**Wiscasset Historic Preservation Commission**

Minutes, 10/6/16

Present: John Reinhardt, Richard Thompson, Wendy Donovan, Susan Blagden, Gordon Kontrath

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm

2. Consideration of September 1, 2016 minutes

Richard asked to change the minutes of the September 1st meeting to clarify the sequence of events in and around Jib’s motion. The corrected minutes were accepted 4-0.

3. CAMP training

John, Richard, and Ben attended the CAMP training on September 23rd. They learned about crafting an historic preservation ordinance that is appropriate and that would stand up in court when challenged. They also learned different methods for running meetings. There were 20 participants from towns similar to ours.

Richard commented that he was impressed that so many of the participants were in their 30’s and 40’s, with varying degrees of knowledge. All of them had a negative story about dealing with MDOT, so we are not alone. He thanked Ben for setting this in motion for us.

John told us that they had brought back paperwork and links with more information, including the Secretary of Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties. They also discussed the process for public hearings. It was interesting to see what other people are doing.

Ben mentioned that the fees paid for the training would be refunded by the town. He has a flash drive with contents from the training that he can share.

Susan commented that if our ordinance does not change when the state law changes, we are out of luck. We don’t want Wiscasset to become static.

If we want to incorporate the Secretary of Interior guidelines in our ordinance, we’d need to go through the ORC.

4. Discussion of Federal Historic District

We compared our historic district to the most recent National Historic District survey, taken in 2000. The borders of the National District are roughly the same as ours, but it considers some properties non-contributing or not determined. If we becomes a CLG, we would work with the State Historic Preservation office to get a grant to survey the rest of the properties using Secretary of Interior guidelines. The national standards look at buildings 50 years old and older.

5. CLG requirements

We need to talk to the selectmen about becoming a CLG. Funding would be required in order to provide training to the community. Susan commented that we should have a good idea of how much money we’d need before we go to the selectmen.

The more beneficial grants for surveys, etc, are only available to CLGs. There are grants available for non-CLG’s, but they are for less money, and there is more competition for the funds. It is also possible to conduct at least part of the survey using volunteers. Any survey data would be available online for future reference.

The State Historic Office has a copy of our ordinance and will be sending it back with suggested changes. These changes would help clarify issues and help the ordinance hold up in court if need be.

The next step is to talk to the selectmen. Their next meeting is 10/18.

6. Schedule meeting with MDOT

Ernie Martin from MDOT would like to speak with the commission regarding the downtown traffic project. This would be an open meeting, but not a public hearing.

Al asked if the state has something equivalent to the Federal section 106 review, and Ben will check. He also asked if state funds were tied to the state’s historic preservation legislation. Because Maine is a home rule state, out ordinance should be applicable. Ben will confirm.

7. Other business

The letter to property owners is going out to 30-50 people each day. The first set went out on 10/5. It should take a week or two to get letters to all 400+ properties on our list. We would like to have the letter sent to local real estate agents as well, and to invite real estate agents to a meeting so we can educate them on the district.

Al mentioned that he would like to work with Ben to create an overlay showing the Federal Historic District and our historic district. Susan has a map of our district with all properties labeled.

It was mentioned that it would be helpful to tape our meetings. Wendy will look into this.

It was moved that open public comments should be a separate agenda item at the end of the meeting. The motion passed 4-0.

Public comment:

 Ted Talbert told the commission that he was concerned that the town will change drastically as a result of the MDOT project. He hopes that the commission will come forward and talk about the damage being done to 300 years of the downtown.

 Paul Mrozinski asked if the commission would require a Certificate of Appropriateness for the MDOT project. He was told that the process would be the same as for any other project. A Certificate of Appropriateness requires a final design, and we are at the beginning of a 6-month design process. The commission can ask for changes based on the final design.

Kim Dolce commented that we need to update our survey. The commission considers all buildings in the district contributing. We may need to justify this and use Secretary of Interior standards.

Susan asked Ben to report on the challenge to the Certificate of Appropriateness for 16 Fort Hill St. There was no finding of just cause for an appeal based on the procedures that were followed.

Richard asked about the status of the Academy building. The building is mostly unused, and the Maine Art Gallery went out of business. The second floor is being used as a private studio. The selectmen were meeting with the Maine Art Gallery privately. The Maine Art Gallery has a lease valid through 2019 for $1/year, with no requirement for maintenance. Richard asked how this happens to a town-owned building. Ben pointed out that this is not currently under the commission’s purview because no alterations are being made to the exterior of the building.

The next commission meeting will be Thursday, November 3, 2016 at 5:00 pm.