

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
April 2, 2003
Town Hall
Meeting Minutes

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APPROVED
WITH
ATTACHMENT

Attending:

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

480 PLEASANT STREET

Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacement of 20 original windows with matching Pella wooden sash units with insulated glass was approved. Existing storm windows will be removed.

MCLEAN MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

With the addition of language specifying archival processing and printing for photographic documentation, the draft Memorandum of Agreement between McLean Hospital Corporation, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Regarding the Redevelopment of the McLean Hospital was approved. The Agreement specifies the measures that have been or will be taken to advertise the availability of five cottages and the former Superintendent's Residence for removal to off-campus sites and to document the buildings prior to being moved or demolished.

TOWN HALL COMPLEX

Michael Smith reported that the final set of plans for the rehabilitation of the Town Hall Annex and the School Administration Building has been sent out for bids. The Town Hall renovations will be completed on time. One of the copper finials that needed to be replaced has been saved for future display.

CUSHING LIBRARY

Richard Cheek reported that the original agreement between the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities and the Town of Belmont specifies that the Cushing Library must be returned to the SPNEA if the Town is unable to restore and reuse it. As a result, the SPNEA will be responsible for notifying architectural salvage dealers about the history and availability of the Library, with the understanding that any interested party will promptly remove the Library parts from storage at its own expense.

483 PLEASANT STREET

Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for plans for a small kitchen addition to the rear of 483 Pleasant Street was approved. Changes made in the designs by owner Andy Salzman and architect Jane Langmuir in response to suggestions made by the Commission were greatly appreciated.

MINUTES

Minutes for the meetings of February 5 and March 5, 2003, were approved.

PLANNING FOR THE TRAPELO ROAD CORRIDOR

Linn Hobbs informed the Commission about the seminar he participated in as the HDC's representative concerning the improvement of Trapelo Road. The well-attended seminar was sponsored by the Belmont Citizens' Forum and was held at the Studio Cinema. Hobbs stressed the need for the HDC to become more directly involved in the planning process for the Trapelo Road corridor and for the Town as a whole.

5 SOMERSET STREET

The owners of 5 Somerset Street, Frank and Gillian Aguilar, presented a draft Preservation Restriction Agreement for their property in response to the HDC's suggestion conveyed at its meetings of May 1 and June 5, 2002, and in its letters to the Aguilars of April 15 and June 24, 2003.

First to speak was member Michael Smith. Although recognizing adaptive reuse as a legitimate preservation tool, Smith stated that during the ten months when the Aguilars were considering whether or not to submit a Preservation Agreement (from June 5, 2002 to April 2, 2003), he had reconsidered whether or not it was appropriate for the Commission to support the Aguilars in seeking a zoning variance for a cluster development that would allow the Aguilars to rehabilitate the barn as a second residence and to divide ownership of the property. He feared that such a course would so alter the appearance of both the barn buildings and the landscape that the integrity of the property as one of the last surviving farmsteads in Belmont would be irreparably undermined if not destroyed.

Considerable discussion was then devoted as to whether the Commission should proceed with revising the Preservation Agreement to make it sufficiently specific and effective in its provisions to prevent inappropriate future alterations in the property's agrarian and architectural character, or whether the Commission should reassess the consequences of preserving the barn by converting it to a residence in the light of further thought and research that had been devoted by members in the interim between meetings to the architectural and landscape issues involved. Further investigation had shown that there were, in fact, other viable alternatives for saving the barn short of rehabilitating it as a residence. For example, Nancy Richards pointed out that a similar property in Waltham with a barn that was in equally poor condition recently sold to a couple willing to restore the barn as a barn so that its open space could be used as a studio for the husband.

Co-Chair Cheek reiterated that the Aguilars were submitting the Preservation Agreement in response to the HDC's prior suggestion, making it incumbent upon the Commission to work with the Aguilars to develop as effective a Preservation Agreement as possible. But various members asked whether it would be fair to the Aguilars to ask them to devote further

time and energy to revising the Preservation Agreement if there was a chance that a majority of HDC members might decide not to support the overall effort to save the barn by making it into a residence that was part of a cluster development.

Cheek responded that even if such a vote against the proposal was a possibility, the Commission still had an obligation in his view to work with the Aguilaras on the Preservation Agreement, if they so desired. If a more detailed, workable restriction could be worked out, and if such an agreement could be reviewed and approved by appropriate legal authorities and by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, then members who were currently in doubt about the merits of the proposal might be persuaded to change their minds.

Given the length of the discussion as to how to proceed, insufficient time was left to begin revising the Preservation Agreement. Given the course of the discussion, the Co-Chair asked the Aguilaras if they might need time to consider whether or not they might wish to continue with developing the Preservation Agreement at the HDC's next meeting on May 7. If they wished to proceed, he suggested that it might be to everyone's advantage if they could bring their attorney with them.

Although disappointed that the discussion had not focused on the Preservation Agreement, the Aguilaras said that they would be back in touch with the Commission as soon as they decided how to proceed.

Minutes recorded by Nancy Richards and Richard Cheek