

CITY OF LACONIA HERITAGE COMMISSION  
5:00 PM City Hall - Armand A. Bolduc City Council Chamber  
*Approved 11/12/2020*

10/14/2020 - Minutes

1. Call to order

Chair Mike Sweet called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM

2. Salute to the flag

Chair M. Sweet led the Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll call

Members present: Mark Haynes, Lois Kessin, Catherine Tokarz, Jane Whitehead, Dorothy Duffy, Mike Sweet

4. Recording secretary

Kalena Graham

5. Staff in attendance

Planning Director Dean Trefethen

6. Acceptance of Minutes from previous meeting

6.I. Acceptance of minutes from September 9

Motion to accept the minutes with revisions made by L. Kessin, D. Duffy seconded. All voted in favor.

7. City Council Liaison Report

M. Haynes noted that nothing the Council discussed was relevant to the Commission. He mentioned the first Historic District Commission meeting was September 22 and the next will be October 27.

8. Planning Board update

D. Duffy has been following and watching the meetings and nothing applies to the Commission right now.

9. Old business

9.I. Election of Officers

Chair M. Sweet stated that he was appointed Chair along with a full membership at the last Council meeting.

Motion to elect M. Sweet as chair of the Commission made by L. Kessin, C. Tokarz seconded. All voted in favor.

9.II. Update from Mae Williams

Mae Williams addressed the Commission via Zoom. She went over a draft map of surveyed area she has been working on of downtown. The map includes around 68 parcels and when the leaves come down she will retake some photos as they were difficult to see with the leaf coverage. She is currently in the process of taking notes on the history of Laconia and what she has seen out in the field and putting it into the State of New Hampshire's Historical Resources Area form. She is writing up narrative of historic trends that have affected the downtown area. Each property is being assessed by its integrity. There are seven aspects to consider looked at: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. She explained the process and how it fits into the story of Laconia. This draft document she is working on will be a good baseline for the Commission on what is there and what to look for in trying to preserve historically significant structures.

The first set of photos were taken in early September. She went around the perimeter of the downtown area including the area affected by Urban Renewal as that was a big deal with the history. On her draft, the gray areas are the areas that don't have integrity or not considered historic. One question she had was because of the surviving mills are outside of the Area Studies, was if there was a potential to have a mini industrial district. The photos and historic maps are going to be worked into the document in relation to the evolution of the history of downtown.

## 10. New business

### 10.I. 60 Mechanic Street

Applicant: Tom Cantin, property owner, addressed the Commission. He showed some pictures of the existing building. The structure is located right behind the dealership. The lot will be used for employee parking. He is working with the Hughes next door on fencing and tree saving. D. Duffy asked about buffers for the abutters and T. Cantin said he is the abutter on three sides. He also mentioned that he will comply with any and all conditions of any approval as he has in past dealings with the City. The company has been in Laconia for 90 years.

Motion to approve the demolition of 60 Mechanic Street made by D. Duffy, C. Tokarz seconded. All voted in favor.

### 10.II. 249 Court Street

Applicant: David Gouette, the future purchaser addressed the Commission. Also present was Virginia Sanborn. D. Gouette's plan is to demolish the existing vacant structure and build a greenhouse to relocate his garden center, currently located next to Contigiani's Catering. He stated the house has been vacant for some time and is in disrepair. There are holes in the foundation and the barn is in complete disrepair. L. Kessin stated that so many neat houses in the area are disappearing. C. Tokarz asked if there is anything in the building worth retaining and was told the building has been vacant and nothing was seen in his walk through.

Motion to approve the demolition of 249 Court Street made by C. Tokarz, L. Kessin seconded. All voted in favor.

### 10.III. 76 Lakeside Ave

Planning Director D. Trefethen noted that Staff had tried to contact the applicant with no success. He told the Commission there are two options: continue the application to November 12 or if the Commission felt the structure could be a significant building, as defined in the ordinance and want to make that determination, a public hearing could be scheduled for the November meeting to start the process. L. Kessin asked if she could talk to the abutter and was told only to gather information, but not voice her comments.

Motion to table the application to November 12 made by C. Tokarz, M. Haynes seconded. All voted in favor.

## 11. Public comment

J. Whitehead brought up two things: the Commission has been invited to be involved in two things with the NH Preservation Alliance. The first is a virtual conference on October 20. The Board does a road trip every year throughout the state and on November 6 (rain day November 7) will be in Laconia to see Lakeport, St. Joseph's, Belknap Mill, Prescott Farm and the Colonial Theatre and suggested other members go. Tara Shore's understanding was that the road trip is for the NHPA Board members to meet with some property owners. She isn't joining the walk, they are just using the Mill as a gathering point.

D. Duffy asked J. Whitehead if there was a specific role that she wanted the Commission to take part in and J. Whitehead thinks the Commission needs to explain the decision that was made in August regarding the Elm Street project and stated that the Commission was in the doghouse with the NHPA for its procedural issues. J. Whitehead has spoken with people about the meeting and the shabby application and the fact that none of the buildings were given the regard deserved as they were all candidates for the National Register. She felt the Commission was swayed by the proposed plan and didn't give the past its due. She feels that it is the Commissions duty to preserve the history, memory and importance.

C. Tokarz brought up that she is still waiting to hear from Everett's attorney Shawna Bentley about a site visit in the Elm and Park Sstreet properties.

There was considerable discussion on the decision of the application for Lakeport/Elm Street of August 12, 2020. Overall, the Commission members stand by their decision. J. Whitehead noted that Jennifer Goodman would like an intervention between the Heritage Commission and Historic District Commission on a general education session.

Planning Director D. Trefethen appreciates the opinions of the Commission and other organizations. He brought up the fact that if there are any complaints about process or due diligence, the proper way to handle that would be to contact City of Laconia Planning Department Staff, go to a meeting or write a letter to the entire Commission and not an individual member of the Commission.

## 12. Other business

C. Tokarz added a few changes to the minutes of September 9.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 12.

Chair M. Sweet asked about the awards and if she had heard from anyone else. C. Tokarz stated she will be sending a hand written letter to get more attention. There was concern expressed by Commissioners that homeowners thought their taxes may go up if they get the award.

## 13. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by L. Kessin, C. Tokarz seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 6:01 PM

Respectfully,

K. Graham