

*These minutes were approved at the January 4, 2024 meeting.*

**DURHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT/HERITAGE COMMISSION**  
**Monday, November 2, 2023**  
**DURHAM TOWN HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Larry Brickner-Wood (Chair); Charlotte Hitchcock (Vice-Chair via zoom); Mike Hoffman, Eric Lund (Town Council Rep); Carolyn Singer; Jennifer Becker (Alternate) and Tom Janosz (Alternate).

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bill McGowan (Planning Board Rep) and Aaron Wolfson-Slepian

**ALSO PRESENT:** Town Planner Michael Behrendt

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Larry Brickner-Wood called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

Roll call attendance was taken and it was noted all votes will be by roll call this evening because Ms. Hitchcock is attending from New York via zoom.

**III. Seating of Alternates**

The Chair seated Mr. Janosz as a voting member for Mr. Wolfson-Slepian and noted an alternate can't be named for Mr. McGowan because he's a Planning Board Rep.

**IV. Approval of Agenda**

*Mr. Lund MOVED to approve the agenda as submitted; SECONDED by Mr. Hoffman, APPROVED unanimously on a roll call vote, 6-0, Motion carries.*

**V. Approval of Minutes: September 14, 2023**

*Ms. Singer MOVED to accept the minutes as presented; SECONDED by Mr. Lund, APPROVED 5-0-1 on a roll call vote, with Mr. Hoffman abstaining because he wasn't present at the meeting; Motion carries.*

**VI. Public Comments:** None.

**VII. Staff Report:** There was nothing to report.

**VIII. Tideline Public House – Parking Signs.** 15 Newmarket Road. Application to install three freestanding signs on site alerting customers about restrictions for parking across the street at Town Hall. Slipknot Properties LLC – Scott and Karen Letourneau, applicants. Map 108, Lot 69. **HDC**

Mr. Letourneau is here to speak on behalf of the application. He had sent proofs of the proposed signs to the Commission earlier and tonight he explained the location for each sign.

Ms. Singer asked if Items VIII and IX could be discussed together since she sees the two as connected. In her view, the proposed parking signs aren't appropriate for the HDC and she's unclear why more signs are needed. The Chair said he believes the items should be looked at separately since further discussion on each will help to clarify the issues.

Ms. Becker commented that the proposed signs are uniform to other signs in common use in the area and Mr. Hoffman mentioned there's a code for Uniform Traffic Control Devices for this type of sign.

He noted some historic districts don't allow U-channel posts or they paint the back of the posts black to avoid the aluminum look. While he would generally prefer a 4 x4 or a round post, in this case it makes sense to affix the new signs to the existing ones which already have U-channels.

Mr. Letourneau said he proposed portable signs that could be brought out only on nights there are meetings at Town Hall, but this wasn't met with enthusiasm by the Town. The alternative was to place signs at his business.

Chair Brickner-Wood agreed it would make sense to have portable signs at Town Hall. He then read a note received today from resident Peter Stanhope, 37 Dover Road, addressed to Town Planner Michael Behrendt. Mr. Stanhope wrote that: "Items VIII and IX [on tonight's agenda] are a degrading influence of what the district was created to preserve." He added, "The municipal parking lot is the Town's responsibility to police" and "placing signs at Tideline Public House degrades the Historic District."

Chair Brickner-Wood expressed gratitude to the Letourneaus for their cooperation with the Town and suggested the Commission could table this request to give more thought to being consistent about this type of signage in the HDC.

Mr. Behrendt acknowledged the Letourneaus have been good neighbors and have worked closely with the Town to resolve any issues. He suggested that the Commission approve two signs for the rear of the property at the exits (as proposed) since those signs wouldn't be visible from the Historic District. If parking continues to be a problem in coming months, other solutions can be explored.

***Mr. Hoffman MOVED to allow the applicant to locate two of the signs as submitted on the application to be located in the rear parking lot area co-located on existing signs. SECONDED by Mr. Janosz, APPROVED by roll call vote, 4-1-1, Motion carries.***

**After much discussion on the motion, the vote was YES:** Mr. Hoffman; Ms. Singer; Mr. Lund and Mr. Janosz; **NO:** Mr. Brickner-Wood; **ABSTAINED:** Ms. Hitchcock (because she hadn't received information about the proposed signs in advance.)

