

Newington Historic District Commission – FINAL MINUTES

Wednesday, November 21, 2018

10:00 a.m.

TOWN OFFICES

Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ted Connors Member (2020) √ Christopher Cross Member (2020) √ Edna Gove Member (2021) √ NellAnn Hiatt Alternate (2020) √ John Lamson Member (2021) arrived at 10:10 a.m. √ Lulu Pickering Member (2020) √ Maxine Mintz Pottier Member (2020)
Meeting dates and times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HDC will hold regularly scheduled meetings on the third Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m.
Town Planner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Lamson and Lulu Pickering met with Jerry Coogan on November 21, 2018 to discuss how the HDC and Town Planner can better communicate. It was agreed that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Town Planner supports four land use boards. – The HDC will be informed as soon as the Town Planner becomes aware of new projects; pdf attachments sent by email are great. – The HDC will email Jerry and other boards when it hears of new projects. – Twice a month, Jerry will send an update by email to the HDC about ongoing projects. – The position of the HDC on any project before the town needs to have been discussed and agreed in the HDC minutes rather than informally through the grapevine. • The HDC would like to set up monthly meetings with Jerry, probably the third Thursday at 1:00 pm, to discuss any ongoing issues impacting historic resources.
Posting material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town website currently has no areas that are non-public, so all agendas and minutes are public, which is a good thing. • However, the committee does need to share material, including pdfs and proposals, which means all this information is posted in the public domain when it is attached to agendas or minutes. • The HDC will continue to post all material it receives for discussion on the town website to foster communication and to make everything readily available to the public. • In the unlikely situation that something is marked “CONFIDENTIAL,” it may, or may not, be posted depending upon ongoing discussions during public meetings. If the HDC or other boards are asked to discuss the material, it is public.
Meeting Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes of October 16, 2018 were approved with one change – there are four, not three, distinct land use boards (conservation, planning, adjustment, historic); motion by Edna Gove, second by John Lamson, unanimous approval.
EBI Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Planner Jerry Coogan emailed that “Verizon is seriously exploring an alternative cell tower site at Sprague.” • Kate Ritter of EBI Consulting confirmed that the 2211 Woodbury Ave cell tower project is indeed on hold.

Langdon
Library
overflow
parking
proposal

John Welch presented a proposal for an overflow parking lot (attached).

- The current lot is full about once a week, usually on Fridays when book or family hour groups both meet.
- The Meetinghouse lot has 7 spaces including handicapped spots; usage of this lot is not tracked because it is hard to see from the library desk.
- The current library parking area would remain but be unstriped.
- A new area to the west would have 12 new spaces (8'x10').
- The new area would be at a higher (2 feet) elevation, with a sloped, grassy area between the two sections of the lot.
- Travel between the lots would be via a 20-foot wide access lane closest to the building.
- The new lot would be asphalt rather than gravel due to plowing concerns.
- The current walkway by the building would be removed and a new walkway constructed to the back, west-facing door of the new addition.
- Patrons would ring a bell and someone inside would come let them in.
- Flooding is a problem in spots and will have to be addressed.
- Construction of the new lot would occur in 2020.

HDC concerns:

- Members couldn't agree that extra parking space was justified given the number of days and times the existing lot is not full.
- Many townsfolk are healthy and more than willing to walk from the Meetinghouse lot or from Nimble Hill Road to the library.
- A new parking lot would impact the visual quality and uses of the historic district. The old town center is one of the prettiest spots in town and needs to be preserved. The proposed lot is in the core of the historic district. The old parade area is special; it is the old "New England town green."
- Many driveways in town, some very long, are gravel and plowing is not a problem.
- Even though the library trustees would use some trust funds for the design, the construction of a new lot by the town would be costly.
- The library seems to be consuming a large share of the funds that are available for the historic district. There are more than five other buildings and all the surrounding land that also need attention.
- The overflow parking lot for the library only addresses the needs of one of these buildings. The HDC is in the midst of creating an Old Town Center plan and wants to address parking issues globally across the whole district, for all the buildings, before any one building need is addressed.

