

**Village of Skaneateles
Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission
May 9, 2013**

Present: Chad Rogers, Chairman, HLPC
Dave Birchenough, Member
Katharine Dyson, Member
Ted Kinder, Member
Lisa Riordan, Member

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to the Historical Commission

Chairman Rogers called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm, noting that there was no formal business on the agenda. Chairman Rogers reminded the members about the requirements of the state Open Meetings law, including the avoidance of unpublished gatherings of three or more members. He went on to note that this is a good opportunity to continue the previous meeting's discussion on establishing guidelines or standards for applicants. The Chairman reported that he had downloaded some information from the Village of Pittsford web site and sent it to the members, noting that Pittsford's Mayor is an architect and preservationist. The Commission found the information to be helpful and relevant – and something that would be useful for applicants because of its understandability.

Member Kinder asked Mr. Dundon to send a copy of the Downtown “D” District Design Standards to the members of the Commission, in order to avoid contradictory guidance. Member Dyson noted that Bluffton, SC has an historic district that encompasses the entire town. Chairman Rogers feels that the Commission members are in general agreement that it would be good to go forward with some guidelines or standards for applicants. While the front facades may be restricted to limited changes, the rear facades may be more loosely interpreted, though subject to definitive criteria. The Commission is seeking to develop its standards so that consistency in decisions is maintained.

Member Riordan observed that the Pittsford packet could be a little bit daunting to an applicant – with its voluminous publications -- though the members felt that any architect should be reasonably familiar with these types of requirements. Member Dyson felt that preparation of a simple guideline should start with the areas that most often arise. Distinction might be necessary between residential and commercial properties. Member Riordan feels that it is important to provide guidelines to applicants before they go to the expense of having plans drawn up, so they can derive guidance in advance. It might be published on the Village web site. The Commission feels that informational meetings between the Commission, and applicants or their design professionals – at the start of a project – is helpful to both parties, and should be encouraged. The Commission may consider field visits on a scheduled basis for major projects.

Chairman Rogers said that he would be willing to participate in a two-person subcommittee in order to provide a draft of possible standards for Commission consideration. Member Riordan offered to participate as well. The subcommittee plans to contact Pittsford for permission to use some of their work.

The Commission discussed the photographic project, that had begun under the prior Commission, that was designed to identify important aspects of properties within the District. Member Dyson offered to contact Mr. Ramsgard to try to obtain the information that had been compiled.

Member Riordan asked what benefit comes from being in an Historic District. Member Kinder explained that a national district may enable to owners to take advantage of tax credits for renovation of buildings that are on the National Register or “contributing buildings” that are part of a District. The members discussed the difficulty of getting an individual building listed on the National Register. It is much easier to have an area designated a national district. Member Dyson gave the members some of the background of the surveys conducted on West Genesee, West Lake and Onondaga Streets by Cornell students.

The members discussed the sensitivity of publishing guidelines, or even a pamphlet. Some residents may see them as more restrictive regulations, even though the Commission may have been using the same standards previously, though unpublished. Again, the members reiterated the goal of consistency. Chairman Rogers suggested that the Commission take a first pass at it to see if it feels right. Members Dyson and Kinder believe that the advantages and philosophy of the Historic District should be made clear in such a work, and that the Commission state its mission and relate the benefits to affected property owners.

The Commission discussed the way in which the Village’s sign ordinance and the HLPC approvals work in concert. In summary, the proposed sign must be conforming to the Code and also appropriate for the District to gain approval, unless a Variance from the code requirements is granted by the ZBA.

Member Dyson expressed that doing a guide would be helpful to Commission members as well as to applicants.

Noting that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday June 19, 2013, the meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to HLPC