Members present: Kathie Northrup, John Giotas, Jim Sullivan (council rep). Meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. at council chambers in the town offices.

Chair asked that the administrative matters on the agenda be deferred and that we consider first the meeting regarding the demolition of 1253 Hooksett Road, the Stone House. Members agreed.

Gordon Welch, Manager of RCA Holdings, LLC, and Raymond Houle, owner, present.

Chair opened this part of our meeting by showing a letter she picked up today from our mail slot. Although no signature or return address, the envelope contained a $10 bill with a note saying “I hope this will help to Save the Hebert House or Stone House. I wish I could give more to help you.”

Chair’s reviewed the status of the procedure:

Pursuant to Development Regulation 17, after the public hearing the Heritage Commission and applicant are to meet to discuss alternatives to demolition if the HC determines the building is significant and its loss potentially detrimental to the town.

If no alternatives to demolition have been identified and agreed to by the applicant, after today’s meeting the applicant is free to proceed with demolition if all other conditions are met.

At the HC request and the consent of Mr. Welch, the time for this meeting was extended beyond the 10 days.

The HC has found the building significant and that its loss is potentially detrimental to the town so the alternatives discussed at the public hearing were reviewed.

The Heritage Commission proposed:

1. Keep and reuse as office for the business. Otherwise incorporate into the project;
2. Keep and continue renting as residence or otherwise; or
3. Subdivide and sell the house piece.

We also made more of a request that there be an up-to-3-month moratorium on the project to allow time to explore alternatives. The intent of the moratorium was to address the criticism—“if you want to save the house buy it.” We thought that couldn’t be answered unless you asked. Perhaps there was someone out there who, if the house was separated from the lot, might want to purchase it.

At the time of the public hearing the legal status of the ownership was not clear to the commission. With clarification (Houle and RCA have the property under contract, so Houle has no authority to consider the moratorium), all of the alternatives are now addressed to Mr. Welch.
The applicant, RCA Holdings, LLC, through Gordon Welch, Manager, did not agree to any of the alternatives as offered saying that it would be impractical to renovate for commercial use, keeping the house would lessen the acreage he needed for his facility, and having the frontage on Route 3 was valuable.

The commission received a letter this afternoon setting out RCA’s “proposal.” Reviewed those conditions:

1. That the Chair of the commission sign the demo permit application at the conclusion of this meeting. Chair said that that is not required under our regulation.

2. That RCA agrees to delay physical demolition of the Stone House until 11/1/20. Commission requested an amendment to add “or until all necessary permitting is complete, whichever is longer.” RCA declined to amend. RCA will use the ninety days to continue with permitting before other boards and agencies.

3(a): RCA will allow the Heritage Commission to photographically document the building. Jim asked about salvaging certain architectural elements. RCA will consider if realistic.

3(b): After demo, RCA will endeavor to repurpose some of the stones and construct a memorial wall with a plaque, the design, location, and dimensions of the wall and the plaque in RCA’s sole discretion. Kathie suggested use of the wrought iron decorative element from the porch.

Also discussed was a land swap proposal by a local couple which would have subdivided the building and a small piece of land it sits on for land on the north end of the acreage (frontage on Whitehall Road). It was thought this would give RCA the acreage it needed and some frontage on Route 3 with the added bonus of reusing the Stone House and saving it from demolition. Welch declined to pursue further.

At the end of the hearing, an audience member requested public input. Her question to Mr. Welch concerned the local opposition to his plans and who would support his business if the house is torn down.

This concluded the Heritage Commission’s responsibilities under the Demolition Regulation. Kathie will notify the CEO of today’s results. Mr. Welch and parties left the meeting at about 5 p.m.

Regular meeting of the commission commenced.

Minutes of 6/25/20, John moved acceptance, Jim seconded. Unanimously approved.

PUBLIC INPUT:
None
COMMUNICATIONS, CORRESPONDENCE AND MISCELLANEOUS:

1. July 14, 2020, Kathie was invited to participate in the panel in NH Preservation Alliance’s virtual meeting: "Community Heritage and Preservation Celebration and Promotion Ideas." Talked our history scavenger hunt, marker program/unveilings, and merchandise line.

Review Assignments:
1. Kathie - estimates for Vet Park maintenance//have gotten one estimate, waiting for another
2. Kathie - order t-shirts//done, on order
3. Kathie, Painting of Head School. Sent fu email July 26, 2020; DPW Director responded that “yes Head’s was added to the list for the trim and outhouse.”

NEW BUSINESS:
None

OLD BUSINESS:

Demo Review
1253 Hooksett Road, the Stone House
Public Hearing, July 16, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

There was a site visit on July 7 with the applicant, the realtor, Kathie, John, and Paul Scarpetti, acting as a consultant for the HC.

The public hearing regarding the petition to demolish the Stone House was held on 7/16/20 attended by about 25 people. Eight people spoke in person, excerpts from 22 emails were read into the record. We also used comments from the Change.org petition to gauge public interest. As of noon the day of the hearing, there were 7,140 total signatures, 750 from Hooksett, and 4,232 from all of NH! The petition was to “urge RCA Holdings LLC to reconsider demolition.” The comments (over 600) were overwhelmingly in favor of continued use, reuse, or subdivided sale.

Under the local demo regulation, the Heritage Commission presented our alternatives--adapt for reuse for the business, continue renting for residence or commercial, subdivide/sell for residence or business--and added one request--due to the large amount of interest and publicity generated by the planned demolition, allow an up-to-3-month moratorium to allow for other possibilities to surface. The applicant then had 10 days to consider those alternatives.

That post-public hearing meeting was held earlier today.
Assignments

1. Kathie - get another estimate for Vet Park maintenance
2. All - review demo review regulation

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Kathleen Northrup, Chair
August 15, 2020

Next meeting to be set as needed

Please see subsequent meeting minutes for any amendments to these minutes.