

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY COMMITTEE

MEETING NOTES

Monday, March 05, 2018

On Monday, March 05, 2018 Local Historic District Committee members: Kenneth Warchol; Harry Berkowitz & Robert Laflamme met at the Town Hall Annex from 6:00 PM to approximately 6:45 PM.

R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner was also in attendance with Daniel O'Neil, Member absent.

Kenneth Warchol noted Mr. O'Neil's absent was due to a family matter. Mr. Warchol explained that the Committee still has a vacancy and cannot officially hold a meeting until a quorum of the Committee is satisfied. Mr. Bechtholdt reminded Committee members that he will provide staff support however is not considered a voting member and does not count towards a quorum. Mr. Warchol indicated that a minimum of four (4) members would constitute a quorum.

The purpose of this informal meeting was to meet one another, review the role of the LHDSC and establish a timeline for its completion. After general introductions, Mr. Warchol shared with the Committee members copies of Massachusetts Historical Commission's guidance document entitled "Establishing Local Historic Districts". Mr. Warchol then briefly reviewed with Mr. Berkowitz and Mr. Laflamme a (draft) map listing 19 to 20 properties within the boundaries of the proposed Whitinsville Local Historic District.

Mr. Bechtholdt then distributed a flowchart he prepared based upon the timelines detailed in the guidance document prepared by MHC. Robert Laflamme indicated that he had reviewed the manual prepared by MHC, noting that it seems very thorough; Mr. Laflamme expressed concerns with the time commitment to complete all required tasks.

Mr. Warchol explained that the Town Manager had secured municipal funds (2017 Fall Annual Town Meeting) to hire a preservation consultant to assist the Committee in preparing the Preliminary Study Report. Mr. Warchol indicated that he has already prepared a majority of the Form B -Building inventory forms for the properties identified. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that he would put together a Request for Price Proposals (RFP) to hire a historic preservation professional consultant.

Harry Berkowitz stressed the importance of getting this done, noting having the National Park Service recognize Northbridge (Whitinsville) as part of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park was a big deal. Mr. Berkowitz felt this was a tremendous opportunity for the town to bring in tourism and other economic development into the community.

Mr. Warchol indicated that he had, a number of years ago, looked to create a local historic district for Whitinsville however there was too much opposition. Mr. Warchol acknowledged concerns of property owners placing restrictions on their property and was willing to consider a number of exemptions that would not be subject to the local historic district bylaw. Mr. Warchol agreed with Mr. Berkowitz on the

importance of formally being designated as a National Park, which cannot be done without adopting a local historic district.

Mr. Warchol noted a draft bylaw was circulated previously which was not necessarily representative of the bylaw provisions for Whitinsville, it was meant as a template and sample of an existing bylaw. Mr. Berkowitz suggested circulating a draft bylaw that did not include exemptions set things back for the Committee. Mr. Bechtholdt agreed, noting it was premature to consider bylaw provisions before concluding public outreach.

Robert Laflamme also agreed and stressed the importance of communicating with the public and meeting with the property owners early on in the process. Mr. Warchol explained that a property owners meeting was held in November 2016. Mr. Bechtholdt shared with Mr. Laflamme a copy of the PowerPoint presentation reviewed at the November property owners' meeting.

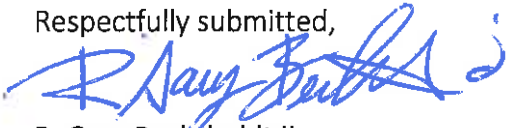
Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that he has since reached out to a number of the property owners about the idea of creating a local historic district and the ability to incorporate exemptions such as paint color, roofing materials, window treatments, etc.

Committee members reviewed the flowchart; Mr. Warchol proposed that the Committee look to the Fall Annual Town Meeting (October 2018) when the LHD map & LHD Bylaw could be considered for acceptance.

After some general discussion regarding tasks and timing Mr. Bechtholdt offered to contact the property owners to invite them to a public meeting in April 2018. Mr. Bechtholdt will also prepare a property owner survey for distribution; copies of same will be forwarded to Committee members.

The next meeting of the Local Historic District Study Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, April 24, 2018 (6:00 PM -Town Hall), where the LHDSC will meet with property owners.

Respectfully submitted,



R. Gary Bechtholdt II
Northbridge Town Planner

Cc: Town Clerk