William Street Historic District Commission (WSHDC)

Tisbury Historical Commission (THC)

December 6, 2023

Tisbury EMS Building

Present: John Bacheller, Leo Christian, Judy Federowicz (chair), Michael Levandowski, Bowdoin Van Riper, Akeyah Lucas (member of the public)

Meeting was called to order by the chair at 4:08 p.m.

Motion to hire Akeyah Lucas as administrative assistant was passed.

It was decided that approval of November 1st meeting minutes be delayed until the January 3rd meeting, as they are incomplete.

New Business

1. Review of application for 63 Spring Street (note: address was incorrectly listed as 63 William Street on the agenda):
* According to the building permit application in OpenGov, scope of work for the barn is listed as follows: “reshingle north and east walls, repair and replace some bevel siding at west and south walls, replace cornerboards and window trim as needed, renail pine sheathing.” It appears that some of the windows are being replaced as well. Discussion ensued regarding the Commission’s consistency in terms of the types of windows allowed, whether the applicant is allowed to replace like with like, and members’ recollections as to what used to be there. It was agreed that JFederowicz would contact the owner in regard to the full scope of work.

2. Review of application for 36 Woodlawn Avenue (note: address was incorrectly listed as 24 Woodlawn Avenue on agenda):

* While the Grace Episcopal Church resides in the William Street Historic District, the Rectory property (where the ground-mounted solar array was permitted) is not. BVan Riper recommended that the Commission gently suggest a request for screening of the array, and all present agreed.
1. Review of application for 30 Beach Road:
* After reviewing the building permit application (build half bath on first floor, build outdoor staircase to second floor, remodel side entrance and repair the floor near the side entrance) it was determined that no action was required by the Commission.
1. Review of application for 59 State Road:
* Unsure as to why this project (cedar siding replacement) had come before the Commission, JFederowicz tabled the application.
1. Review of MVC update on the Caleb Prouty House (15 Cromwell Lane):
* JFederowicz reviewed the plans for the archeological survey of the proposed relocation site at 187 Lagoon Pond Road (attachment sent with agenda via email). Discussion ensued regarding the Commission’s desire to support this project; it was decided that JFederowicz request an update from the owner, Amelia Hambrecht, and that Ms. Hambrecht be asked to attend January’s meeting.
1. Bylaw Change Proposal:
* JFederowicz reviewed the email from the Massachusetts Historical Commission informing the members that any bylaw change would need to be voted on and approved at Town Meeting. The Commission reviewed the proposed changes to the warrant article; JFederowicz noted that it was her opinion that the nomination process has never worked out and that Town Administrator Jay Grande’s recommended fix of this issue had been added to the draft article.
* BVan Riper stated that he had written up a definition of the Town Historian position, per Mr. Grande’s request, but did not want to submit it before the Commission had a chance to review. BVan Riper also expressed his opinion that the nomination process be removed altogether; he presented a solution that he felt might address the historical lack of nominations and/or interested parties (see attachment). Discussion ensued and members LChristian and MLevandowski expressed their support in submitting this amendment.
* The appointment and expiration of member terms, as well as the length of terms, was discussed. BVan Riper suggested that the Commission think about the length of terms, and what happens if members are automatically reappointed if/when the proposed bylaw amendment passes. Five-year terms, and additional five-year reappointments were proposed, with term expiration being staggered each year so that the entire Commission does not find itself entirely lacking in members all at once. Members would also be able to resign should they no longer wish/be able to serve out another five-year term. MLevandowski stated that the article needs to be written and submitted to the Town.
* BVan Riper recommended rewriting paragraph one of the article to address the lack of clarity regarding the Town Historian’s term expiration. It was suggested that paragraph three be rewritten to allow an architect, builder, and realtor as alternate members, so that their expertise and services may be called upon as needed. JFederowicz questioned the requirement of a realtor on the Commission; she asked BVan Riper to write up these amendments.
* MLevandowski stressed the importance of Commission members’ ability to read building plans, and suggested approaching the Martha’s Vineyard Preservation Trust and utilizing their knowledge of old/historic structures. BVan Riper expressed his concern about contracting with an outside group such as the Preservation Trust could mean a lack of a dedicated resource, as they might only be used once or twice per year, and this lack of commitment could result in the 60-day review clock running out before they could provide input.
* MLevandowski stated that he’d like to be included in BVan Riper’s write-up of the proposed warrant article. JBacheller noted the lack of follow-up in previous years needs to be addressed; even when the Commission did have an architect and a builder as members “balls were dropped”.
* MLevandowski proposed that the application fee should reflect the complexities of and challenges posed by particular applications.
* JFederowicz would like to speak with other towns regarding how they deal with requiring architects and builders on their boards. Discussion of these bylaw changes will be continued in the January meeting.

Old Business

1. JBacheller noted the possibility of the Town building a new Town Hall, and expressed his concern regarding plans for the existing Town Hall structure, in particular the Stan Murphy murals on the walls of the Katherine Cornell Theater. He feels that the Commission needs to be proactive in staying up to date on the Town’s plans for preservation.
2. JBacheller inquired as to the Town’s management of Airbnb/short-term rentals; JFederowicz explained owners must registered with the Town, and that they are subject to state and local taxes, with the latter varying by town. JBacheller’s concern is that this registration is basically self-policing. It was noted that the existing framework of the Town is not sufficient to adequately oversee these types of rentals.
3. Discussion ensued regarding the new front door color at 84 William Street; it had not been presented to the Commission for approval and members felt the color did not meet historical guidelines. It was decided that the Commission would reach out to the homeowner regarding this change.
4. As a resident of an abutting property, LChristian thanked the Commission for their work on the 52 William Street application. He also informed the members that the new structure at 43 Spring Street was for the live nativity, and that the church was not actually building a stable.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.