MEETING MINUTES OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Tuesday, February 13th, 2018

CONVENE: Mr. Lescarbeau called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Lescarbeau, Mr. Shields, Ms. Charren, Mrs. Hintsa, Mrs. Kenower, and Mrs. Anderson,

ABSENT: Kristen Connell and Meghan Murray

ALSO PRESENT: Michael DeLuca, Director of Community Development; Bruce Lofgren, Planning Technician; and Denise Russ, Clerk of the Board

CONSENT AGENDA

1C: Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 11th and January 9th, 2018.

A Motion is made by Mr. Shields and duly seconded by Mrs. Hintsa to approve the Consent Agenda with noted corrections. Motion passes 6 to 0. (Mr. Lescarbeau, Mr. Shields, Ms. Charren, Mrs. Hintsa, Mrs. Kenower, and Mrs. Anderson).

PUBLIC HEARING

2PH: Advisory Comment to Planning Board: Old Presbyterian Church Land Development Plan, Assessor’s Plat D, Lot 134, 114 Boon Street; Owner: Craig Miller

Craig Miller introduced himself to the Commission and informed them that he purchased the above-referenced property in November of 2017. He explained that he and his family often vacation in South County; and after having lunch at Crazy Burger last summer, he noticed the Tower and the For Sale sign on this piece of property. He stated he is a history buff and has been a member of the National Historic Preservation for many years. He owns an Engineering and Architect business in the Boston area.

He further informed the Commission that he does residential development at his pleasure, and when he feels like everything could line up with his interest. He was in awe when he walked by this building and noticed the tower sticking up above the rooftop. He called the real estate agent and was told that he was ‘third in line’. Mr. Miller told the agent that he wanted to restore the building, and he was told that the other two prospects were not interested in doing that. Because he owns his business, he had the ability to quickly figure out a design plan. He knew that his desire from the beginning was to bring the original structure back and put the reuse inside of it that would ‘pay the freight’ for doing the recovery work.
Mr. Miller showed them the renderings of the 4,600 sq. ft. floor plan area of the existing site plan they will be submitting to the Planning Board next Tuesday evening. He informed them that he is proposing to put an addition on in the back, just for stairs.

He explained the original 1888 church was designed by Ware & Van Brunt, who specialized in American Gothic Architecture. This church fits more into what is called American Gothic Architecture, which involves massive stonework with large steeples and towers. He added that it fits the description of ‘Carpenter Gothic’ quite nicely.

He further stated that he is making a few modifications just to allow a reuse to occur. His proposal includes four (4) market-rate condominium units in the building; one (1) unit on the front side for him and his family, and three (3) units in the back. The interior of the first floor unit in the back will have an open floor plan, with a study and three large bedrooms. The second floor unit is an open floor plan with two-bedrooms and an ocean view. The third floor has a smaller two-bedroom unit with an open floor plan and an ocean view.

He informed the Commission that if he split the building the long way, he would have to create entrances, which would have disturbed the frontal façade. His wish is to have the front of the structure look almost identical to the original church.

Mr. Lescarbeau noted the main gable and the tower treatment is the same height as the original, and Mr. Miller concurred with him.

Mr. Miller added that he is also planning to make the windows almost exactly the same as the original. He informed the Commission that the Planning Board has asked them to do some work on the rear elevation, and they are in the process of working on that. There are currently stairs and an elevator proposed for the outside of the building; and because of the way the footprints lay out for the interior of the units, it is very difficult to get a set of stairs to work inside the building. The elevator shaft is currently exceeding the height of the main gable, and he is not pleased with that. He added he is still not set on actually installing an elevator, but if they do, that is where it would go. Because there is no basement, he is also proposing a shed in the back for bicycles and lawnmowers.

He further stated that fortunately, both the stone materials and the mortar joints are in great condition.

Mr. Shields informed Mr. Miller that the National Register of Historic Places has a story on the history of the Narragansett Pier, which he has researched. In it, the church is mentioned, and it also provides information on other homes that were built at the same time.

Mr. Lescarbeau stated that personally, he could not ask for anything more than the design Mr. Miller has presented. As best as they can perceive, based on the level of performance provided and the fact that this is a reproduction and a re-creation, the HDC should be in full support of this project because it is a ‘win/win’ all around success.
Mrs. Hintsa agreed that the support from the Commission be made obvious; but there should be a caveat that because these details have not yet been determined, they would still like a second look at the renderings when the final plans are presented. They enthusiastically support where the project is now.

A Motion was made by Mr. Shields and duly seconded by Mrs. Kenower to draft a letter of support for the overall concept as best as the HDC can perceive based on the level of drawings and details that have been provided, with a reserved final bill of approval provided when the complete drawings are presented. Motion passes 6 to 0. (Mr. Lescarbeau, Mr. Shields, Ms. Charren, Mrs. Hintsa, Mrs. Kenower, and Mrs. Anderson).

OLD BUSINESS

3OB: Historic District Expansion Review – Review of Town Council decision

Susan Buonanno, Town Council President, was present and expressed her deep gratitude to the Historic District Commission for all of the hard work they have done with the proposed district expansion. She stated she was trying to shepherd the entire project, and she personally felt they did a lot of things right. Through the informational workshops, the Council was able to hear most of the concerns of the residents. While the residents seemed to have a positive outlook, she stated that in the end, they did not have full support of the Council. She is disappointed, as the leader, because she realizes how long the Commission has worked on this to try to make these proposals come through.

Mr. Lescarbeau noted for perspective that 10 years ago there were no districts existing, so the Commission has come a long way since then. He added that the Commission now has a base, which is three times the size of what was originally approved in 2009.

Mr. Shields suggested to the Commission that this may be a good time to hire Richard Youngken to come back to the HDC and read the Standards and Guidelines. If the HDC is really interested in expanding into the Boon Street area in the long run, certain things should be added to our guidelines, which pertain to mixed and commercial structures.

Mr. DeLuca explained that he had a conversation with Mr. Youngken a short while ago and noted that he has been hired by other towns to create their own HDC Guidelines; and uses our Guidelines as a baseline. He feels it would be a good idea to make that a target for this coming year. He suggested that a better idea would be for the members to start their own individual introspective reviewing of the 78 regulatory guidelines; so that if we hired Mr. Youngken on an hourly basis to return, they could be more specific about the guidelines in question.

Mrs. Hintsa informed the Commission that she and Mrs. Connell would like to discuss bringing forward an awards program, and there are many different ways that could work, i.e. a plaque acknowledging the work that has been done. The goal would be to bring a menu of options for the next meeting.
Mr. Lescarbeau applauded her idea and gave the Middlebridge School an example for an application that should be acknowledged.

4OB: Tip of the Month:

Next month, Mr. Lescarbeau will send Mrs. Russ a sample letter of congratulations to all those who were selected to be in the historic district.

REPORTS FROM STAFF / COMMISSION:

AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING:

- 2017 Historic District Commission Annual Report
- Certified Local Government – CLG Report

ADJOURNMENT:

A Motion is made by Mr. Shields and duly seconded by Mrs. Hintsa to adjourn this meeting at 7:52 p.m. Motion passes 6 to 0.
(Mr. Lescarbeau, Mr. Shields, Ms. Charren, Mrs. Hintsa, Mrs. Kenower, and Mrs. Anderson)

Submitted By:

Denise Russ
Clerk of the Board