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CITY OF STAMFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION
888 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
STAMFORD, CT 06904-2152

(FINAL) Minutes of the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC)

Date: Regular meeting held: October 17, 2019
Location: Board of Finance Conference Room - 4th Floor
Stamford Government Center, 888 Washington Blvd. Stamford CT 06904
Present: Anne Goslin, David Woods, Barry Hersh, Rebecca Shannonhouse, Elena Kalman

REGULAR MEETING

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order 7:05 p.m.

A motion was made to assign Rebecca Shannonhouse and Elena Kalman to be voting members for this meeting. Anne Goslin (Vice-Chair) will chair the current meeting.

(The motion was moved by D. Woods and seconded by A. Goslin and carried unanimously.)

II. Approval of September 3, 2019 Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2019 meeting. There were no changes to the minutes noted.

(The motion was moved by E. Kalman and seconded by A. Goslin and carried unanimously)

III. New Business

There was no new business was on the agenda.

IV. Old Business

A. Preservation Trust Fund Ordinance

Applicant: City of Stamford

Participants: Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief

Presented: Ralph presented the background of the Ordinance. A draft of the Ordinance was reviewed by the Commission at the last meeting. Ralph updated the draft and it was distributed.

1. Ralph first reported he has funding for an intern. It was posted last week, for 20 hrs. per week. He would like feedback on tasks for the intern. One item is to review existing maps and update those. As part of the Section 7.3 changes there is a need to create a cultural resources inventory. There are some ideas on how to tackle that. Ralph reached out to some institutions. The overlay districts proposed in the Section 7.3 changes relate to the cultural resources inventory.



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2. Ralph provided an overview of the Trust Fund Ordinance. This is for persons or developers doing restorations and do not have resources. It is intended to be a receptacle for that. It could serve as a place for grants. A funding mechanism can be fees generated by other buildings or Section 7.3 applications. This is a draft; it has not been reviewed by the Law Department or the Board of Representatives. It would need to be approved by the Board of Representatives.
3. The Ordinance calls for five people or their designees to govern the Trust Fund. There is some language on how it can be used for: inventory, rehabilitation, historic district plans, acquisitions of historic buildings, etc.
4. Rebecca said she reached out to her City representative. There is indication the Board will support this. They may not like it if it requires additional taxing.
5. Elena said a flat fee may not be best. There should probably be a scale of fees tied to the size of the project or the bonus requested. She also mentioned grants are hard to write. There needs to be someone who can work for HPAC. Ralph said it can also be the intern. Anne said that will fit with HPAC's responsibility to seek grants. Ralph said he will look into the fee scale and the amounts requested.
6. Ralph said there may be low interest loans. And, if a developer wants to give money for historic preservation, there is a place for that. Anne questioned whether a developer could donate money to the fund, unrelated to an application. She also asked if developer donations could become an option to avoid conformity to Secretary of the Interior Standards or other preservation conditions. The Board of Representatives holds the purse strings, so donations must be accepted by the Board of Representatives. They then authorize the Trust Fund to spend the money. Ralph concluded, the new intern, the Trust Fund, and the Section 7.3 application changes are all supposed to work together.
7. Rebecca said Section 7.3 cannot be used in single-family zones and wonders if there is room for the single-family zone to be accommodated including trust or grant opportunities. David added that normally single-family zones will not be seeking the density bonuses that are allowed in Section 7.3 and usually do not qualify under the historic requirement. Ralph said they looked at this and did not want to open the door to "in-law" suites or added density in those areas. He did say the underlying zone may allow additions and extra height for single-family zones without using Section 7.3. Barry added there was some effort to allow in-law apartments at one time, and it was killed by the Zoning Board.
8. Rebecca further asked if the tax incentive program that was presented to the Mayor can work with the Trust Fund approach. Ralph said they can work well together. He will ask the Law Department for clarification.
9. Anne said the Connecticut Trust gave some feed-back by Brad Schide that we can review in the Section 7.3 discussion.



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10. Ralph asked for HPAC support when this proposal goes to the Board of Representatives and to Zoning. All were generally in favor of the Trust Fund Ordinance, as it can only help with other programs to save historic structures.

(The item was tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on going.)

B. Proposed Changes to Section 7.3

Applicant: City of Stamford

Participants: Ralph Blessing

Presented: Ralph presented the background for changes to Section 7.3 of the Zoning Code. These changes had been reviewed at prior meetings. He noted that this is a part of the Omnibus changes the City is considering to the Zoning Code. It will be submitted soon and there will be Public Hearings. Ralph handed out the latest version of the Section 7.3 draft. He said it is now in text that will fit with the Zoning Code. It also brings up the notion of "Historic Overlay Zones", similar to other zones as described in sections of the code.

1. Anne said she has reviewed the changes with the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and has a few comments / questions from Brad Schide. She noted many of these questions have been answered.
 - a. How will overlays be established?
 - b. Will they work over established overlay districts?
 - c. What entity will have final control over exceptions?
2. Ralph said the approval of an overlay district will be with the Zoning Board. The mechanism is the same as a zoning map change. The Zoning Board can propose an overlay district or HPAC can propose it to the Zoning Board as an advisory commission.
3. He added the overlay district is a very good tool to push projects into a Section 7.3 application. In an overlay district a homeowner really cannot do much without applying for a Section 7.3. Ralph says if the building is beyond repair, they could take it down...but that will be adding a level of approval. An owner can also demolish and still build a replica, even if they do not want additional density.
4. David said there has always been a person that signs off on Section 7.3 applications and follows through during construction. That person has been Renee Kahn. She has been paid to follow those projects through the City. There does not appear to be a person or entity that will do that work in the new draft. There needs to be some oversight. David continued, it was understood that a Section 7.3 application has a higher level of responsibility to complete a restoration to a higher standard. How can that be managed? Should some text be added to the new Section 7.3? Ralph noted that the language probably needs to be clarified. He will look at that.
5. Ralph also said they may need to clarify what a historic building is. He will check on the definitions section.



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6. Barry asked if the existing historic districts can become overlay districts. Ralph said yes. There would be an overlay in the South End that may correspond to the existing outline, or may change that outline on the map. HPAC would map those and have a point to agree to the boundaries.
7. Ralph noted the protections in this Section 7.3 just apply to buildings on a list, either in a district, or as a historic structure. Hubbard Heights will be eligible. Old long Ridge Road and South End, etc. He added the good part is you do not need to do extra research of historic districts or make applications to a Federal historic program. The overlay will be there, and it is already established. It will allow owners to go straight to Planning and Zoning for approvals.
8. Rebecca said she remembers concerns from members about how this can affect individual homeowner property values. Ralph said the one thing that came out of the Hubbard Heights meeting was the text in Section 2.A.a.3.B., on Page 2, that gives some direction for minor work in a historic district. The language is: "all work not visible from public writing of way." These can be minor modifications which can be done under Section 7.3, but probably do not need it. He said there are two safety valves for a typical community: one is if you cannot see it and second is you can do what you want within the underlying zone. A private owner still needs to get Zoning approval. The Section 7.3 program is really an honorary program. It is not imposing on a community.
9. This is an easier way to allow historic preservation without having to go to the State or other complicated applications. They do not want to put on too many regulations. Section 7.3, as a tool, is a more user-friendly process.

There was some additional discussion, and all are generally in favor of Section 7.3, as it will be very helpful for historic preservation.

(The item was tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on going)

D. Tax incentives update

Applicant: HPAC proposal

Participants: Rebecca Shannonhouse

Presented: Rebecca gave an update.

1. Anne contacted SHPO; Mary Dunne sent information regarding a State law that allows municipalities to pass preservation regulations. It was not tax-incentive related. Rebecca also said she can reach out to the State Senator and see if there is another statute that will apply to tax incentives.

(The item was tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on going)



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E. New Item

Sue Halpern, Vice Chair, South End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, attended the meeting; she was not scheduled on the agenda. The issue to be presented at the next meeting is about creating a study to research the feasibility of creating a Local Historic District in the South End. She recently sent information to Anne who will forward it to the Commission members. She added they will go through the application process for a public presentation to HPAC. The South End members have a meeting scheduled with the Land Use Commission of the Board of Representatives later in the month.

Sue agreed to come to the December meeting as the November meeting may be cancelled and she is not available on the date of November 12, 2019.

(The item was tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on going)

F. New Item - Mill River Bridge

Anne said she just received documents about the Coastal Site Plan Review for the Mill River Bridge. They did not arrive in time for tonight's meeting. This came from Land Use. Barry asked if there is timing issue. Anne said our comments are due three days after HPAC's next meeting. It was recommended that Anne contact the City to see if HPAC's review and comments to follow can be pushed to the December meeting as there may not be a November meeting.

(The item was tabled without further decision. Review of status will be on going)

V. Adjournment

A. Goslin adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m. (There was no further discussion)

Drafted by: David W. Woods AIA, Secretary
Historic Preservation Advisory Commission
October 30, 2019

Meetings are normally on the first Tuesday of the month starting at 7:00 p.m. in the 6th Floor Safety Training Room. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 12, 2019.