

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

September 12, 2002 7:00 p.m.

Town Hall, Conference Room 3

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDING:

Commission Members: Richard Cheek and Lydia Ogilby, Co-Chairs; Paul Bell; Arleyn Levee; Richard Pichette; Nancy Richards, Michael Smith; Sharon Vanderslice. Absent: Linn Hobbs, Jonathan Treat.

McLean Hospital Representatives: Michele Gougeon, Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer; Andrew Healy, Building Superintendent; Stephen Kidder, Esq., Hemenway and Barnes.

Office of Community Development: Timothy Higgins, Senior Planner.

Belmont Cemetery Commission: Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Chair; Bob Gardner.

Pleasant Street Residents: Joan and Arthur Wolfson.

MCLEAN HOSPITAL HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Secretary Robert Durand, of the state's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, in a certificate dated July 1, 2002, requested that the Town of Belmont, the Belmont Historic District Commission, McLean Hospital, and the Massachusetts Historical Commission consider ways to reuse rather than demolish Hope, Ledge, North, and West Cottages and the Superintendent's Residence during redevelopment of McLean property. Hospital representatives came before the Commission to discuss ways of publicizing the availability of these five buildings for relocation to other sites. These buildings will be available at approximately \$1 each to any party willing to pay the cost of moving them to a new location. On behalf of the BHDC, Richard Cheek presented a list of suggestions (attached). Other attendees suggested that publicity also be sought in the *Belmont Citizen Herald* and in *Yankee Magazine's* House for Sale column.

Bob Gardner of the Cemetery Commission asked how much it would cost to move one of these buildings. McLean representatives presented relocation estimates (attached) for the Superintendent's Residence and the Hope Cottage. These estimates include costs for building a new foundation, seaming the house back together, and installing utilities. Lydia Ogilby said her son had moved houses on the West Coast for considerably less. Ellen Cushman said that the Cemetery Commission might be interested in one of the cottages. Relocating a cottage to the new cemetery on Concord Avenue would keep the cottage in its original context, and very little permitting would be required. However,

Cushman said, such a move would require "money that we don't have." She wondered if there was a philanthropic donor who would be willing to help.

Nancy Richards asked if one of the cottages could be used as a non-denominational chapel.

Richard Pichette suggested that whatever amount the McLean developers expected to spend on demolition of these buildings be put towards relocation costs instead. Nancy Richards said that the cost to take down "a pretty large building" was about \$50,000.

At the request of Tim Higgins, the Commission took a vote on whether the Hospital should proceed with advertising the buildings as suggested. Mr. Cheek asked for a show of hands and a majority of the members voted in favor. McLean representatives agreed to have professional photographs taken of the exterior of all five buildings, to be used for publicity purposes.

PLEASANT STREET RECONSTRUCTION

The Commission reviewed portions of the 75% design plan for the reconstruction of this street. Concerns were expressed about the width of the roadway, the turning radiuses onto adjoining streets, landscaping around the sidewalks, and the size and species of the new trees that are to be planted in place of old ones. Joan and Arthur Wolfson of 737 Pleasant Street objected to the construction of a sidewalk on the north side of the street between Snake Hill Road and Concord Avenue. They said that it would be detrimental to the rural character of the neighborhood and detract from the historic stone walls that border the street. Ms. Wolfson presented a copy of a letter that was sent to Belmont's Traffic Advisory Committee by 13 Pleasant Street residents who live on that block and oppose the sidewalk's construction. When questioned, she said that the residents of Snake Hill Road were divided on the issue. Rather than walking on this stretch of Pleasant Street, many of them now use a path that cuts through the woods to Old Concord Avenue, and then walk down to Pleasant Street from there.

The Commission agreed to appoint a subcommittee to study the Pleasant Street plans in more detail and draft written comments for the Board of Selectmen. The subcommittee members are Paul Bell, Richard Pichette, and Sharon Vanderslice (all residents of the Pleasant Street Historic District) and Arleyn Levee, a landscape historian.

TOWN HALL COMPLEX

Mike Smith, HDC representative to the Town Hall Complex Building Committee, said that this committee would be meeting more frequently in the coming months and invited other interested members to attend.

MINUTES

The Commission reviewed the minutes of the August 7 meeting and approved them with revisions to a few phone numbers and to the list of those absent.

OLD BUSINESS

6 Stella Road – The commission was unable to review the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness submitted by Carolyn Brownsberger for alterations to the front stoop and entrance stairway of 6 Stella Road because the application had not been received in time to give the required 14-day notice to abutters. The Brownsbergers will be asked to submit the list of the names and addresses of the abutters so that notice can be sent out in time for the application to be reviewed at the October 9 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Cheek welcomed Sharon Vanderslice to the Commission and said that he hoped she would be able to help the Commission put together a preservation plan for the town as a whole, and also help keep more complete minutes of the Commission's meetings. Ms. Vanderslice said that it would be useful if the Commission published a "How To" book for owners of historic buildings, so that they would know not only "what they can't do, but what they can." It would also be helpful if local realtors had a packet of information to give to prospective buyers of homes in the Historic District so that these buyers understand what the procedures are for making changes to houses in the district before they consider buying a house here.

The next meeting of the Historic District Commission will be held on Wednesday, October 9, at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes recorded by: Sharon Vanderslice

SUGGESTED METHODS FOR PUBLICIZING THE AVAILABILITY OF THE FORMER SUPER-INTENDENT'S RESIDENCE AND OF HOPE, LEDGE, NORTH AND WEST COTTAGES FOR RELOCATION TO ALTERNATIVE SITES.

1. Advertise with text and photographs in the FALL issue of Preservation and People, Historic Massachusetts' quarterly newsmagazine. HMI will place the notice without charge since the McLean Hospital campus was formerly on their Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources list.
2. Advertise with text and photographs in the Historic Properties for Sale section of Preservation Magazine published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and in the corresponding section of Preservation Online on the Trust's website. Also, emphasize the need to save the buildings as a preservation emergency by posting an E-mail letter under Preservation 911 on the website. Determine whether the magazine would consider writing an article on the effort to preserve the campus.
3. Find out if it would be possible to list the buildings on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's website.
4. Advertise with text and photographs in Old-House Journal.
5. Put out an RFP to be distributed to developers who might consider moving one or more of the buildings. The Massachusetts Historical Commission can provide a list of developers who could be notified.
6. Solicit the help of local realtors in finding private individuals who might be interested in moving one of the buildings. The Boston Office of Sotheby's International Realty has expressed willingness to send out a notice to its affiliated brokers in the greater Boston area.
7. Ask The Boston Globe to run an article on the effort to save the buildings. Contact Robert Campbell to see if he would be interested in writing a column about the public/private preservation effort at the Hospital.
8. Other ideas for getting the word out?

9/12/02