime in Sept.

8. **Applications from the Public**: The SHC did not have any applications from the public.
9. **Correspondence**: The SHC did not receive anything and nothing was in the SHC's mailbox.
10. **Review of MASS. Preservation Manual**: Amanda made a motion to postpone the Review of the Mass. Preservation Manual. Helen B. seconded the motion. Five were in favor. One absent. Motion passed.
11. **Special Projects**:
 - a. **Neighborhood Signs**
 - b. **Pictures of Homes on National Historic Registry**
 - c. **Evelyn A. Petrelli Room Dedication**

Amanda asked the Commission members if they wanted to discuss any of the agenda items under agenda item 11. Linda asked the Commission if they wanted to decide on a date to have the dedication for Evelyn. Arthur said that Evelyn's room should get done first, by having the artifacts hung up on the walls; a date could be decided on at a later time. Linda and Amanda discussed and agreed on a day they would meet with Joel, the Town Hall's Maintenance Custodian, to go over the décor that needs to be hung up in the room since he will be doing the work.

No discussion was had in regards to agenda items **11a & 11b**.

12. **New Business**: Amanda passed out copies of Digital Commonwealth's profile on the Fire Station, to the Commission members. She passed them out since there has been a lot of planning the past few months, by the town, for a new fire station and Amanda wanted to make sure commission members had information on the Elm Street building. Arthur said that it looks like the town is leaning towards building a new fire dept. building and that would mean that the old one and the property it's on, which is owned by the Town, could possibly be sold. If so, Arthur said that he wouldn't mind seeing the building being turned into a type of restaurant or even a brewery. He also said that if the two bays which house some of the fire trucks are taken off the building, its okay since they weren't original to the design of the building when it was first built. Other commissioners agreed with Arthur and said that the future of the building is still unknown and hopefully it will remain and be turned into a place that can be enjoyed by the public.
13. **Commissioner's Forum**: Commission members decided to send a "Get Well" card to Casey since he had surgery earlier that day. Helen L. offered to mail out the card on behalf of the Commission. Amanda thanked Helen L. for doing that.

Arthur provided Amanda a list of the meeting minutes that need to be fixed on the Town's website. Amanda said that she would talk with Yvonne Tortis, the Executive Assistant to the Town Manager, to get those corrected.

Helen B., Helen L, and Linda talked about their "fieldtrip" to the Southbridge Credit Union's barn on July 19th, in which they photographed/documented the interior of the building. The three of them met with one of the executives of the bank and while there, they asked if they could take pictures of the basement level. They were denied that request, but were able to see the first and second floors. The three of them explained that the barn seemed to be in good shape and there didn't seem to be any issues with the wood. The barn wood was beautiful and was described as looking satiny and red in tone. Helen B. described the rafters and dormers that adorned the second level and the horse stalls on one side of the first floor. Helen B. said that the cupola was to be given to OSV, but the rest of the barn was set to be torn down.

The demolition of the barn began sometime after that, during the end of July. As of Aug. 15th, the barn was completely gone and the construction crew doing the work was filling in the hole left by the foundation of the building. Helen B. submitted a CD containing 57 photos she took of the interior of the barn to the SHC, for its' records. Amanda thanked Helen B. for the CD and said that she would see if she could have them developed to include in the SHC's photo album.

On that note, Amanda discussed an article she found in the Living & Homes section of *Telegram & Gazette*, dated Sunday, July 21, 2019. The article describes the midcentury, modern, glass house located at 106 Cole Ave. The article talks about the home being built in 1964 by the late, "legendary" New England architect, Donald

Jasinski. It is referred to as “The Edmondson House” since it is believed to have been built for Dr. Edmondson. Amanda brought the article to the meeting to give an example of one of the homes that would be protected under the Demolition Delay Bylaw if passed, since it is unique, is a historic example of midcentury modern architecture, and was built more than 50 years ago. Other members said that they had seen/read the article and agreed that it could be protected.

Amanda informed the Commission of a new possible member to the SHC, Richard Sullivan, who has sent in his application to the Town Manager. She said she was informed by the Town Manager’s Office that in order for Mr. Sullivan to be appointed to the Commission, the SHC first needs to vet him and give their suggestions to the Town Manager. Then he will be vetted by the Town Manager, the EHS Subcommittee and then lastly the Town Council, if everything goes well. Amanda said she would put Mr. Sullivan on the agenda for review for the next SHC meeting which would be on Sept. 19th.

14. **Adjournment:** A motion was made by Amanda and seconded by Helen B. to adjourn the meeting. Five were in favor. One absent. Motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Submitted by:

Amanda V. Richards, Secretary