

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES– July 21st, 2010
Norwich Historical Society, 277 Main Street, Norwich

Attending: Bill Aldrich, Roger Blake, Peter Brink, Nancy Hoggson, Anne Silberfarb

Absent: Phil Dechert

Guests: Kate Barlow, Ann Cousins (Preservation Trust of VT- PTV), Anne Garrigue, Nancy Osgood

Beaver Meadow: Ria Blaas, David and Jennie Hubbard, Ray Royce – Root District: Suzanne Lupien,

1. HPC met at NHS @ 1:00pm. The purpose of this meeting was to visit the last two historic one-room schoolhouses remaining in Norwich that are still being used for community purposes: Beaver Meadow and the Root District. Beaver Meadow, with a list of repairs and work to be done on the building, had called the Historical Society to explore what might be done in planning for the future of this historic building. Cousins gave an overview of the work PTV does for communities in Vermont. Since PTV had been instrumental in the rehabilitation of the Beaver Meadow Chapel, Cousins was interested in seeing the building.
2. Cousins encouraged HPC to use some of a possible CLG grant, which can be applied for in January to join the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a Forum member @ \$125 and also to purchase the complete library of preservation books published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation @ \$650. A possible grant from PTV would cover ½ of the cost. Since Norwich is not an official Certified Local Government (CLG) yet (*although all the application papers have been submitted to VT Division for Historic Preservation*).
3. First stop: Beaver Meadow Chapel with Ray Royce, David and Jennie Hubbard. Everyone agreed that it is an outstanding community resource, beautifully restored and maintained. The restoration campaign was spearheaded by Elsie Sniffen, and the end results are wonderful. Although two big drawbacks are no water and no plumbing. Services are held the 3rd Sunday of each month, with the exception of January, February and March. The big woodstove in the middle of the room means that chapel services and the building can be used in the fall/winter as well. The Hubbards and Royce commented on the lack of community interest in both the chapel and the schoolhouse. The Beaver Meadow Association maintains the building and raises money from the community for a maintenance fund.
4. Second stop: Beaver Meadow Schoolhouse: another wonderful community resource. We were joined by Ria Blass, Chair of the Schoolhouse Association. The building is having sill work done by someone who used to live in the 'Meadow' but is now in Bradford. However, concern was expressed that no footing drains were being installed with the sill work. As with the Chapel, there is no water and no bathroom. They were given a composting toilet some years ago, but it has never been installed. The Hubbards, Royce and Blaas discussed the lack of interest/support from the neighbors in the area. They try to host 'events' in the building for the community but they are not well attended. Dartmouth College uses the building for the freshman trips each fall, and that is a revenue source, along with the fundraising they do for specific repairs etc.. The building appears to be in reasonable condition but in need of work. Cousins encouraged them to consider applying to PTV for a Condition Assessment Grant of \$500 (\$50 from PTV and \$250 from the community) as a foundation for future fundraising and a guide for rehabilitation planning. Hoggson echoed Cousins recommendation as the Historical Society did this when they purchased the Lewis House in 2003, and it is still being used today as a guide to rehabilitation projects. Cousins has offered to help the group with the application process, and all present felt this was an important step to take.
5. Third stop: Root District Schoolhouse on Union Village Road: This building was deeded to the Root District Game Club by the Norwich School Board, who owns the building, in 1952. Over the years, it has enjoyed many iterations from a Game Club to Riding Club now to the Root District Community Club. Suzanne Lupien is now President of the Association with Jean Lawe as VP and a Treasurer. They are obligated under the 1952 agreement with the School Board to maintain the insurance and the electricity and maintain the building. As with Beaver Meadow, over the years, there has been less and less interest from the community in supporting the upkeep of this building. Lupien indicated, when asked by Cousins, that there was no outside help needed at this time. The Root District Association had a condition

assessment done of the building by Sally Fishburn, Danville VT, funded in part by PTV. The full 2002 report is available at the Historical Society and in the Zoning Administrator's office. At that time, the report indicated that between \$85,500-\$121,900 was needed to return the building back to a good standard with running water and bathroom facilities. The biggest concern detailed in the Fishburn assessment was the foundation (pages 6-9). Before leaving, the group visited the basement to look at the foundation. Concern was expressed about the continued deterioration of the foundation, which was deemed to be even more precarious today than noted in Fishburn's 2002 report. The foundation walls are continuing to fail mainly due to issues revolving around water pressure around the foundation walls. If the building is to thrive as a community center, a strong community organization would be a huge asset to help raise the funds needed to underwrite the cost of some of the most pressing repairs. Cousins will follow up with Lupien to encourage her to think about an update to the Fishburn assessment so the Root District Committee has a clear picture of what they need to focus on in terms of restoration and maintenance.

6. Norwich Historical Society to debrief and discuss next steps:
 - i) **Hoggson to send Cousins contact information** for the Beaver Meadow committee
 - ii) **Cousins will follow up with the Beaver Meadow** committee and Lupien to explore what might be possible for next steps, keeping the HPC informed as well through Hoggson as HPC Chair.
 - iii) **National Register Update** – original work was done in 1990 chaired by Anne Silberfarb. It was recommended that HPC look into the updating process so that we know what is involved and what the costs will be. Annual CLG grants can be used for this.
 - iv) **State Historic Register** – Brink has followed up with SHPO, and the question was raised as to whether or not if a community is already on the National Register – would it also automatically be on the National Register.
 - v) **Designated Village Center** – Hoggson did follow up with Cheryl Hermann of the Norwich Business Council about the possibility of a NBC meeting with Chris Cochran as speaker to discuss the tax credit program available for rehabilitation work on commercial buildings. Hoggson to follow up with Joe Lavin, NBC Chair about a possible meeting in September/October. Dechert will need to provide the list of property owners to be invited.
 - vi) **Town Plan** – Historic and Cultural Resources. Brink sent a letter to Dechert on June 18th with thoughts and recommendations. Follow-up with Dechert and the Planning Commission.
 - vii) **CLG grant program** – HPC agreed that it was important to explore all project possibilities now for a January 2011 grant application.
 - viii) **New historic districts** – exploration of Beaver Meadow as a second historic district. Follow up will be done before the next meeting to find out what is entailed with that process – ie. How many buildings have to exist to make another historic district; could Norwich's potential grant for updating the village Historic District also include work on Beaver Meadow.
 - ix) **Town plan recommendations** as per Brink's letter to Phil and the Planning Commission; Dechert was not at the meeting so no discussion about any follow up with the Planning Commission.

There was no further business, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Hoggson

July 229, 2010

Follow-up

1. more information about State Historic Register; *(Brink has confirmed with Cousins that since the town is already on the National Register, it is automatically on the State Historic Register.)*
2. information about using CLG funds for National Trust membership and purchase of recommended books; *(Hoggson did call the State. She was told that this would need to be included in the January 2011 grant application, and it is something that would be eligible for funding as it falls under the 'education' category.)*