

Town of Sandwich

The Oldest Town on Cape Cod



Historic District Committee

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Minutes of a public meeting held on **Wednesday, March 4th, 2015**, by the **Sandwich Historic District Committee** in the Sandwich Town Offices, 16 Jan Sebastian Drive, Sandwich, MA.

Members Present: Bill Collins (BC), Mary Foley (MF), Lynda Haller (LH)

Alternate Members Present: Richard Claytor (RC)

Absence(s): Richard Alger (RA) Barry Hall (BH), Terry Blake (TB)

Guests Present: James Wilson (JW)

Staff Support: Paul Spiro (PS)

Administrative Support: Michelle Raymond (MR)

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A special workgroup meeting of the Town of Sandwich, Historic District Committee (SHDC), chaired by Committee Member, Mary Foley (MF), was convened. The purpose of the workgroup was to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the SHDC, gain knowledge and understanding of the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District Act as specified in the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District Commission (OKHRHC) Bulletin, and to consider appropriate process for fulfilling these obligations under the Law.

1. **Review of the Charge of the Workgroup:** (MF) opened the workgroup discussion and raised issues about the Old King's Highway Regional Historic District Commission (OKHRHC) Bulletin, as well as the SHDC's processes for reviewing and making decisions on applications. All agreed that the process has been challenging because the Bulletin is written with little specificity. All noted that the Bulletin is sometimes difficult to interpret, and as such, makes decision making challenging and or inconsistent.
2. **Discuss General Process for Workgroup:** A general discussion took place and all SHDC members present commented:
 - (BC) informed the group that the OKHRHC is in the process of updating the 2008 Bulletin. He indicated that the update may help to alleviate some of the current concerns of the SHDC, however (JW) noted that it may be two years before the document is completed. He also indicated that the frustration that some of the newer SHDC members may be experiencing was not foreign to new members, but that in time, with experience, the process and the intent of the Law becomes more clear.
 - (PS) noted that defining "Historic" within the context of the role of the SHDC may be difficult at times. He noted that there is no single rule that applies to all circumstances and therefore, the Law is written broadly to help the SHDC make "appropriate decisions" in all circumstances. He also noted in terms of process that the administrative support provided by (MR) to the SHDC is taking a significant amount of time.
 - The SHDC did not undertake the steps below at the meeting due to time constraints; and felt it would be in the best interest of all to methodically review the Bulletin one to two item(s) at a time. The group agreed that at the next several SHDC meetings, the SHDC would review one Section of the Bulletin, until all Sections were reviewed. All agreed and that when this process is completed, any additional tasks by the SHDC could then be considered.
 - i. Identify topics that we believe need improved clarity; guidance; and/or criteria
 - ii. Identify available resources/policies/guidance from other towns
 - iii. Collect available resources, etc.: Several items were submitted as examples
 - iv. Review available resources from other towns
 - v. Develop a guidance for use by Committee
 - vi. Develop suggestions/recommendations for the Old Kings Highway Regional District Commission
 - During the meeting each SHDC member provided their interpretation of their respective roles and responsibilities as a SHDC member. Each noted personal frustrations with the process and a willingness to work together to resolve challenges. After each SHDC member spoke about the process and their



experience, (JW) provided an overview about the history of the Bulletin, and the difficulty in establishing a "hard set of rules" to determine appropriateness. He indicated that the Statute identifies six factors that the SHDC should be using to determine "appropriateness". He noted that the State Building Code is being used by the Town of Sandwich; and that the work of the SHDC stems from that. He stressed that the responsibility of the SHDC is to become educated on these factors and on how to determine the appropriateness of structures. He noted that there are federal guidelines for historic buildings and it would be appropriate for the SHDC to consider them when making judgments. He also made it clear that SHDC members needed to judge objectively, using tangible points providing reference to Section 10 in the Bulletin. He suggested the SHDC members analyze the Act and study the words that the Legislature used. Once these tasks have been undertaken, then the SHDC would be well positioned to assess process and put forth more concrete steps for both applicants and the SHDC. (JW) informed the group that in the past, the six towns in the Region have tried to unify, however the differences in the town make it too difficult. Each town and building department has their own forms and their own checklist. He reminded that group that the SHDC has the authority under the Act to expand on the criteria and have procedures to assist applicants. The SHDC could consider this, but be careful not to make the procedures too arduous. He emphasized that the outcome of this work should be for the SHDC to come up with our own approach that yields a consistent pattern of judgment.

Following (JW's) comments (MR) suggested that the application may be a good place to start. The SHDC could refer to other town's application forms for ideas and/or Best Practices. The group agreed that this is an important step, and that the process for accepting applications would also need to be reviewed.

At the end of the meeting, there were four major items that the Committee decided to move forward on:

- Need for education and training- gain consensus
- Need for additional resources: development of a list of public/committee resources made available via more user friendly website
- Continue to explore the idea of a "published guidance" for use by applicants and SHD
- Need to develop a process for gaining historic information and then process for deliberating on it.

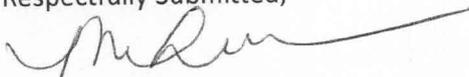
3. Logistics-

- *Establish a Workplan:* The SHDC decided that the Committee would take up for review and discussion, a Section or portion of a Section in the Bulletin at each public meeting scheduled within the next several months.
- *Determine a schedule for meetings:* It was determined that no schedule was needed.

4. High Level Bulletin Review

- *Identify topics that we believe need improved clarity; guidance; and/or criteria:* (JW) provided guidance on this and members of the SHDC will begin a process of education and training to become more effective in their individual and collective roles on the SHDC.
- **Policy/Literature/Resource Review:**
 - Initial discussion about what resources we should explore
 - Develop list of resources for future committee review

Respectfully Submitted,



Michelle Y. Raymond
Administrative Assistant

Date Approved: _____

4/8/15