Following the vote, Mr. Behrendt asked if the wording on the signs could be changed from violators "will be towed" to they "may be towed."

**IX. Tideline Public House – Freestanding Sign.** 15 Newmarket Road. Preliminary discussion for application to install a freestanding sign in the front of the site. The applicant has also applied for a variance as the size of the sign exceeds the six square feet allowed in the Historic District. Slipknot Properties LLC – Scott and Karen Letourneau, applicants. Map 108, Lot 69. **HDC**

Mr. Letourneau said there's an existing sign on the back of the building which is of the same design and materials. The HDC is being asked to do a preliminary review of the design; The Zoning Board will decide if they wish to grant a variance for the size which exceeds the six-square-feet permitted in the Historic District.

He then explained the reasons for requesting a new sign in front. He said they're getting feedback from customers that the business isn't easy to find. All activity on the property is in the rear and isn't visible when driving by.

From the front, the property still looks like an office building. Guests renting the lodging space have said they couldn't determine if they were in the right spot, despite GPS directions. The Letourneaus are requesting this sign in order to have "Tideline" clearly visible from the front by motorists.

Ms. Singer asked for clarification on the proposed size of the finished sign and Mr. Letourneau said it would be about 14 square feet. She added that due to their location next to a gas station, she believes they would have more leeway on signage.

Mr. Lund asked if the Letourneaus are looking for the Historic District Commission to support their application to the ZBA and Mr. Letourneau replied that he's not sure if the ZBA is seeking input from the HDC. He added this is a preliminary design review with the HDC. If the size variance is granted, he'll return to the HDC for final design approval.

After discussion, consensus was reached that the Historic District Commission won't communicate with the ZBA on the application in advance.

Members made suggestions about the sign design, including using either painted posts or granite posts and downcast lighting. They generally agreed that the six-foot-square size restriction in the District is only visible to pedestrians and may need to be revised to help support businesses.

Mr. Lund said the Planning Board is in the preliminary stages of reviewing and re-writing zoning codes and now might be the time to submit any requests for changes. Mr. Janosz added in addition to sign size, the Commission should address setbacks from the public way.

**X. Oyster River Raid Sign.** Discussion about plans to facilitate meetings with stakeholders to address revisions to the language in the sign that was located on Newmarket Road near the Oyster River. **HC**

Chair Brickner-Wood said he and Mr. Behrendt met with two potential facilitators and are awaiting a written proposal from one of them. A decision will then be made as to which one is the most affordable and appropriate.

The proposed timeline is to start the meetings in January and run until March, if needed.

Mr. Behrendt added the plan is to include six stakeholder groups, with two people from each group invited to participate. The forum would be open to the public. It was agreed that the Historic District Commission would be considered a sponsor of the meetings.

There was brief discussion about which members of the Commission should be part of the group and the Chair said he's happy to chair the event and not take part in the discussion, since he'll have opportunity to comment later.

*Mr. Lund MOVED to appoint Jennifer Becker and Carolyn Singer as HDC representatives to the meeting described above; SECONDED by Mike Hoffman; APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.*

#### **XI. Other Business**

Chair Brickner-Wood brought up Ms. Singer's request to purchase and place sensors in Smith Chapel. He would like to take care of it in this budget year.

Ms. Singer explained that her recommendation is to purchase data loggers that would take temperature and humidity readings every ten minutes for a year. The data would then be analyzed for seasonal variations. She added that the wooden frames installed around the stained glass windows about eight years ago are already rotting. The cost for the data loggers is about \$155 plus postage.

*Mr. Hoffman MOVED to purchase and install data loggers at Smith Chapel, with the cost not to exceed \$200; SECONDED by Mr. Janosz; APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.*

#### **XIII. Adjournment**

*Ms. Singer MOVED to adjourn at 8:20 p.m., SECONDED by Mr. Lund, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Lucie Bryar, Minute Taker  
Durham Conservation Commission

*Note: These written minutes are intended as a general summary of the meeting. For more complete information, please refer to the DCAT22 On Demand videotape of the entire proceedings on the town of Durham website.*