

Rockingham Historical Commission (CLG) Meeting
Wednesday, April 29, 2015 at 6:30pm
3rd Floor Conference Room, Town Hall

MEETING NOTES

Present: John Leppman, *Chair*
Gary Fox
Francis Walsh, *Development Director*
Chip Stearns, *Town Manager*
Christy Hotaling, *CLG Coordinator*
Charlie Hunter, *Commission Nominee*

Agenda:

1. Introduce Nominees
2. CLG Mission and Overview of Past Projects
3. Discuss Potential New Speakers Program “Community Forum: A Panel Discussion on Bellows Falls
4. Other Business

Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm.

Minutes of December 10, 2014 meeting were reviewed and approved pending a quorum

1. Introduce Nominee

- Our sole nominee to the CLG Commission is Charlie Hunter. Hunter describes his long interested in historic preservation, his collaborative work with the Preservation Trust of Vermont, and his interest as a citizen in participating on this commission. JL would like to present Hunter to the Select Board as a nominee to join the commission. Since there are only currently two seated members of the Commission, CH will write a memo to recommend Hunter be approved as a member so that the Commission will once again have a quorum. If this request is approved, the Commission will meet again on May 14th in order to approve the minutes of December 10, 2014. Hunter has a few people in mind who he would like to approach about joining the Commission. Those present encourage Hunter to do so. The Commission discusses the frequency at which they should meet and agree that meeting quarterly would be most efficient. The Commission agrees to meet once quarterly in the middle of each quarter on Thursday evenings at 6:30pm.

2. CLG Mission and Overview of Past Projects

- CH describes the purpose of the CLG as a venue to help local governments integrate historic preservation concerns with local planning decisions. Past projects have included: a Speakers Program, The Old House Awards, National Register Nominations, administering projects and running the Meeting House. Currently the CLG is also developing a curriculum for local fourth grade classes to focus on the history of the Rockingham Meeting House; CH would like to apply to have this published with the National Park Service's Teaching with Historic Places lesson plans. JL mentions that having someone from one of the local schools on the CLG would be very beneficial. Next year the CLG will create a historic survey of the town's hamlets: Bartonsville, Brockways Mills and Cambridgeport. JL mentions the possibility of encouraging collaboration between the local historical societies and museums; perhaps having them all open on the same day.

3. New Speakers Program

- CH comments on Dan Scully's talk on March 25th and the level of interest that it garnered in the community to discuss a sustainable vision for Bellows Falls with historic architecture in mind. From this the idea emerged of holding a Community Forum with a panel to discuss a sustainable vision for Bellows Falls. FW says that nothing has been planned but that the CLG should think about what we would like to accomplish? What have other town's in similar situations done? The Commission discusses the challenges the Town faces; most notable of which is in bringing residences to the downtown. Hunter agrees, noting that he was surprised at the Scully event by the amount of interested in bringing more owner occupied residences into the downtown; if we move into an era of having more owner occupied residences downtown how can the CLG help with this? How can we help sponsor this conversation; what are the challenges and what are potential solutions? JL agrees; we need practical conversations regarding how this can happen in terms of financing. Perhaps we should look at what strategies other towns have used. The Commission discusses challenges ranging from high taxes to employment opportunities.
- FW mentions that he has spoken with Ted Carmen from Concord Square who has done a lot of work in the realm of community housing. Carmen has expressed interested in coming to Bellows Falls; perhaps he might be a potential candidate for this panel. The Commission should look at the resumes of potential candidates that would complement the focus/intention of the forum. We need individuals with a track record of helping communities. Perhaps someone from Housing Vermont to discuss new market tax credits, etc. GF suggests having one of the Town Listers come

in and present an analysis to the Commission about what's happening to the housing stock in Bellows Falls. FW says that Paul might consider doing so.

- The Commission agrees that FW and CH will make a draft outline for the forum and a list of potential individuals to be on the panel.

4. Other Business

- CH and JL discuss payment of invoices to the Vermont Welcome Centers for the display of the Meeting House brochures. The Rockingham Meeting House Association has assumed responsibility for the display fee. The 2014 invoice has not yet been paid; JL says that he will have the Association send a check immediately.
- CH reminds the Commission that this Saturday at 10am Paul Wainwright will be presenting on "Colonial Meeting Houses of New England" in the Lower Theater of Town Hall.
- CH informs the Commission that the 2015 Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference is on June 5th in Burlington. CH will be attending if anyone is interested please let CH know as soon as possible.
- The Commission agrees to meet on May 14th to discuss the Community Form and the timeline for the Old House Awards.

Meeting adjourns at 8:00 pm

Meeting notes submitted by Christy Hotaling, CLG Coordinator