CHHDC Meeting (approved)

February 27, 2024

Present: Duane Wetherby, Tamara Golden, Evelyn Beliveau and Paul Beliveau

Absent: Phil Turner, Joanne Hipp

Member of the public: Charlie Baraly

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm

**Minutes** of the last meeting were reviewed. Paul moved to accept the minutes, Duane; seconded, all in favor.

**Treasurer Report:** Treasurer not in attendance, so the report was not shared. Duane shared that we should have $3,000 budget for this year, minus $50 in dues paid to the NH Preservation Alliance. Evelyn said that $7,000 was not put in the budget for the design guidelines since it won’t be worked on this year since the ordinance is not going to vote.

**New Business:**

Charlie Baraly presented about select board’s plans. He said he met with the selectboard a few months ago and they discussed a warrant article to sell the Bakery Building; the vote among them was 4 for, 1 against. Next time they discussed buying the Old American Legion building next to the town garage, demolishing it and using it for more sand storage. When the warrant article went to the deliberative session, it did not mention the Bakery Building specifically, but they wanted authority to purchase, sell and demolish any building without going to a vote; it would have to go to Planning Board, but the select board could override the PB decision. One selectboard member is fairly new to town and his argument is that the Bakery Building where the historical society is currently, if sold, would allow the town to get $16,000 a year taxes income. It costs the town 6K a year for maintenance and utilities. Charlie argued that the Historical Society is needed in town; they have an average of 60 phone calls and emails a month for inquiries about genealogy, the fort, historic houses in Charlestown, etc. Several authors have come to do research for their books. Other article writers come to do research. Thirty to 40 people come in and visit per month. The Historical Society is open 2 days a week and ‘not convenient’ per the selectboard. Charlie says they are strictly volunteer; they are doing what they can to be open and available. They are bringing in another volunteer who will be able to open one more day and Sunday. Phone numbers of volunteers are published and people can also make appointments outside of the regular hours. For the selectboard to say it’s costing the town money, and we do nothing for the town is crazy.

The Senior Center is another organization in town, most is not taxed, except for the rental part of the property. The Senior Center gets 5K a year from the town. Fort at 4 is a non-profit and does not pay taxes, but town gives 5K a year to help them, too. “They bring business into town” was the selectman’s justification for the Fort. However, Charlie says there is likely little impact, since people attending fort activities tend to bring their own food, so not much going to the pizza place or Ralph’s. Charlie says he is looking for support against article 13, which would give the selectboard uninhibited ability to buy and sell property as they see fit, and support for continued operation of the Historical Society and welcome center in the Bakery Building, which is the best location with easy visibility and access. The selectmen would perhaps let the Historical Society use the basement of the old town hall again if displaced from the Bakery Building, but that is where they were before and there wasn’t enough room.

Evelyn said Charlie was being very nice. She attended the deliberative session where that particular selectboard member openly said that he does not care about the Historical Society and the town doesn’t need it. Charlie said he is running for selectboard this year to bring a voice to the table that cares about the history and heritage of our community and would appreciate support on that as well.

Additional general discussion was had about the value of the Historical Society and the history of our community that makes our community unique and is our ‘claim to fame.’

Evelyn commented that a local teacher wrote a letter about how valuable the Historical Society is to the students and their learning. Charlie says the students come in a few times a year, and they go through files and photos, etc. to do hands on research for their assignments. A copy of a “rude” response letter from Mr. Recsanski of the selectboard to the teacher was shared.

Charlie commented that his wife, Judy Baraly, got an Lchip grant years ago for old town Hall; put in sprinkler system, and other upgrades. It sounds like the Old Town Hall may be on the selectboard’s list to sell as well, if they get their way.

Tamara thanked Charlie for coming to the meeting and sharing what is going on in town regarding the Historical Society and matters that stand to affect its operations. She said that the Heritage Commission and Historical Society have common goals regarding our history and community, and we certainly value the Historical Society. Charlie mentioned that he appreciates the work that the CHHDC is doing with the Historic District Ordinance as well.

**Old Business:**

**Design Guidelines:** We’re at a standstill until we get an ordinance. Phil suggested that we draft a scope of work for the guidelines this year. Phil will draft it and bring to next meeting. It of course won’t go out to bid until we have an ordinance, hopefully next year.

**Ordinance:** There was discussion about how to proceed with the ordinance. Tamara said she had not had a chance to do further updates since our last meeting. Paul said he doesn’t believe that there is much to change, but we have to be better prepared to defend our positions. For instance Terry Spilsbury had complained that the purpose and some other sections were ‘cut and pasted’ from the RSAs. However, it still fits and has been used by many other communities in the state, so he doesn’t see any reason why it can’t work for us as well.

After short discussion, it was decided that each member will review the ordinance and suggest edits, etc. and then we will go through it piece by piece together at the next and upcoming meetings.

Evelyn asked what the date is on the most recent copy of the ordinance, to be sure we are all working from the same copy. Tamara thinks that Jan 8 or 9 is the latest copy, except for the new proposed wording she presented in the last regular meeting in January, but she didn’t have a copy of that – she can bring next time and others bring their suggestions as well, such as Phil who had some last time, too.

**Benches**: There was a short discussion about whether the benches need to be removed to be refinished or not. We will need to find someone to do the work and see how they want to manage it. Paul said that the benches should be secured with bolts to the cement base which should be easily removed.

Tamara asked Charlie about the bench that was donated to South Parish and is in front of the building by the sidewalk. His wife, Judy, he says is a trustee of the building. Tamara suggested that perhaps we could collaborate on the refurbishing of that bench, if the owners desire, which is in dire need of a new coat of protective polyurethane and many of the leaves have lost their gold leaf. Evelyn commented that there are a couple of leaves that have been broken off as well, and could poke someone if they sit back against it. Charlie said he would mention it to Judy, and we’ll get in touch with her at some point as we get into spring bench repairs around town.

**Next Meeting:** Will be held on Tuesday March 26th. Evelyn mentioned that she and Paul may not be able to attend, depending on how things go with the robotic tournament they are helping with.

Duane moved to adjourn the meeting, Paul seconded; meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tamara Golden

Secretary