

Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission Meeting **Wednesday August 17th 2016 7:00PM - 9:00PM at the Community Center**

Commissioners attending: John Orfitelli (Chair), Helen Christie (vice Chair), Caryn Sobel, Dawn Elliott, and Susan DeMark. Town Board Liaison Julie Seyfert Lillis was not able to attend.

Agenda

1. Public Comment
2. Historic Landmark Signage: South Putt Corners Cemetery
3. Gateway Moratorium Update
4. Foothills Historic District
5. Review/Approve July Minutes

New Items:

6. Presentation to Town Board: *Need for Incentives*
7. Interview with Terence Ward of the New Paltz Times

Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 7:05pm by motion from Helen Christie, seconded by John Orfitelli, motion carried.

1. **Public Comment:** No public comments were received. Since Stacy Delarede was not able to attend, the topic of Public Hearing Guidelines will be discussed at a future meeting.

2. Historic Landmark Signage at South Putt Corners Cemetery

- A) Interpretive Sign:** John Orfitelli contacted Glenn Hoagland to obtain design specs for informational signage used by Mohonk that may be applicable for an interpretative sign. Glenn provided the image shown below of the interpretive sign used at Mohonk Preserve along with a detailed design drawing and the following information on Monday 8/22:



We fabricate the bases to the signs 'in house' using our Rangers, so I can't give you an exact cost if you were to go out to a carpenter. I think a ballpark might be \$350?

Here are the other estimated costs:

Design: Fossil charges \$120 an hour. The Preserve does our design in-house now. For a local option, we recommend graphic designer Linda Engler (Ad Essentials – 255-4281, adessentials@gmail.com). We don't know her fees.

Panel Fabrication: Sensory Trail signs (12" x 25" x ½") \$121 each + \$40 for color sample. Not including shipping.

Angie Edwards is our account rep (aedwards@fossilgraphics.com)

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B) Road Visible Sign: Susan DeMark provided a list of valid vendors which included those from the prior list along with a number of new sites. The Commission reviewed the top five (listed here) and decided to use the local vendor, Catskill Castings.

Catskill Castings, Bloomville, N.Y.
<http://www.catskillcastings.com/preview.htm>

Sewah Studios, Marietta, Ohio
<http://www.sewahstudios.com/product.htm>

Architectural Bronze Aluminum Corporation, Deerfield, Ill.
http://www.architecturalbronze.com/cast_aluminum_plaques.htm

Centec Cast Metal Products, Fremont, Ohio
<http://centec.com/Plaques.aspx>

Circle C Products, Plymouth, Minn.
http://www.ccproducts.com/plaque_samples.htm

Helen Christie agreed to check procurement guidelines to mitigate any purchase issues. The Commission discussed offering to share the expense of signage with property owners as a means of encouraging participation in the designation process.

The Commission selected style #1 with maroon and white lettering.



It was decided that the most recognizable logo design would be of the Mohonk Mountain and tower profile. Susan DeMark agreed to contact Catskill Castings with our design and logo to obtain a rendering and price estimate.

The Commission currently has a number of solid brass signs (shown here) for attaching to a house designated as a local landmark. These will be provided to property owners in the future at half the cost.



3. **Gateway Moratorium Update:** Since Town Board Liaison Julie Seyfert Lillis was not able to attend, there was no update on this item.

8/26 Update: This from Kevin Borden email reporting on the 8/25 Town Board meeting:

...the Town Board did take a pretty significant step forward last night in terms of laying the groundwork on the issue. They voted to allocate up to \$2,000 to request an attorney to draft a moratorium law so it can be brought forth for public discussion. In terms of that motion, Torres, Seyfert-Lillis and Bettez voted in favor, Irwin voted against and Logan was absent for the vote. This allows the discussion to continue to move from a purely hypothetical discussion to a substantive one! Always a good thing.

It probably will be one of our main tasks to ensure that the discussion remains one of substance...so we'll need to double-down on our collective message discipline, continue to use the issue as a way to bring others in and participate, enliven the process in creative ways (a la Superheroes and the like), attempt to remain above the morass of personality-driven politics, etc.

There is no way we would be even close to where we are today if it wasn't for the previous work tied to Crossroads, for Planning Board conversations around CVS/other projects, for the work of the Ad-Hoc Moratorium Committee, etc. Always nice to see when communities come together and become the full sum of their parts to, at the very least, give issues like this a chance. So, good for us.

4. **Foothills Historic District:** Dawn Elliott agreed to continue work on assembling materials on properties within the Mohonk preserve area to begin building a designation package. Helen Christie agreed to obtain a digital map of the approved subdivision w/boundaries from the Town Assessor.
5. **Review/Approve Minutes from June 2016:** A motion to approve the meeting minutes from June 2016 as amended was made by Susan DeMark and Seconded by Helen Christie. Motion carried. John Orfitelli agreed to post the minutes on our site.
6. **Presentation to Town Board Need for Incentives:** The Commission agreed that the most critical work item this Fall is a presentation to the Town Board regarding the need for incentives to owners of properties that are candidates for designation and local landmarks. Caryn Sobel will provide John Orfitelli with a summary of the materials she collected on various incentives currently in place or considered in many communities. The summary will be used by John to create a draft PP presentation for review at our meeting in September. Target for presentation is October timeframe.
7. **Interview with Terence Ward of the New Paltz Times:** John Orfitelli met with Terence Ward prior to our meeting for an interview as part of his series on volunteerism in the Community. The article which was posted in the 8/25 edition of the New Paltz Times is included here and has been added to our web site.

