

Historic Preservation Commission
Minutes
October 27, 2015
7:00 p.m.

Present: Wes Stone, Chairman
Mary E. Lowther, Member
Susan Palmer, Member
Kate Waterman-Kulpa, Member
Dr. Stephen Dyson, Member
Chuck Akers, Member

Also present: Deborah A. Habes, Deputy Clerk
Basil J. Piazza, Trustee Liaison
Charles Grieco, Village Attorney

Excused: Anthony Bannon, Member

Mr. Stone opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Topic of Discussion: Lehigh Valley Section House on Herbert Darling property

Guest: Hank Olejniczak – henry.olejniczak@roadrunner.com , advocate for WNY Rail Heritage/Central Terminal Restoration Corp.

Mr. Olejniczak stated his purpose in appearing before the HPC tonight was to urge the Village to preserve the Lehigh Valley Section House on the Herbert Darling property. He stated that the property is under contract for sale to a developer and he hopes this house can be saved and used by the Village as a multi-purpose building. The building was built in 1907 and used as a “bunk house” for railway workers and the station master and his family for many years. He sees the building as a valuable piece of Western New York’s railway history and wishes to raise public awareness of its importance. It could be part of the bigger picture as this area is rich in railroad history. This could spur tourism in the Village and surrounding areas as the building is an integral part of the Village’s history. He believes the new owner may be interested in donating the structure. He suggested the Village could use it to house its historical collection and be used for many other public functions as well.

Mr. Olejniczak stated he has serious issues with the Western New York Railway Society and their management of the Society’s finances. He stated it is a 990 organization. Mr. Grieco stated HPC and the village must base their decisions on facts not opinions. Mr. Grieco stated that as a 990 organization, they must be audited. He proceeded to look them up online and found that the group was audited in 2013.

Mr. Olejniczak stated he is part of a group of local rail enthusiasts who hope the Village will take over the structure and not the WNYRRS.

Mr. Grieco stated the HPC could make recommendations to the Village Board, but could not make any determination on its own. That is up to the Village Board.

There was discussion of the possibility of landmarking the building. Ms. Waterman-Kulpa suggested that if moved, the building would not be eligible for NYS preservation funds or be eligible to be on the State Register.

Mr. Dyson suggested the creation of a feasibility study committee to investigate the possibility of the acquisition of the structure, the condition of the structure and the possible consequences of moving it. We need to get inside the building to see what we would be dealing with. He suggested the building could be a good means for education of the community on its railway heritage and also be used as a multi-purpose building by the Village.

Ms. Waterman-Kulpa suggested the Darling property/S. Long Park area is part of the Village's Community Plan as a focus district. Mr. Olejniczak urged the Village to make the building usable and accessible to the public.

Ms. Waterman –Kulpa suggested the building met several criteria for landmarking – cultural significance, age of structure. Local landmarks can be buildings that have been moved. There are no restrictions about moved structures – ie the White House at 80 E. Spring St. It could be nominated for landmarking after it is moved.

Mr. Olejniczak distributed copies of a brief history of the structure, which included mention of the original building materials for the 1 ½ story structure. These included red quarry tile floors, and finishes of “rock asbestos” stucco and “Natco” hollow building tiles on concrete foundations. The “bunk room” is plastered with Portland cement mortar. It was originally heated with wood stoves.

Members of the Commission thanked Mr. Olejniczak for appearing this evening. Mr. Olejniczak expressed his appreciation to the members for allowing him to speak this evening. He left the meeting at this point.

Mr. Dyson urged investigating the issue before making any decision going forward. He further urged HPC and the Village to get the facts straight before making any moves on this. We don't know what we would be dealing with unless HPC and the Village Board see the building first and fully investigate the issue.

Ms. Waterman-Kulpa wondered if the HPC budget would allow for the inspection of the building. Mr. Akers suggested asking for a proposal and that would include an inspection.

Ms. Waterman-Kulpa suggested Mr. Stone speak with Mayor Kulpa first, then Mr. Stone, Ms. Waterman-Kulpa, Trustee Piazza and the Mayor could possibly meet with Herbert Darling, current owner of the property to find out the facts of the building's condition and status.

Ms. Waterman-Kulpa suggested it is worth investigating the issue to see if the building is structurally sound enough to save. Mr. Stone will ask the Building Dept. to pull the file on the property (Darling property).

Chairman Stone will speak to the mayor.

It was decided to try to visit the site some Saturday in November with Mr. Darling, any HPC members who can make it, the mayor and any trustees.

***Chairman Stone will communicate to all involved Village parties a date and time for a meeting on site once determined.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Deborah A. Habes,
Deputy Clerk

**The next REGULAR
HPC meeting is scheduled
Dec. 1st at 7:00 p. m.
at Village Hall, 5565 Main St.**