

**Village of Williamsville
Historic Preservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
December 1, 2015
7:00 p.m.**

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

Also present: Deborah A. Habes, Deputy Clerk
Basil J. Piazza, Trustee Liaison
Evan Bussiere, Acting Village Attorney

Guest: Mayor Brian J. Kulpa

Excused: Susan Palmer, Member

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

ON MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Mr. Akers, it was moved to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2015 minutes, as submitted.

Unanimously carried.

ON MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Ms. Waterman-Kulpa, it was moved to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2015 minutes, as per revisions provided by Ms. Waterman-Kulpa.

Unanimously carried.

Guest: Mayor Brian J. Kulpa

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

Mayor Kulpa gave some background on the Village's relationship with WNY Railway Society. The Village has a contracted relationship and because of this, the Village Attorney did background checks into the Society's finances and they checked out. Village Board is not going to get involved in the politics of the group. They are basically sound.

Natale Builders has a contract to close on the Darling property at this point. It is tied directly to Darling closing on their new location.

Natale has no interest in demolishing the Station House. The Railway Society has approached the Board saying they are interested in the building. They would like to move their artifacts into it and also be able to use the building as meeting space with its kitchen.

Mayor Kulpa stated he asked Natale for the building and if they would re-locate it if the Village wanted it moved. They said yes. The WNY Railway Society is raising funds for a new slab foundation for the building if moved. Village of Williamsville would own the building. If Society couldn't raise the funds necessary to renovate it, the Village could apply for grants. Could there be a land swap?

Mayor Kulpa sees a 3-part plan going forward:

1. HPC – Stays involved with the property and Section House
2. Parks Committee - Bring them into the mix
3. Natale Builders – Need a plan for the Section House, a plan for park expansion and a plan for Natale's development project.

There are many moving pieces to this. Natale has a lot invested in the property. Village wants to preserve the Station House. Can it be saved? HPC says yes. Make it a local landmark if moved or not. Wants to go to SHPO with the 3-part plan. Would they give us funding?

Ms. Waterman-Kulpa suggested that if the land itself was landmarked and the Section House moved onto it, then that could possibly make a better case to SHPO.

Mayor Kulpa wants to protect the Section House and merge S. Long Park with Lehigh Trail Park. He does not want to spend a lot of Village dollars. This is a prime opportunity for SHPO funding and private (Natale) dollars. Once closed on, Natale will give the Village total access to the building (Section House). He believes the closing could come at the end of January.

Trustee Piazza – Should we first go to SHPO and see what our options are?

Mayor Kulpa would like to present the plan first to Senator Ranzenhoffer and Assemblyman Walters, then go to SHPO in February. We have a good relationship with SHPO.

Mayor Kulpa stated his understanding from this meeting tonight is that HPC wishes to preserve and locally landmark the building.

Because it would be helpful for making plans going forward, Mayor Kulpa asked Ms. Lowther, who is President of the Williamsville Historical Society, to search the archives for images of the Section House. Ms. Lowther agreed.

Mayor Kulpa wants the Village to put together a park plan and go to Natale. A joint parks plan is desirable. He suggested doing a joint HPC/Parks Committee meeting in January 2016. Need a drawn plan.

Mr. Dyson – What will be the use of the Section House? He would like to see that spelled out.

Mayor Kulpa suggested that the Railway Society wants to use it for functions there. They also want space to house their equipment, perhaps upstairs. The Village would extend the license agreement for use of the site.

Mr. Bannon – Has the Village ever moved a building? Mayor Kula stated no, but Natale has. Mr. Bannon suggested it would be a good idea to consult with the Amherst Museum or the Genesee Country Museum. Perhaps approach International Chimney for a shoring plan.

Mayor Kulpa – What happens to the rest of the site? We have an opportunity to make a statement park. It's a natural connection between 2 parks.

Mr. Bannon – This has potential for branding on the part of Natale Builders for their private development by tying into the historic nature of the site. Mayor Kulpa suggested there is a brownfield cleanup by the owner to consider. The Village will do our due diligence.

Mayor Kulpa suggested the Village needs to start research. We will put a plan together in January and go to SHPO in February. He suggested speaking to Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society for any info they may have in their railway files. The more collected our committees, the better strength and direction we would have.

Mr. Akers – Railway Society has talked about wanting to add more rail cars to the site – He suggested we consider that now to make sure there is enough space for that use and also for parking.

Mr. Stone – Stated he is doing boundary surveys of the Darling property for Natale.

Mayor Kulpa – We will want a map/plan and will want to include Ben Vilonen on this. He asked for a joint meeting of HPC and Parks Committee (plus Ben Vilonen) to be held on January 26, 2016 at 7pm. The exact time of the meeting will depend on if HPC has anything else on the agenda. Time will be firmed up later.

Mr. Stone will provide land plans.

Mayor Kulpa – This is a big opportunity for the Village. The Railway Society has a good track record as far as the work they have already done on the Depot. Continuity of railway history is important. He thinks it would be an easy sell to SHPO on this. This is a

good focal area for the Village. The Mayor wants HPC's help in taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity for the Village. This would give a welcome overhaul to South Long Park.

Mayor Kulpa asked those present for their opinions and comments on this topic:

Mr. Akers – Would like to integrate the 2 buildings and provide for more parking space and future expansion.

Trustee Piazza – Keep Section House where it is and bring in a box car and it would be a great themed area.

Ms. Waterman-Kulpa – Agrees. Parking has to be taken into consideration and it is near a playground.

Ms. Lowther - Agrees. Would be a huge attraction for the Village. This area has been neglected over the years.

Mr. Bannon – Agrees. Huge opportunity for brand enhancement. Wants us to keep our eyes on the prize – Public/private development – Good for both parties. Don't come out modestly – come out strong on this.

Mayor Kulpa – Brand enhancement makes sense. Let's get site cleaned up and give it a professional face-lift.

Mr. Stone – Keep building where it is. Green space would be great.

Deputy Clerk Habes – Agrees. Would provide a tremendous lift to an area of the Village that has long been forgotten. Would like to see these parks merged.

Acting Village Attorney Bussiere – He has visited a train museum on Cape Cod with his children (all kids love trains) and thinks this would be a good fit for the Village and very popular with families. He suggested that the Village first approach SHPO to ask what the ramifications would be to moving the building so we would know up front what direction to take.

Ms. Waterman-Kulpa – Will call Julian at SHPO.

Mr. Dyson – Prefers keeping the Station House in place. He would also like to see it used for Historical Society artifacts and not only for Railway Society use.

Ms. Lowther – Questioned need for DPW side yard. They could possibly find storage elsewhere.

Mr. Akers – South Long Park could be better utilized than it is now.

Mayor Kulpa – Agreed. Right now South Long Park has no identity.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.

NEXT MEETING

**Joint meeting between HPC and
Parks Committee to be held on
January 26, 2016 at 7pm.**

Deborah A. Habes,
Deputy Clerk