*Sowing seeds of community: New Paltz Town Historic Preservation
by TERENCE P. WARD*



Pictured are members of the Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission (l-r): chair John Orfitelli, commissioner Susan DeMark, commissioner Dawn Elliott and vice chair Helen Christie. Not pictured: commissioner Caryn Sobel and New Paltz Town Board liaison Julie Seyfert-Lillis. (Lauren Thomas | New Paltz Times)

An historic preservation commission (HPC) is one of those volunteer municipal boards that have real power. Members of the commission

may declare a property to be a local historic landmark, deciding what's worth preserving and what might be lost to time. The commissioners are mindful of the historic nature of those decisions. The challenge, according to chairman John Orfitelli, is deciding when and if to use that power.

The process of designating a local landmark involves a public hearing — with notices published and posted. Technically, designation could be done without the owner's consent, but in New Paltz the HPC members have no interest in forcing such a decision. They prefer to work with people who are interested in preservation themselves.

"We have our own code of ethics," Orfitelli said, different from the one that covers other town volunteers and employees. "We want to build rapport with the public." He feels that couldn't happen if a stronger hand were applied.

The Testimonial Gateway on the Mohonk Preserve was already listed on the national registry, "but that's just a nice thing," Orfitelli explained. "It does not protect the property, which the local law does. Without a designation, a developer who bought that property could bulldoze it." The preserve, which wanted that additional layer of protection and preservation, worked with HPC throughout the process.

Bulldozing can and does happen. When the Studley barn on Butternut Road was declared a lost cause by engineers for owner Open Space Institute, neighbors were dismayed. More recently, the Ohioville Chapel was demolished to make way for an office building. Neither structure was listed on the local registry. Had they been, the owners would have had to apply for and receive a certificate of appropriateness from the HPC before a building permit could be issued.

Orfitelli isn't sure that the barn could have been saved; by the time he got a close look, he agreed that it would be expensive to salvage it. "It would have cost more than a new building," he said. "The best we felt we could do is ask OSI to replace it with something that reflected the essence of the style" of the old barn.

HPC members feel constrained by their own past actions. "There's a precedent of not designating without owner participation," Orfitelli explained. A change of course might lead to an owner prevailing in court for that reason alone. Designation would certainly have stopped the demolition of the Ohioville Chapel, but the chairman said that that HPC must focus its efforts where it will get the best results.

For some owners, listing their properties as local landmarks is a dream come true. Others see it as an intrusive inconvenience.

HPC members received a grant that would have paid for all the necessary documentation to place 15 stone houses on the local registry all at once. "We figured they were low-hanging fruit," Orfitelli explained, since the stone houses capture the essence of what makes New Paltz historic.

It didn't work out that way. "Only one of the 15 owners was willing," the HPC chairman said. The others didn't see designation as a benefit for them. They saw it as "government interference that will get in their way," possibly negatively affecting future resale value.

For the commission members, it was an exasperating situation to be in. "If we don't protect the stone houses, the barns, the cemeteries, we will lose what we cherish over time," Orfitelli predicted. Designating a property without owner cooperation, on the other hand, could easily lead to bad blood and court expenses. In the case of the stone houses, the HRC chose not to move forward.

The perception of how difficult it might be to get a certificate of appropriateness might be overblown in the minds of some residents. But at the very least it's one more meeting that must be attended. If commissioners don't think a project is consistent with the historic site, they can require changes to the plans. "There's no reason you can't make changes," Orfitelli said, but one more group of people will have to grant their blessing.

Commissioners would like to see some kind of tax incentive put into place. Several different models exist, Orfitelli said, including one that delays how soon the owner's tax bill would be increased by an addition. Such tax plans shift that cost to all taxpayers, something which Orfitelli believes is a fair price to pay in the name of historic preservation.

The presence of protected landmarks increases the value of other homes in the community, Orfitelli argued. His opinion as a real-estate professional adds weight to that argument. Together with communicating a rationale for preservation, those incentives could "create an environment for people to come to us."

Some kind of incentive might make it easier for something else commissioners have been working on: historic districts. Two districts, Mohonk and Ohioville, are being considered at this time. The Mohonk district is more feasible because commissioners would be working with preserve officials, who have demonstrated a desire to protect iconic structures. Ohioville, the town's last hamlet, has a number of buildings of interest to HPC members. To create a district is a tall order. It would entail convincing all the property owners of the importance of preservation to the community as a whole. Tax breaks along with the landmark label might be helpful.

The ad-hoc committee studying a moratorium to create a gateway zoning district included Orfitelli. "We want to be sure that whatever we impose is consistent with what we feel good about," he said, "the essence of New Paltz."

Renderings of the CVS drugstore haven't gotten the warm reception that the Hampton Inn being built across the street has. The owner asked HPC members for input, which was not required.

Orfitelli believes that good development could accentuate the historic nature of New Paltz, but without a plan that character could be undermined. "The ShopRite Plaza could be the next thing, if somebody buys it," he said. Thoughtful zoning could prevent decisions that negatively impact the community. The most recent comprehensive plan adopted in the town before the turn of the century didn't reflect present community values. It also didn't make reference to the importance of a gateway.

The existence of the HPC and an historic preservation law have paved the way for a certification that opens the door to grant opportunities and other benefits. Money from such grants has been used to survey properties of historic significance, and also to create an interactive map on the town's website.

The HPC page on townofnewpaltz.org contains tools and information of interest to the amateur historian. The property map shows the borders of all the town's historic hamlets then and now, photo comparisons of some landmarks, video and prose information about the town, and an animation that compresses centuries of population growth into a few seconds on the screen. Also included are relevant forms, including one that lays out the criteria and steps for getting a property listed as an historic landmark.

Motion to adjourn was made by Helen Christie and seconded by Dawn Elliott. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:38pm.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday September 21st at 7:00pm at the Town Community Center.