

[D R A F T]

**DURHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT/HERITAGE COMMISSION**  
**Thursday, May 2, 2024**  
**DURHAM TOWN HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Larry Brickner-Wood (Chair); Charlotte Hitchcock (Vice-Chair); Eric Lund (Town Council Rep); Michael Hoffman; Carolyn Singer; Aaron Wolfson-Slepian and Tom Janosz (Alternate).

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Jennifer Becker (Alternate)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Town Planner Michael Behrendt

1 **I. Call to Order**

2 Chair Larry Brickner-Wood called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

3

4 **II. Roll Call**

5 Roll call attendance was taken. Mr. Behrendt noted that Bill McGowan is no longer  
6 serving on the Commission because he's not continuing with the Planning Board.

7

8 **III. Seating of Alternates**

9

10 **IV. Approval of the Agenda**

11 **Mr. Lund *MOVED to approve the agenda as presented; SECONDED by Ms.***  
12 ***Singer; APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.***

13

14 **V. Approval of Minutes: March 7, 2024**

15

16 Mr. Lund had submitted minor edits to town staff.

17

18 ***Mr. Wolfson-Slepian MOVED to approve the minutes of March 7, 2024;***  
19 ***SECONDED by Ms. Hitchcock, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.***

20

21

22 **VI. Public Comments:** There were none.

23 **VII. Staff Report:** There was nothing to report.  
24

25 **VIII. Durham Community Church.** 17 Main Street. Application for various changes to  
26 the existing building including replacement of the granite steps; replacing/rehabilitating  
27 numerous windows; washing, repairing and painting portions of the exterior; and  
28 rehabilitating the front doors, the steeple, and the copper roof. Community Church of  
29 Durham, property owner. Stephen Castoldi, Project Manager for Careno Construction,  
30 contractor. Map 108, Lot 6, **HDC**  
31

32 Chair Larry Brickner-Wood recused himself because he's a longtime member of Durham  
33 Community Church. Vice-Chair Charlotte Hitchcock assumed chairing the meeting. She  
34 seated Alternate Tom Janosz as a voting member to replace Mr. Brickner-Wood on this  
35 application.  
36

37 Doug Banks, 7 York Drive, and a member of Durham Community Church, and Ben  
38 Careno of Careno Construction, came forward to discuss the project.  
39

40 Commission members had received detailed plans in advance and a note from Town  
41 Planner Michael Behrendt about which items are subject to their review. Mr. Careno and  
42 Mr. Banks gave an overview of the work:  
43

- 44 1. Front Doors: The historic doors that are original to the building will be  
45 rehabilitated.  
46
- 47 2. Windows: 12 single-hung windows will be removed; re-glazed as necessary and  
48 put back. In answer to a question, Mr. Careno said they will re-use the original  
49 glass when possible.  
50

51 Mr. Banks said the Church has done significant fundraising and intends to apply  
52 for an L-CHIP grant. They are also applying for a grant from the National Fund  
53 for Sacred Places. Depending on success, they may be able to include new storm  
54 windows more suitable for the building.  
55

- 56 3. Globe Window: will be removed, sent to re-furbisher in Connecticut to be rebuilt  
57 historically.  
58
- 59 4. Chapel Windows (3): Mr. Careno said they are not very visible from the street.  
60 This portion of the building dates to 1962 and has steel windows. Mr. Banks said  
61 the intent is to replace them with double-hung fiberglass windows that operate  
62 better and are more energy-efficient.

63 5. Granite Steps: Existing steps aren't code compliant. Plans are to rebuild with  
64 granite. They will be adding a new platform and riser. Ms. Hitchcock asked about  
65 the landing being ADA-compliant and the applicant replied that's the main  
66 impetus for the changes.

67  
68 Mr. Banks said the landing will be extended because currently people have to step  
69 back off the landing when opening the door. Mr. Hoffman asked about snow and  
70 ice accumulation. Will a roof overhang be necessary? Mr. Banks replied they  
71 don't anticipate any kind of porch or covering in the future.

72  
73 There was discussion about snow and ice removal, the configuration of the landing  
74 and the fact there are other accessible entrances to the church. Vice-Chair  
75 Hitchcock commented she's in favor of the proposed changes to the main entrance  
76 to make it welcoming and accessible to all.

77  
78 Re: Railings: Mr. Banks said the side railings aren't very functional due to  
79 positioning. Mr. Hoffman asked if the Fire Department or Code Enforcement have  
80 reviewed the handrail proposal and the applicants replied no.

81  
82 6. Trim Replacement: Mr. Careno said they plan to power-wash the building and  
83 determine which pieces of trim need to be replaced. Ms. Singer doesn't advise  
84 power-washing the original historic clapboards. Mr. Careno replied some will be  
85 power-washed and other sections will be gently scrubbed.

86  
87 Mr. