

HDC Education and Outreach Meeting
City Hall, Executive Conference Room
10/10/18

Members Present:

Richard Brooks
George Poulin
Laura Barry
Matthew Gerding

Public Present:

David Witham

Call to Order: 6:02 pm by Mr. Brooks

The meeting began with public comments:

Mr. Witham came to the meeting as both a city councilor, but also as a citizen hoping to have some questions answered. First question was about whether the size of the district will be changed with the new ordinance changes proposed by the HDC. The committee explained that the size of the district will remain the same, and will only be further clarified by the ordinance. Mr. Witham's second question was about the practicality of the HDC district ordinances. He stressed that he was concerned that cost prohibitive historic preservation being a requirement may be difficult for homeowners within the district. He asked the committee whether less expensive, more modern options may be a better option than not doing anything at all – which could end up being the case if homeowners could not afford more expensive preservative methods.

Ms. Barry answered, saying that the ordinances do not require any specific materials, and they remain flexible enough that the HDC can advocate for different types of materials that may be preferred. Ms. Barry also stressed that some of the newer, less expensive materials are not tried and tested materials, and may not have the longevity that many preferred materials do. Also, she stressed that it was important for the public to know that any material that is being replaced like-for-like does not need to be presented before the HDC. This is only reserved for if the material is being replaced with a different material.

Mr. Brooks also reminded that line-of-sight is another big consideration for the HDC. Often, as long as the area of interest is out of the line of sight from the road, there is much more flexibility with materials.

Ms. Barry explained that she hoped misconceptions about the HDC could be clarified, with both the Education and Outreach meetings and the normal HDC meetings. Such things as interior work and paint colors do not require homeowners to come before the HDC.

Mr. Brooks also brought up street signs, and how it would be nice to better indicate the historic district to residents and guests to the city.

Mr. Witham said that it would be nice to have specific HDC street signs. And suggested this is brought up to Public Works and City Council.

Ms. Barry also wanted to share with the subcommittee what she learned at the White River Junction Conference for Design Review. She explained that the Somersworth HDC would fall into what is called the “rehabilitation” category of historic preservation. She learned techniques to make better defensible decisions, bringing up the “Riggings Rules.” Ms. Barry also shared pictures from White River Junction, VT to exemplify how to blend modern design with historic buildings.

Mr. Witham and Ms. Barry explained that form-based codes may be an option, if done correctly, to help preserve the historic district and allow for well-designed in-fill.

Mr. Brooks brought up the Matrix that has been in use for the subcommittee. He reflected on changes, specifically the updates to the city’s website that would allow the HDC an opportunity to update its section of the website.

Motion to adjourn: Ms. Barry

Seconded: Mr. Gerding at 6:54 pm