

## Minutes

### Longmeadow Historical Commission Meeting Thursday March 15, 2007

Present were Commission members Chris Hall, Beth Hoff, Betsy Port, Milton Reach, Brewster Sturtevant and Susan Hall. Also present were representatives from the Historic District Commission, Longmeadow Historical Society, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Demolition Delay Committee, members of the public and special guest Christopher Skelly, Director of Local Government Program at the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The Historic Preservation Summit convened at 7:00 P.M. with a Power Point presentation by Chris Skelly which was interspersed by enthusiastic discussion with folks in attendance. Highlights of his talk included:

- “Historic preservation is essential to getting kids interested in history”
- “Smart growth essential: If you are afraid to say no to anything expect you’ll get the worst of everything”
- Historical Preservation begins with *local* governments and historic commissions

#### There are 3 Essential Steps Involved in Historic Preservation

1. **Identification** of historically significant buildings, landscapes, monuments, etc.

In 1987-88 Longmeadow Historical Commission compiled detailed and comprehensive inventory with help from Boston University graduate students. Inventory forms have now been scanned and will be posted on Historical Commission website for public information.

Next Steps: Inventories should be updated every twenty years as changes occur. It is time to begin this process. Matching grants are available through MHC for inventories as work is best done by a paid professional. While reviewing inventories be sure the back side of the form is completed.

- Inventories could be updated on an ongoing basis as changes occur.
- Historical Commission should consider sending a copy of the inventory to new homeowner whenever a historic property is sold.

2. **Evaluation** of historical significance of properties by Historical Commission and Historic District Commission: Prioritize what needs to be protected.

Next Steps: HDC and HC (as well as Historical Society) meet to determine priorities to determine which properties, landscapes are currently most at risk. Chris suggests that National Register criteria be used to guide the process.

3. Develop strategies for **Protection** of Longmeadow's significant historic assets. This can be tackled in several ways:

Public Education (raising community awareness of local history) including:

- signs, plaques recognizing historically significant landmarks, districts, etc.
- make historic maps (or copies) available to the public
- brochures, publications, walking tours, etc.
- anniversary celebrations
- displays of old photographs

Next Steps: HC, HDC and Historical Society can collaborate to implement all of the above.

Creation of National Register Districts. Though primarily an honorary designation, National Register status affords specific advantages for including community pride and eligibility for funding assistance for certain non-profits and municipalities. Mass Historical Commission becomes involved automatically if state or federal project is proposed within a National Register District.

Creation of Local Historic Districts, which can be contiguous neighborhoods or streets OR individual pieces of property.

Next Steps: HC, HDC, Planning Board, Historical Society and others can begin this process based on evaluation results of properties in need of preservation.

Demolition Delay Bylaws, something Longmeadow now has in place.

Massachusetts Preservation Project Funding Grants are available from MHC for municipalities, churches, non-profits.

Next Steps: Such a grant could be used to repair the Community House. Susan will be sure Robin Crosbie is aware.

Preservation Restrictions include an agreement between property owner and municipality to put restrictions of deed so property cannot be altered. This is recorded at Registry of Deeds. If property owner chooses to put a "preservation restriction" easement on property would be eligible for federal tax credit. This might also afford a local tax break as property would be appraised before and after the easement. Valuation would decrease after easement, hence taxes would decrease.

Next Steps: Continue discussion on all of the above preservation strategies at future collaborative meetings. Develop ways to inform homeowners of the benefits of these options. Consider lobbying Boston to provide tax credits for individual homeowners for rehab of privately owned historic properties.

Arrange meetings with interest homeowners to advocate for creation of new historic districts. (Chris specifically mentioned South Park, bungalows along Bliss Road, Glen Arden, Colony Hills and Chandler Ave. as areas that should be considered for District zoning.) Collect data from MHC and other state HC's about where easements, National Register status and local historic districts have been successfully implemented to benefit of municipalities and homeowners. Chris invites inquiries along these lines and is willing to be an educational resource for us or to put us in contact with others. Walter Gunn suggested that we research how Nantucket created a means for making grants to homeowners to encourage preservation and/or provides funds to purchase historic properties that are at risk of demolition or drastic character change.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Hall