

**HISTORIC DISTRICT &
HISTORIC PROPERTY
COMMISSION**

Kevin Quinlan, Chair
Colleen Fawcett, Vice Chair
Helen Whitten, Clerk
Matthew Kehoe
Allison Sanders
Al Stauderman
Alternates
Peter Gaboriault
Carol Lenihan



**TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897**

Tuesday, September 8, 2015- Meeting Minutes

7:30 PM Old Town Hall

- I. Chairman Quinlan called the meeting to order at 7:40PM. In attendance were Commissioners: Whitten, Kehoe, Sanders, Stauderman, Gaboriault and Fawcett. Also in attendance was guest Bill Follett, Head of Buildings and Grounds, Wilton Congregational Church. It was suggested by Commissioner Gaboriault to shift the order of the agenda so that Mr. Follett could present first. All agreed.

- II. Sign honoring Walt Smith – Wilton Congregational Church - Wilton Congregational Church, and their buildings including parsonage and barns, is located in Historic District #2. Mr. Follett was present to share information regarding a plaque that is being designed to honor the life of Walt Smith who dedicated his many talents to the community of Wilton, and to the Congregational Church. The family has been consulted and Mr. Follett reports that they feel this is an appropriate way to recognized Walt Smith's contributions. The Commission agrees. The plaque will be positioned on one of the Comstock barns at the corner of Ridgefield and Belden Hill Roads. Because of the Historic District designation, the Commission is responsible for reviewing the general style and appearance of the plaque so that it is appropriate to the structure. Mr. Follett shared several drawings done by Mr. Ian Tessar, and a photo of the barn and possible positioning of the plaque. After discussion the Commission favored two simple designs that are similar to the Historic markers already used in Wilton, suggesting: a preference for some wording, a size large enough to be read by vehicle occupants passing by, and protecting it from potential snow plow damage (snow/salt piles) due to its proximity to the road. The Commission expressed pleasure that the church was honoring Walt in this way and will write a letter of support.

Commissioner Stauderman asked about the connection between the barns and the church. Mr. Follett stated that the barns were part of the parcel that the church bought, and that they were restored so as to be useful structures. Commissioner Sanders complimented the church on the new sign at Sharp Hill Cemetery. Mr. Follett reported on the work that was done around the sign and indicated an Eagle Scout candidate will be continuing to do restorative work around the entrance of the cemetery. Chairman Quinlan thanked Mr. Follett for attending and keeping the Commission informed regarding the improvements, restorations, and repairs to the church structures.

III. Ongoing Business:

A. Current Demolition Delays –

- 105 Old Belden Hill expired. Although outreach efforts were made, and the local paper reported on the impending demolition, no one stepped forward and expressed interest in saving any portion of any of the structures.
- 211 Hurlbutt Street - There is interest in the original frame, windows and chestnut floors of this historically significant structure, specifically interest in dismantling and reassembling in a different location in Wilton. Negotiations are underway between the builder, owners and interested party. The Commission believes it would be terrific if this historic structure could be saved and moved due to its richness in history and what appears to be good condition of the frame, flooring, windows and hardware.
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IV. New Business

A. Regulations discussion - Demolition delay start date: Chairman Quinlan discussed with the Building Department the start date of the demolition delay and continues for 90 days. The start date is the date that the Commission is notified of the intent to demolish. The Commission concurs, but would like to add a condition – namely that the sign indicating the intent to demolish needs to be in accordance with the Building Department’s requirements (including legibility and visibility from road), and if the signage does not meet the requirements - the start date of the demolition delay will then coincide with the proper posting of the intent to demolish sign (rather than coincide with the date that the Commission is first notified). Commissioners expressed willingness to monitor whether the signs are in compliance since we visit those structures that have historic and/or architectural value and are slated for demolition, rather than put another duty on the Building Department.

The Commission will discuss this idea with a Building Department representative at the next Commission meeting that a Building Department representative can attend.

V. Other

Wilton Bulletin reporter Kendra Baker contacted Chairman Quinlan about the purchase of the historic Wilton landmark – 183 Ridgefield Road – known as the Schlichting estate.

The original 1824 Victorian Italianate home is 190 years old and retains many of its original features. The purchaser / developer who has also contacted Chairman Quinlan has expressed his desire to donate some parts of the structure, and expressed his intent to demolish the structures. Chairman Quinlan shared with him the purpose of the Commission, which is to save all or part of historically significant homes and also explained the typical procedure wherein our Commission gets notified by the Building Department -during the course of a Demolition Permit Application being filed - of any structure that is older than 50 year and greater than 500 square feet, and that he must follow the prescribed procedures.

Commissioners discussed the limitations of our ability to save these important structures, with our only authority being the ability to delay a demolition for 90 days. Commissioners expressed the desire to have more tools to be able to have a better outcome in saving some of these structures. Discussion included ideas of how to save this one of a kind structure (Schlichting estate) , and it was determined that perhaps the best chance would be to see if the developer was willing to separate the home and barn into a parcel and offer it for sale with the hope of finding someone willing to purchase and renovate it.

(It's important to note that a written intent to demolish has not yet been received by the Commission.)

This led to discussion on the timing or process of intents to demolish – builders/developers can (subject to Zoning Officer's approval on the condition that the original house must be demolished before occupancy of new house and only if the delayed house is a sufficient distance away from the proposed new project) obtain a building permit prior to expiration of Demolition Delay – allowing new building to start while the old structure remains until the Demolition Delay expires. Commissioners agreed that this makes it even more difficult for the Commission to find suitable alternatives to demolition, and / or development of the property in a way that may retain the original structure as part of the property (guest cottage/home, rental, studio, etc.) The Commission will look at current regulations and timing and propose changes that will require the demolition permitting to occur *prior* to receiving a building permit and discuss this suggestion with the Building Department.*

**Chair Quinlan in conversation with the building Department as a follow-up to our Commission's discussion has invited Rachel Matthews to attend our October or November Meetings and Rachel has expressed an interest in attending. In the meantime, Rachel requested that our Commission email her our Demolition Delay Ordinance so she can review it in coordination with the Building Department's Demolition Permit and she will also place a link to our Commission's Delay Ordinance on the building Department's webpage.*

Commissioner Sanders noted an upcoming CT Trust for Historic Preservation Fall Conference that will include panelists from the UConn Center for Energy and Environmental Law who will explore the changing regulatory framework for land conservation and historic preservation and outline new standards and procedures that may

affect historic district commission and other regulatory agencies. New tools, strategies and funding sources will also be discussed.

Commissioner Kehoe suggested that the few updates that are needed on the Commissions portion of the town website be outlined, mocked up, and shared with the commission at the next meeting. Commissioners Sanders and Kehoe will work on this. Changes include: email link to current chair, adding the newly created “frequently asked questions” document, and making demolition process easier to locate.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Minutes written by Vice-Chair Colleen Fawcett