HDC Decisions:

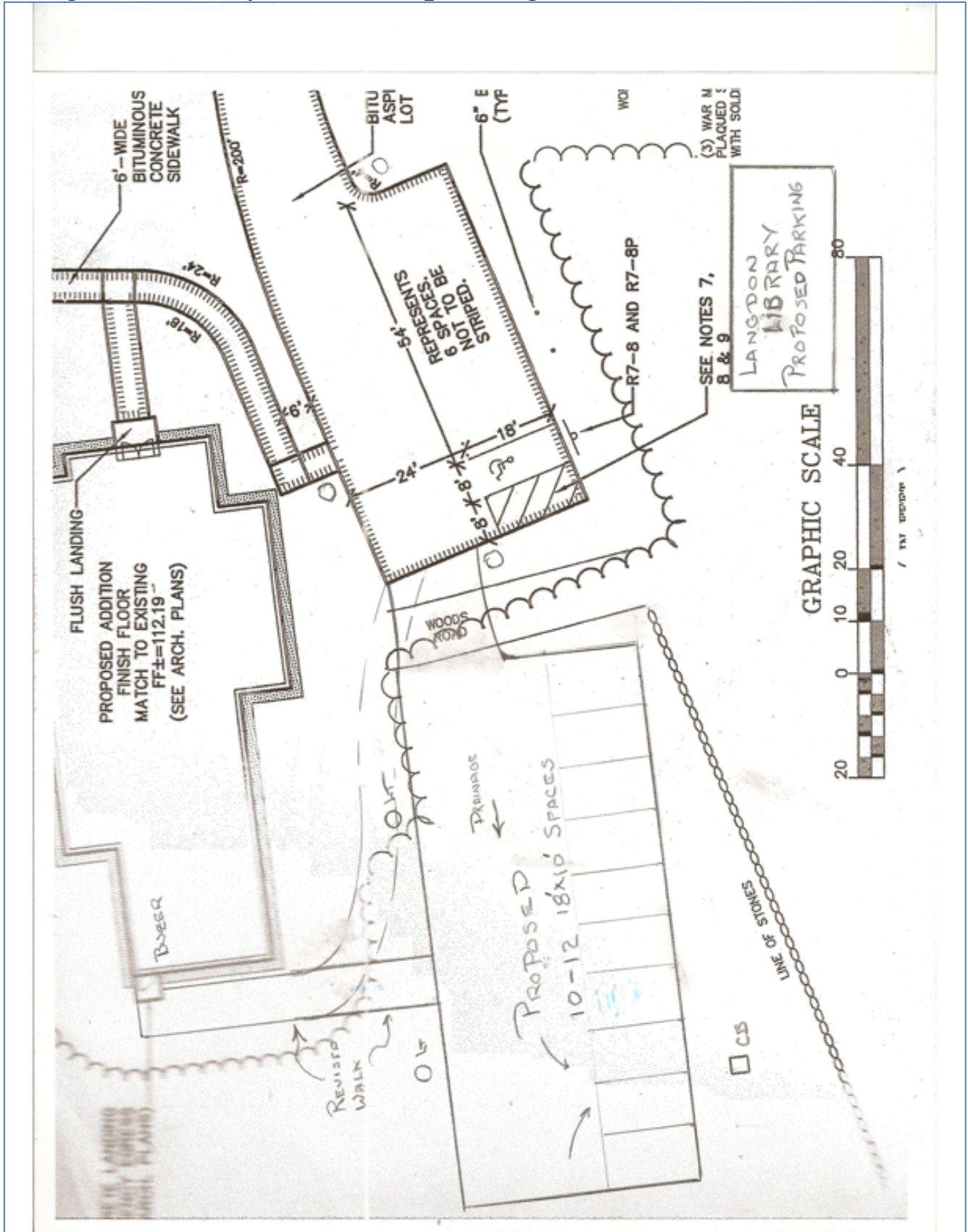
- Given the discussion, it seemed unlikely that the HDC would approve the current proposal.
- The Library Director agreed the proposal could be put on hold, so the HDC could call a meeting(s) of stakeholders to discuss overall needs and ideas about what is needed in the historic district.
- The HDC promised to convene "**an all-interested parties**" meeting(s) early in 2019 to look at a global solution for parking and other issues.
- John Lamson (chair of the Budget Committee) said it was OK for the trustees to put money for engineering plans into their budget as a space-holder. The Library Director said this money would come from library trust funds.
- Motion to table made by Edna Gove, seconded by NellAnn Hiatt, Chris Cross (abutter) abstained, unanimous approval by other committee members.

