

Village of Skaneateles
Historical Landmarks Preservation Commission
April 16, 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

Marty Hubbard, Mayor
Mary Sennett, Village Trustee

Mr. Dundon explained that even though no new business is before the Commission tonight, that some review of the Commission's mission and processes would probably be useful to the new Members. Mayor Hubbard explained that the meeting schedule should be designed by the Members to best fit their schedules. The traditional time of the second Wednesday of the month is a problem for Member Birchenough. After lengthy discussion, the Members felt that the third Wednesday of the month would work best. That schedule will begin in the month of June with the meeting to be held on Wednesday June 19, 2013. The May meeting will be scheduled for Thursday May 9, 2013.

Trustee Sennett, who is the Village Board's liaison to the HLPC, brought up the chairmanship; Member Rogers was selected by the Members to be Chairman. The members noted that they had received a procedural template for the flow of a Public Hearing as well as the development Guidelines published by the Secretary of the Interior. All agreed that general familiarity with the guidelines is desirable. While the document is specific, it need not be followed always; common sense and the appropriateness to the Village's character play a major role.

The standard used by the HLPC has been 'appropriateness'. Member Kinder observed that this permits considerable latitude from absolute authenticity. Member Dyson cautioned that just because something is old it may not necessarily be historic or even worth saving.

The requirements of the 'Open Meeting Law' were reviewed and the requirements for advertising meetings in which action might be taken by a quorum. Discussion ensued about acceptable ways for the members to communicate among themselves, including telephone and email conversations. Likewise any number of Members are free to -- and encouraged to -- attend regular meetings of the other Boards at any time.

In response to a question, the Trustees made it clear that the Commission has the authority to, and is expected to, make the final decision on the issuance of a Certificate of Approval.

Member Kinder used an example of window replacement to illustrate an area in which the Commission's rulings might differ from the published guidelines that strongly favor repair. For good reasons, the owner might favor replacement. Member Kinder suggested that the same type of window, with the same fenestration and the same mullion pattern, probably is appropriate. Member Dyson observed that the window might not have been original to the structure.

In response to a request from Member Riordan, Mr. Dundon explained the process faced by an applicant, who usually is approaching the Village to obtain a building permit. If in the Historic District and if the work involves the exterior of the structure, the Code Enforcement Officer may turn it down because it needs a Certificate of Approval from HLPC. Then with the application completed, it traditionally would be scheduled for a Public Hearing. The Trustees would like the Commission to exercise judgment as to whether a Public Hearing is necessary. Meetings with an applicant before the formal application may be very helpful to both. Further, the Trustees encourage the Commission to develop some guidelines for applicants to assist them in approaching the approval process – examples from the City of Kingston and the Town/Village of Pittsford were cited. The Members discussed the possibility of developing/publishing such guidelines to indicate appropriateness and potentially making them available on the Village's web site.

The process continues with publication of the Notice for the Public Hearing, if required. On the meeting date the Commission will go through the process of hearing the application, discussing the application, receiving public input and taking action or postponing action if necessary.

Trustee Sennett indicated that she is the liaison to the Commission and encouraged that the Commission consider changes to its processes that would yield a more effective process. Likewise, the Commission is not required to wait until the next monthly meeting, if the Members wish to move faster.

A brief discussion ensued about some potential overlap between HLPC and the Planning Board, which administers the design standards for the Downtown D District. It should not be a problem.

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Dundon, Clerk to HLPC