

**HISTORIC DISTRICT & HISTORIC
PROPERTY COMMISSION**

Jonathan Foltz, Chairman
Colleen Fawcett
Janet Foster
Matthew Kehoe
Kevin Quinlan
Alternates
Harriet "Scotty" Taylor
Helen Whitten



TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897

Informational Meeting for potential expansion of Historic District #2

Tuesday, April 10, 2012

Chairman Foltz began called the informational meeting to order at 7:05PM

Chairman Foltz welcomed those in attendance and gave an overview of Lovers Lane and Merwin Lane homes that may be included, if interested, in an expanded historic district. He noted that one, several, or all could be included but properties included need to contiguous. There could be a total of 9 properties added, though the Commission has asked the State to determine who has the authority to vote on behalf of the Wilton Playshop since the church and Playshop organization have a stake in the land and structure, respectively.

Chairman Foltz noted the Georgetown district of an example of a district that was expanded because additional neighbors wanted to be included within the protected area. He stressed that the designation or expansion of a Historic District is driven by the interest in the property owners and the HD Commission's role is to help facilitate the process if neighbors are interested, but that the Board of Selectmen have a veto opportunity if they feel the district borders are not appropriate.

Chairman Foltz opened the meeting up for questions and the following was discussed:

Walter Smith, a property owner, voiced a complaint regarding the Commission's approval of architectural asphalt shingles on the barn in HD #2. He expressed his disagreement with the Commission's determination that a public hearing was not required prior to approving the material and presented the argument he would have made to request that wood shingles be required for the barn repair. Chairman Foltz thanked Mr. Smith for his comments and stated the Commission would review the standard for requiring a public hearing going forward.

The neighbors had the following questions:

1. How restrictive are the regulations? Does the Commission regulate materials enough?
2. Are public hearings required for Certificate of Appropriateness?
3. How does the commission define appropriate?
4. Is there an appeal process if a COA is denied?
5. If someone tears a home down, are there restrictions on what can be built?

Chairman Foltz outlined the next step as neighbors thinking about if they'd like an expansion, which will dictate whether or not the commission would begin a study committee. Informational meeting closed at 8:15PM

1. How restrictive are the regulations? Does the Commission regulate materials enough?

Commissioners review and approve or deny alterations, demolitions, or construction of buildings and other structures within their boundaries and are visible from a public street, way, or place. No building or structure shall be erected, altered, restored, moved, or demolished within a historic district or historic property until an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness as to exterior architectural features has been submitted to the Commission and approved by said Commission. A Certificate of Appropriateness shall be required whether or not a building permit is required. No application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for an exterior architectural feature, such as a solar energy system, designed for the utilization of renewable resources shall be denied unless the Commission finds that the feature cannot be installed without substantially impairing the historic character and appearance of the district. A Certificate of Appropriateness for such a feature may include stipulations requiring design modifications and limitations on the location of the feature, which do not significantly impair its effectiveness.

2. Are public hearings required for Certificate of Appropriateness?

A minor activity, which will result in minimal impact upon the historical character and integrity of the building and/or property and upon the surrounding neighborhood as determined by the Commission, may be considered for a Certificate of Appropriateness without the requirement of a public hearing.

3. How does the commission define appropriate?

Buildings/Structures: In determining appropriateness as to exterior architectural features, the Commission shall consider, in addition to any other pertinent factors:

- a. Historical and architectural value
- b. Architectural style

- c. Scale
- d. Age
- e. General design
- f. Arrangement
- g. Texture and material of the architectural features
- h. Type and style of exterior windows, doors, light fixtures, signs, above ground utility structures, mechanical appurtenances, and type and texture of building materials
- i. The relationship thereof to the exterior architectural style and pertinent features of other buildings and structures in the immediate neighborhood
- j. Parking areas: The Commission shall consider the visibility of cars parked therein, the closeness of such areas to adjacent buildings, and other similar factors.
- k. Variations:** Where, by reason of topography or because of other unusual circumstances, strict adherence to the standards would impose exceptional practical difficulty or undue hardship on the applicant, the Commission may vary or modify its standards so as to relieve such difficulty or hardship, provided such variation remains in harmony with the general character of the district.

4. Is there an appeal process if a COA is denied?

Any individual who has been severally or jointly aggrieved by any decision of the Commission may, within fifteen (15) days from the date of such decision rendered, take an appeal to the Superior Court of the County of Fairfield in accordance with Section 7-147i of the General Statutes of Connecticut governing historic district or historic property procedures.

5. If someone tears a home down, are there restrictions on what can be built? (see question #3 – Building/Structures – determining appropriateness)

Submitted by Colleen Fawcett, Clerk
Wilton Historic District and Properties Commission