

Newington Historic District Commission – Minutes

July 17, 2019

10:07 a.m. – 12:07 p.m.

TOWN OFFICES

Members	<p>Ted Connors Member (2020)</p> <p>✓ Christopher Cross Member (2020)</p> <p>✓ NellAnn Hiatt Alternate (2020)</p> <p>John Lamson Member (2021)</p> <p>✓ Lulu Pickering Member (2020)</p> <p>✓ Maxine Mintz Pottier Member (2020)</p> <p>Alan Wilson Member (2022)</p>
Minutes	<p>Discussed and approved the following HDC minutes (motion by Chris, second by NellAnn, unanimous approval):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 22 meeting with amendments about the proposed new cemetery road. • June 10 site walk, with one amendment to change \$50,000 to \$50,000-\$100,000. <p>Note: Unlike other town boards, no one is paid to take minutes for the HDC. There is no transcript, and the minutes are not a “he said” then “she said” portrayal of the discussions and different viewpoints. Rather, the overall concepts of what the HDC discussed at a meeting is provided in the minutes. If a vote is taken, the vote and who voted is given and whether the action passed.</p>
Selectmen request of June 3, 2019	<p>The HDC finalized its recommendations and advice for the selectmen and townspeople about enforcement of zoning complaints for residential lots with unregistered vehicles, junk, and dilapidated buildings (attached).</p>
CLG Program Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with state officials and the HDC is scheduled for August 21, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. at the Old Parsonage. • Alan Wilson has provided a resume; other HDC members should update or submit one. • The meeting will be at the Old Parsonage at a picnic table out back in the shade, weather permitting. • Lulu is trying to get spreadsheets from the town assessor to begin the inventory process that will be discussed at the August meeting.
Old Cider Mill by Fox Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Cowgill has approached the HDC about his rehabilitation plans for the old mill at 288 Fox Point Road. Tom also wants to share history about the mill and what he has found. • The project is a perfect fit for HDC’s role as an advisor to local government under Newington’s CLG status. • Discussions of about 30 minutes encompassed what the HDC should and should not engage in. In a nutshell:

- This property is not in an historic district and our advice and comments are advisory only.
- The HDC should be pleased that the historic mill is being preserved rather than demolished.
- The HDC should offer advice on the historic preservation of this mill, which is being *rehabilitated* for use and not *restored* as a mill museum.
- The property likely meets the requirements for listing on a state or national register if Tom is interested.
- The HDC should offer input on the resulting “look and feel” of the building’s exterior, the extent to which original material can be preserved, the craftsmanship, windows, doors, siding, etc. that all contribute to its historic features.
- The HDC should confine its advice to the historic attributes of the building and not to zoning regulations, potential uses, wetland setbacks, septic design, etc. Whatever the Zoning Board of Adjustment or other committees discuss and decide falls under their purview, not ours.
- When the folks from NH DHR visit in August we can discuss the types of advice the HDC can give when it wears its hat as Newington’s CLG oversight board.
- The HDC should share (by email) its minutes and advice with local government: the town planner (planning board), conservation commission, zoning board of adjustment and building inspector.
- The HDC could consider an award of some sort to encourage property owners to rehabilitate historic structures in Newington and perhaps add a story with photos to the town’s website. (NB: The history section and HDC sections of the town website need attention but no one has had time to address it.)
- Perhaps the Newington Historic Society and HDC could cosponsor a presentation on the history of this mill and what is now being done by Tom to save it.

Current status:

- As far as Lulu and Chris know, no other town committees have been asked to review the mill rehabilitation project but the town planner and building inspector have been involved in various aspects of it.
- Tom Cowgill has not yet asked to attend an HDC meeting. He has shared photos and information on artifacts with the *Newington Neighbor* and has approached the HDC. The artifacts could become part of an exhibit for display in a town building.
- Tom believes that the current building is maybe a hundred or so years old and that it sits on an earlier foundation that is still visible. He is happy to share the history he knows of the building and to help photo document his rehabilitation efforts.
- Much of the stone foundation is being preserved but a new cement foundation had to be poured on the road-side of the building due to water. To lessen the impact, a mason is facing the cement with an outer layer of stone that looks to be about 6-8 inches deep to hide the cement.

