

HISTORICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Farrell, Chairman
Ms. Bishop, Recording Secretary
Mr. Kaufman
Mr. Papp
Ms. Zachowski

MEMBERS ABSENT:

The meeting notice was posted more than twenty-four (24) hours prior to commencement of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. Review and approval of the minutes of the August 16, 2007 meeting.
2. Discussion of applications for demolition permits and pre-clearances submitted since the last meeting.
3. Status of demolition delay imposed on 584 West Road.
4. Discussion of information resources on historic structures
5. Offer of resources and services by the New Canaan Preservation Alliance.
6. Discussion of plans for disseminating information about historic preservation.
7. New business.
8. Next meeting – Thursday, October 18, 2007

PUBLIC MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 A.M. by the Chairman, Mr. Farrell.

A quorum was confirmed.

Mr. Papp moved the approval of the minutes of the August 16, 2007 meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Zachowski and was unanimously approved.

The committee discussed several properties for which demolition applications have been presented or may be presented. These include the following:

11 Skyview Lane
204 Indian Waters Lane
36 Brushy Ridge

It was the general consensus of the committee that, without a formal study of **11 Skyview Lane**, and **Indian Water Lane**, they appear to be of no historical, cultural, or architectural significance: and therefore are not likely candidates for valid objection to their demolition.

In discussing 204 Indian Waters Lane Mr. Papp noted how unfortunate it is to lose another New Canaan modern. The 14 days provided by the ordinance to submit pertinent objections is a short window of opportunity. Mr. Farrell pointed out that in creating the ordinance it was difficult to arrive at a consensus between developers and preservationist in establishing delay times.

The committee discussed procedural deficiencies of the applicant in complying with the ordinance for **36 Brushy Ridge**. Questions were raised as to whether proper notification was made to interested parties, and whether a demolition sign was posted on the property. In such a case of noncompliance it was argued that there should still be time for interested parties to submit valid objection letters. The committee agreed to refer this issue to the Building Official, Mr. Platz.

Mr. Farrell updated the committee on the status of **584 West Road**. He clarified that an applicant need not hold title to a property when filing for a demolition permit, but simply have permission from the current owner for the permit. Members of the committee were unable to gain access to the property over the past month. However, now that the title has been transferred to the builder it is hoped that such access will be permitted. The Historical Society agreed to contact the builder to coordinate a time to view the house and begin the documentation process. Ms. Lindstrom indicated that photography alone may take up to two days. Mr. Farrell informed the committee that he had been contacted by an individual offering to provide a new location for the house to be moved. It was pointed out that a process such as this requires funds, permits, and time; all of which are in short supply in this case.

The committee further discussed the need to increase the demolition delay time from 90 to 180 days. Mr. Farrell noted that a formal recommendation must be presented to Dick White, Chair of the Ordinances Committee, in order for such a change to be considered.

Other issues that may require further consideration by the Ordinance Committee relate to the 15 day time period granted for submission of valid objections, and 'grey' areas in the ordinance which may allow builders to manipulate time tables. Mr. Papp noted that as this was the committee's first experience in recommending a demolition delay, it is to be expected that weaknesses be noted and improvements suggested.

Mr. Papp commented that when a historical property goes on the market the public should be made aware immediately. It was pointed out by Ms. Findlay and Ms. Lindstrom that although notices of antique properties for sale are posted in newsletters statewide and locally, it is difficult to find buyers in New Canaan. Mr. Farrell described how reduced property values of historic homes could be offset by a possible reduction of real estate taxes. The committee will continue to explore this complex issue.

The Committee discussed the parameters of its mission once the demolition delay is instituted. Mr. Farrell noted that because our resources are limited we cannot be responsible for updating records and will depend on the preservation groups in town to continue documenting properties. It was suggested that a template be created in documenting historic homes and should include “best practice” methods to use in preserving old buildings. Ms. Lindstrom pointed out that the survey of Modern homes, currently underway in New Canaan, will include preservation recommendations. Ms. Beckett suggested the need for the town to financially support these preservation initiatives.

An update was provided on 230 Smith Ridge where 75% of the property was torn down. It was documented as a renovation project rather than a demolition. The dispute is currently being tried in court.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Papp, and was seconded by Ms. Zachowski. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 A.M.

Susan Bishop, Recording Secretary