<p>Newington Congregational Church overflow parking and prayer circle proposal</p>	<p>Chris Cross gave a presentation on a proposed overflow parking lot (attached) at the church-owned lot by New Road. This 4.5-acre parcel between the Old Parsonage and Chris Cross’s lot is privately owned by the Newington Congregational Church. The Church is working with the town to correct the name on Tax Map 24 Lot 11 from “Town of Newington” to “Newington Congregational Church.” When this is completed, the property will become taxable property, unless it meets the criteria for being exempt for religious purposes. The Church is proposing an overflow parking lot for church activities and funerals, and a small prayer circle in the woods, to meet the criteria for being tax exempt. The new parsonage owned by the Church is not exempt and the Church pays property taxes for that parcel each year.</p> <p>Parking Proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small area behind the Old Parsonage, parallel to New Road, has been staked out for the proposed lot. • There will be a 20’ buffer (about 12 trees) from Nimble Hill Road to screen the parking area and minimize any visual changes from the road. • About 6 trees will need to be removed to create space (about 1,000 sq. ft) for 7 parking spots. • The stumps will be ground to ground level, the area cleared, and covered with gravel or wood chips, not asphalt. • With the selectmen’s permission, no new driveway off Nimble Hill Road is needed. New Road served as a town road for many years at the end of the 1800s and first half of the 1900s. Although grassy, the road has a substantial base and will support cars turning onto it to access the new parking area. • The purpose of the lot is for seasonal overflow parking from the Church during 3 seasons, excluding winter. • To capture the ambience of the old historic area, 7 hitching posts with rings may be installed by each parking spot. This area was used for horse trails in the not-too-distant past. <p>HDC deliberations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an impact to the historic district? YES • What is the impact and its extent (major, minor, minimal)? The impact is minimal. The proposed lot is recessed from the road and farther down in the woods, plus its linear geometry, use of natural wood chips or gravel, and use of New Road will minimize any visual impacts. Very few trees will need to be removed. Many people won’t even realize the lot is there. <p>HDC decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Lamson made a motion to approve the Church overflow parking lot as described, seconded by Edna Gove, Chris Cross (abutter) abstained, unanimous approval by the other committee members. <p>Prayer Circle proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Wahl, a Church deacon, would like to create a small prayer circle about 1/3 of the way back in the woods, well away from Nimble Hill Road and any buildings. • This circle would serve as a spot where the church could have religious get togethers of some sort (Easter sunrise service?), or where someone could just sit and think or meditate.
