



## NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

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Town of Durham  
Historic District Commission  
Attention: Peter Stanhope  
15 Newmarket Road  
Durham, New Hampshire 03824

September 4, 2014

Dear Chair Stanhope,

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources has received correspondence from the Concerned Citizens group in Durham regarding the potential demolition of the Town Hall. The building is located within the town's local historic district, and we understand that the Durham Historic District Commission will be reviewing this project on Thursday, September 4, 2014. Please share copies of this information with your Commission members.

As you know, the Town Hall is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Durham Historic District. Since the listing in 1980, a number of changes have occurred within the district boundaries. These include the development of historically open land along the mill pond, construction within the district of parking and entrances to the Irving Gas Station, and the re-location of the Grange Hall. The demolition of a number of historic buildings and the construction of large-scale student housing is now underway at the west end of Main Street in the district. With these changes, the current Town Hall remains as the only historical property that connects the northern section of the district with the southern section. Its proposed demolition would sever the district, creating a break in its boundaries.

At a meeting with the Historic District Commission in February 2013 and in correspondence since, the DHR has discussed the ramifications of severing the district boundaries. Most notably, it would invalidate the reasons for the district's listing in 1980. If there were ever a request or reason to re-evaluate the district's National Register status – such as a Section 106 review of a federally-funded, permitted or licensed project there – the district as defined in 1980 would be removed from the National Register. Listing on the National Register presents many benefits. It can be a source of

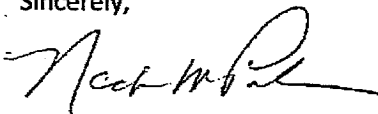


community pride and creates greater opportunities for advocacy, fund-raising and heritage tourism. Property owners within a district can potentially benefit from federal tax incentives and special consideration in the application of building and life safety codes. The DHR strongly supports the National Register program and encourages all communities to participate in it.

As a Certified Local Government (CLG) in New Hampshire, the town of Durham has also agreed to participate in a partnership with the National Park Service and the DHR to help save irreplaceable historic properties. One of the best tools to do this is the designation of local historic districts that provide protections against demolition of significant properties. As you well know, one of the purposes of the local historic district in Durham is to preserve and promote the historic, cultural, educational, economic, and general welfare of the community. The historic district ordinance notes that demolition or removal of a contributing structure is strongly discouraged and shall rarely be permitted. The DHR encourages the Commission to thoughtfully proceed in its review of the demolition of the Town Hall, considering both the goals and purpose of the local district ordinance and the demolition's potential effect on the district's National Register listing.

Review of the proposed Town Hall project presents great challenges for the Historic District Commission. It is the DHR's hope that through the process public support for the district will remain strong. One of the benefits of being a CLG community is to receive direct access to the DHR for technical assistance. As always, please contact our office if you need additional assistance on this matter.

Sincerely,



Nadine Peterson  
CLG Coordinator and  
Preservation Project Reviewer



Peter Michaud  
National Register, Preservation Tax Incentives and  
Easements Coordinator

cc: Elizabeth H. Muzzey  
Todd Selig  
Michael Behrendt  
Nancy Webb