

Town of Windham
Windham Historic District Commission
Minutes: August 26, 2015

The Windham Historic Commission held a public hearing on August 26, 2015, at the Windham Center Congregational Church. The meeting was opened by Chairman, William McMunn at 7:00 PM. Those in attendance included Commissioners William McMunn, David Masopust, Alice Burns-Decelles, Lori Guillard, Alternate David Dupuis, as well as residents John McGrath and Barbara McGrath.

John and Barbara McGrath, of 29 Windham Center Road, met with the Commission to discuss an application for a certificate of appropriateness, proposing that a fence made with rustic looking (although likely newly-cut) granite posts with three iron rails between posts, be installed in front of their home. The McGraths brought a copy of a 100-year old+ photograph taken by Lou Frink, showing that a fence had once been in place at this site. The fence would begin at the boundary of Shawn P. Martin's driveway at 21 Windham Center Road, continue across the McGrath's property, with an opening in line with the granite steps, and continue on the other side of the steps to the stone wall.

The McGraths will request the help of Joe Gardner, the Town engineer, to determine from a legal standpoint how far back the fence must sit from the road. It seems that may be 20 feet.

The public hearing was closed and the Windham Historic District Commission meeting was opened.

David Masopust made a motion to approve the McGrath's proposal of a fence made of granite posts and iron rails. Alice Burns-Decelles seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

John McGrath then mentioned the issue of the fee for newspaper advertising of the legal notice of the public hearing for historic district and other town permits, currently required by statute. James Finger, the Town Planner, favors changing the Connecticut statutes to permit legal notices to be posted on the town web site instead of in the newspaper. The commission discussed that the fee is cost prohibitive (\$130 = \$30 basic fee plus \$100 for the newspaper advertisement), acting as a detriment to compliance with the Historic District ordinance, especially for small projects. We fear that residents will not file formal applications, but instead may make changes without consulting with the commission prior to construction.

Property owner Shawn Martin emailed Chairman McMunn in reference to pulling a permit to replace siding on the south side of his home, as well as to replace the roof on his house and out buildings, with architectural asphalt shingles simulating weathered wood. Chairman McMunn responded to Mr. Martin that where there are no changes in materials, a certificate of appropriateness is not required, so no permit will be needed for the siding repairs. If wood shingles are to be replaced with asphalt, the Commission requires that the color for these shingles should be a dark charcoal gray or a dark green, similar in appearance to weathered wood. Chairman McMunn invited Mr. Martin to attend a Commission meeting, to get an initial

response from the commissioners on proposed changes, and possibly also get some money saving tips.

Wayne Donaldson, buildings and grounds manager for the Windham Public Schools, requested advice from the Commission on how to best disguise the two new wellheads being installed at the Windham Center School in the Historic District. The commission discussed placing artificial boulders, flowers, grasses, shrubbery, or a wooden wellhead structure around them.

The commission was disappointed that the actual size and appearance of the newly constructed school parking lot fence was as large and bulky as it is. The commission had understood that the approved design would somehow be more delicate in nature, instead of what in the end seems more like a “crash barrier.” Also, there was no previous mention that it would extend across the enlarged parking area to surround the flagpole. The commission will not object to the fence that has been constructed, but it does wish that the specific design had been made clearer at the outset.

Issues Since the Last Meeting:

Chairman McMunn assisted Town Planner James Finger in completing the Annual Report from the Town of Windham to the State Historic Preservation Office on Windham’s Certified Local Government (CLG) activities during the prior year, including official Historic District Commission actions on applications and approvals.

Recently several inquiries regarding historical signage have been received and responded to. In 1998, the Commission asked Susan “Annie” Wandell and Justin Holbrook to define a standard for historical signage in the district. Chairman McMunn distributed a copy of the document describing these standards to the Commissioners, noting that the address of the Signs Plus company and estimated costs of the signs have changed since 1998, but in other respects the document is still useful. In 1998 the commission approved these standards and voted that property owners would not need a certificate of appropriateness if they complied with the standards.

With no further matters to bring before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM. The next meeting of the Windham Historic Commission will be September 30th at 7:00 PM, at the Windham Center School.

Respectfully submitted, Lori S. Guillard, Commissioner