

Town of Newcastle
Historic Preservation Ordinance Committee
Meeting Date 6/8/23 at 5pm
At the Town Community Room (Fire Station)

Members Present: Ben Frey, Karen Paz, Catherine Burke, Tor Glendinning, Karen Paz, Bonnie Stone
Also Present: Isabelle Oechsle (Consulting Planner), approx. 12 members of the public

Minutes

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Tor Glendinning called the meeting to order at 5:05pm.
2. **Review of minutes of previous meeting: May 24, 2023:** *Ben Frey moved to accept the meeting minutes as presented. Karen Paz seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.*
3. **Public Comment:** Tor spoke to the members of the public present, asking for public comment and providing an overview of the purpose of the Ordinance (what it is and is not intended to do).

Questions and comments from the public are summarized below:

- What is the level of staffing that will be required from this Ordinance, and can the Town afford it?
- In regard to Article 2: Enforcement (as drafted), the language feels very threatening (“Failure to perform,” “daily violations”)
- Asked if the proposed escrow to pay for consultants to review Major Projects would be completely born by the applicant or if a portion would be paid for by the Town.
- Comment questioning process: consider a survey of impacted residents, understand their concerns
- A question about the process to draft the Ordinance: did this come from another community? Does it actually reflect the views and needs of Newcastle?
- Comment regarding the Ordinance as drafted, noting that people feel that it is burdensome and could have the effect of increasing value but lowering desirability of historic districts
- Minor projects section seems to “micromanage” maintenance and repair and smaller projects, which is potentially not the intent of this Ordinance. Asked the Committee to review.
- Concern from a resident directly outside of the historic district in Sheepscot Village that he didn’t need to have any review to change his house, which is one of the oldest in the community; desire for his house to be added to the historic district
- Advocated for exempting Renewable Energy Systems from review like Damariscotta has done; concerned that historic preservation is being prioritized over energy efficiency/sustainability
- Asked that the Ordinance firmly addresses/clarifies “grandfathering”
- Asked how heat pumps will be addressed, requested that it be a Minor Project or exempt
- Concern expressed about limited scope of the Ordinance. Asked why it focuses only on historic districts when there are historic resources across the community not captured in the Ordinance?

- Asked if the Core Zoning Code has been lacking, leading to the creation of this Ordinance
- Regarding enforcement: resident noted that violations are not being caught under the existing code - how does the Town expect to enforce this Ordinance when there is lacking enforcement over existing ordinances?
- Question regarding materials: would more modern materials not be allowed at all under this Ordinance?
- Question regarding how this Committee was formed, questions regarding plans for public engagement in advance of adoption of this Ordinance

Where applicable, Committee members or the Town's consulting planner provided answers to the questions posed by residents.

4. **Overview of Historic Preservation Ordinance, Draft 5:** Isabelle provided an overview of this draft, indicating the sections where changes occurred based on Committee and public feedback from the May 25th meeting.

In general, discussion at this meeting focused on the following items:

- **Fencing:** After discussion by the Committee, the consensus was that there is value to reviewing fencing proposed in the Frontage Zone but it seems that what people are concerned about is providing an escrow to pay a consultant to review that change. It was suggested that fencing in the Frontage Zone would continue to be a Major Project, but that it would specifically be exempt from escrow requirements.
- **Cameras:** The Committee agreed with the recommendation of the consulting planner to remove cameras, peepholes, and similar from any review of this Ordinance (to make them exempt projects).
- **Article 9: Maintenance and Neglect:** Isabelle asked for the Committee's viewpoints on these items, noting that previous discussion occurred at both the 4/6 and 4/26 meetings on equity considerations. It was noted that the Code Enforcement Officer already has the authority to pursue violations of "hazard buildings" (so defined) through other means, so perhaps this section could be removed in an effort to address public comments. Tor noted that this section, if adopted, would immediately apply to at least two buildings that he could think of. It was suggested that instead of having a forceful violations section, the Town could instead consider allocating annual funds to set up an incentive program/grant program that could fund things like application fees, building rehabilitation, structural repairs, and the like. Consensus was to eject this section from the Ordinance.
- **Maintenance and Repair: Minor or Exempt?:** Consensus of the Committee was to move maintenance and repair from a Minor Project to an exempt project, if materials are replaced in kind with no changes.

5. **Discussion of Next Steps:** An additional meeting was set for June 21st at 5:30pm to review Draft 6 of the Ordinance, incorporating changes discussed this evening.
6. **Adjournment:** Adjourned without objection at 8:10PM.