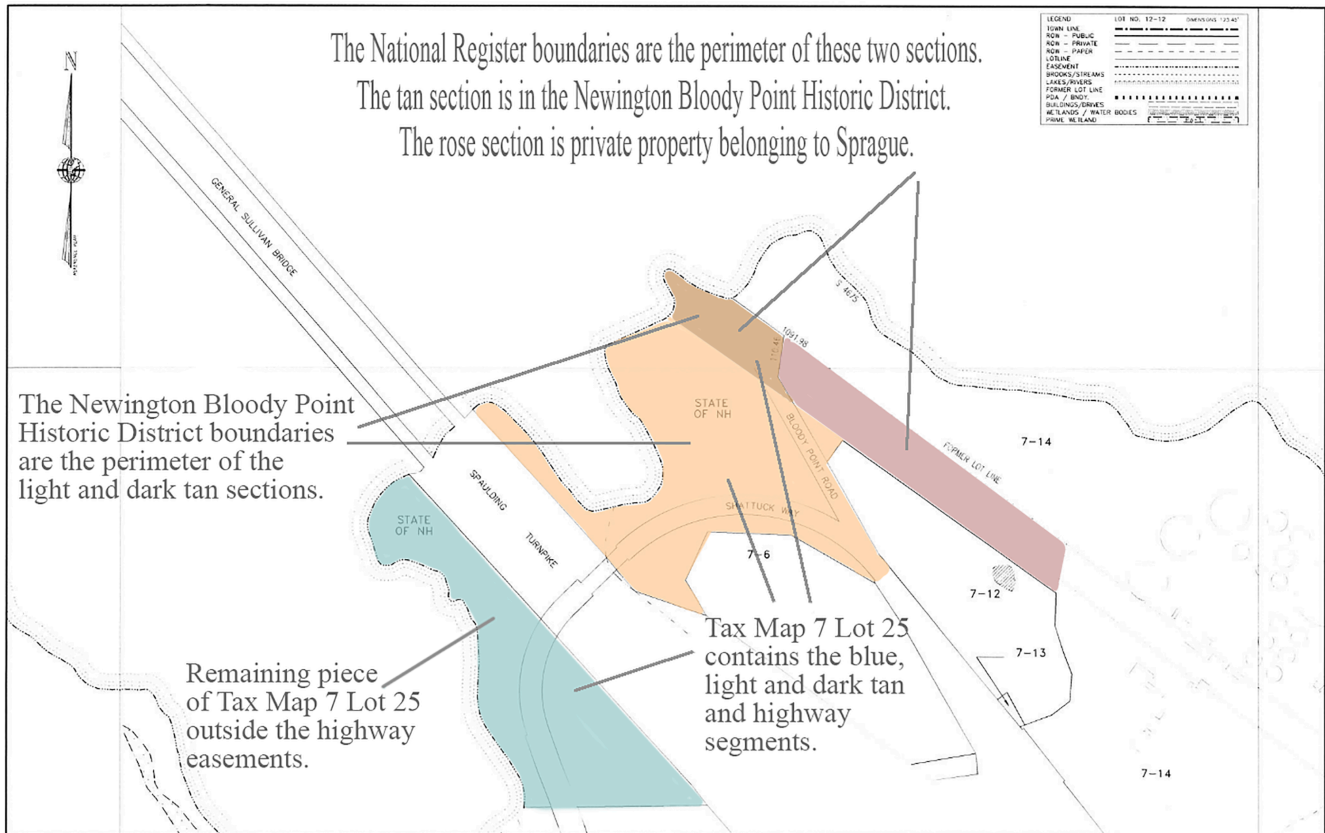
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom thinks he can save much of the stone foundation at the back of the mill and many sections of wall boards. • Tom thinks stones may be left over when he is finished, and those stones could be given to the HDC for use in rebuilding stone walls in the historic district. • The front, south facing side of the building required new boards, which now look to be rough-sawn so they match the character of the original boards. • Tom thinks that many of the roof boards will need to be replaced due to rot. • The rehabilitation will restore the building in its existing footprint.
2019 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maxine Pottier and NellAnn will work on creating an inventory/map of historic resources in town that are outside the historic districts. • Maxine would like to find a way to preserve/restore some of the old stone walls in town that are becoming visible when Eversource cuts trees and clears brush for relocation of the distribution lines. • Perhaps the stone wall idea could be coupled with the selectmen's replanting idea as part of the new committee being formed to address replanting.
Bloody Point Historic District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overlapping boundaries of Newington's Bloody Point Historic District, the National Register filing for the Old Railroad Depot, and Tax Map 7 lot 25 are shown on the attached map.
Cannons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An estimate was received from Prime Coatings, Inc. for painting the two cannons. • The HDC decided that it is important to preserve the cannons rather than spend resources doing something else in the veterans' monument area. • A second quote from Environmental Restorations needs to be updated from 2017 to 2019. • The HDC prefers not to punt this painting project until next year's budget, if possible, so additional funds may need to be requested from the Selectmen.