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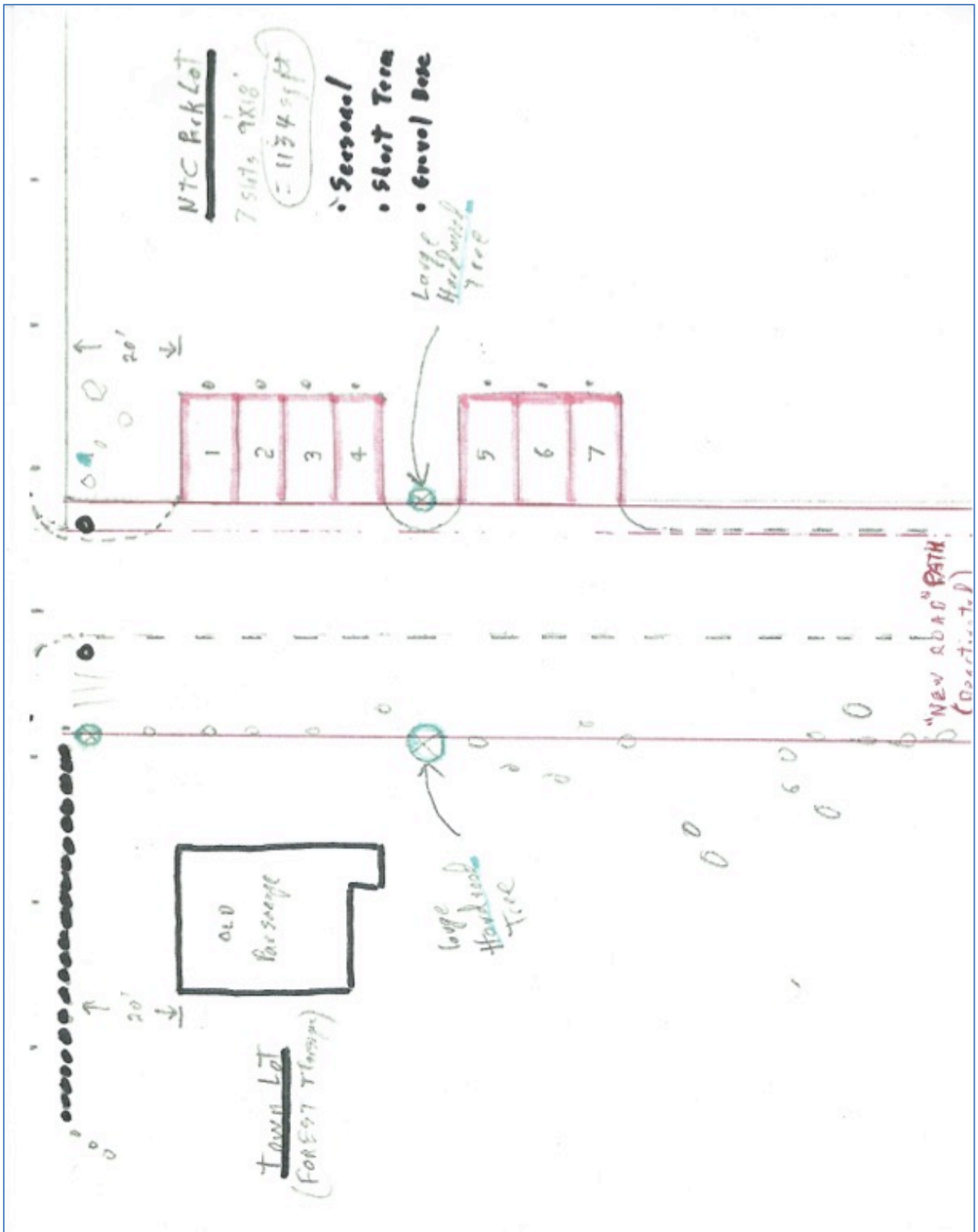
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The circle would be located in a natural clearing close to an old horse trail that was used by ATVs and snowmobiles in the past. The Air Force has several sampling wells in the area, so the woods are well traveled. • Three pines would have to be removed to expand the clearing, and a non-permanent structure created for sitting. The seats would be 8-foot long log benches, set off the ground on V-notched logs, probably in a semi-circle design, facing a pulpit made of similar materials. <p>HDC deliberations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although this property is in the historic district, it is privately owned. • Is there an impact to the historic district? YES • What is the impact and its extent (major, minor, minimal)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Set so far back in the woods and not visible from the road or buildings, this project would have a negligible impact. – It corresponds to one of the new features that the HDC has been discussing in its Old Town Center plan to create more people areas in the historic district. It could be a nice gathering spot. – Edna Gove was very concerned about safety while walking in the woods and who you might meet. She thought the prayer circle would be an attractive nuisance, invite garbage and dog poop, and become a maintenance issue. The HDC agreed that safety, signage, garbage disposal, and similar issues would be discussed across the whole Historic District during their Old Town Center planning, and not just for this proposal. <p>HDC decision:</p> <p>John Lamson made a motion to approve the religious prayer circle as described, seconded by NellAnn Hiatt, Chris Cross (abutter) abstained, Edna Gove voted against, and the rest of the members approved the motion.</p>
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2018 budget is overspent with permission by the selectmen. • \$3,300 will be used from our budget for the recent tree cutting work (\$5,000). • <i>The overage of \$1,700 will come from the Selectmen's budget (update noted as of January 9, 2019).</i>
Adjourn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting lasted from 10:00 am to 12:46 pm.

Lulu Pickering
HDC Member
January 9, 2019

Langdon Library overflow parking lot



Newington Congregation Church overflow parking lot



Newington Congregation Church prayer circle