Attached

- Map showing the boundaries of historic designations at Bloody Point.
- Response to Selectmen's June 3, 2019 request

Lulu Pickering
HDC Member
July 15, 2019

Map showing the boundaries of historic designations at Bloody Point:



HDC Response to Selectmen's Letter of June 3, 2019

Old Town Center Historic District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The old town center is Newington's primary historic district and is under the purview of the HDC. Most of the buildings and properties are in good shape with the exception of the Old Stone School (OSS), which has been mothballed. • Though not the best approach, at least maintaining the integrity of the OSS against the weather and critters will stabilize it until a rehabilitation plan is decided.
Bloody Point Historic District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloody Point is Newington's only other historic district and is under the purview of the HDC. It is currently owned by the State. • The building has been mothballed but additional maintenance should be done to keep out the critters, such as replacing the eaves and some of the plywood panels on the windows. • The landscape is in sore need of attention. • Discussions with the State are ongoing about the fate of this property, which will remain in limbo until something is decided, hopefully in 2019.
Historic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many other historic resources exist in Newington that are privately- or town-owned and are <i>not</i> in a historic district. Some are listed on a state or national register, most are not. • The HDC is tasked with overseeing these resources, keeping an inventory, and helping owners in their historic preservation goals because of Newington's status as a Certified Local Government (CLG). • The HDC can only give <i>non-binding advice</i> to these property owners about historic preservation; the town's historic zoning regulations do not apply to these properties.
Properties in town without a historic resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many properties in town fall outside the purview of the HDC because they are either not in a historic district or they have no associated historic resource (e.g., barn, carriage shed, stone wall, etc.). The HDC has no standing to give advice on these properties.

Given the above guidelines, the members of the HDC have the following advice and comments to share with the selectmen and townspeople about enforcing the zoning ordinances:

1. Enforcement is a landmine. It cannot be selective (i.e., targeted at a specific property owner because someone complains). If there is an aspect of the zoning that the selectmen wish to enforce, they have to consider all the properties in town, make a list of those that are not in compliance, and meet with all the people to discuss the issues. The last time this was done, it created a huge uproar and the selectman behind the enforcement actions was not reelected

the following March. So, tread carefully; is the non-compliance so egregious that causing a town-wide uproar and spending many meetings working through the aftermath a wise investment of your limited time and efforts?

2. New Hampshire is the Live Free or Die State and neighbors should be allowed to live the way they want on their own property. That junk car may be a reminder of happier times or a status symbol of youth and past accomplishments. To some it may be junk, to others it is a prized possession.
3. Some in Newington pride themselves on living in a rural community but they do not seem to appreciate that rural encompasses both good and bad. Older properties have always had a ragtag assortment of buildings used for different purposes and in different states of repair. Collections of vehicles, implements, and the stuff that comes from living in one place for generations have always been a part of this town. Having kids, pets, gardens, farm animals, apartments, duplexes, etc. only adds to the collection of stuff. Embrace it, don't fight it.
4. Not everyone loves a McMansion with its manicured lawns. Many neighbors identify more with the pre-development look and feel of Newington. It is not a matter of jealousy or envy or money or status, some neighbors just do not like McMansions and their park-like lawns. That's OK, they don't have to live there, and they can like the people who do.
5. Most issues should be worked out between property owners and *not* involve official actions by the selectmen. Newington is striving to become a community of people who care about one another and their town. Everyone has to give a little to make that happen. If someone has not already discussed an issue with their neighbors and *listened*, he/she should not be pulling in the selectmen to act as enforcers. Telling the neighbors what they should be doing is *not* a discussion and is *not* listening.
6. Where is the problem? The members of the HDC are unaware of any serious issues around town that would cause the selectmen to have to enforce a zoning regulation.
7. You may not like the view of what is across the road on the neighbor's property, but it's OK, it is their property, not yours.
8. The primary reason an enforcement activity would be justified is if there is a health or safety issue.
9. Respect age and stage of life. What we could all do when we were younger, many of us can no longer do. It is not necessarily a matter of money. Climbing trees to cut limbs or climbing a roof to reshingle it become impractical at a certain point in time. Understanding goes a long way to creating a community.

10. What is a junk car? The zoning ordinance was amended so property owners can only have two unregistered vehicles. So, years ago, Rollie Beane went to the town office and registered about 11 vehicles he had on his property. They were *his* cars and he loved them.
11. But no one is mowing the grass and it looks unsightly.... Sigh, some towns do not even pay someone to mow their cemeteries due to money constraints. We need to concentrate on what is good about living here and resist efforts to make properties conform to only one esthetic.
12. Newington has a long-standing respect for individual property rights. Embrace it.
13. Newington is transitioning from an earlier phase of big open properties to a more developed phase that puts neighbors in closer proximity. Respect your neighbors, however close they may be.
14. Property owners have different points of view about their properties. One is no more correct than another. Give your neighbors consideration and respect; it can only help.
15. Is should not be phrased as “old Newington” against “new Newington,” which is divisive and upsets people. Only a small number of people are complaining to the selectmen.
16. Town enforcement does not replace good neighborliness. Talk things out with the neighbors first to build trust and understanding before engaging the selectmen. If you haven’t made a serious effort to do that, the selectmen should not become involved.
17. Try to understand your neighbors and the community you live in *first* before heading to the town office to complain. What is more important – being disliked because you are “right” or enjoying the neighborhood and people you live with?
18. The guiding principle for the selectmen and the people in this town should be to promote neighborhood and community above all else and not act to divide property owners into different factions. Establish trust with the neighbors and try not to alienate people, which is all too easy to do.
19. In every marriage there are subjects that you learn not to fight about, the same applies to every community.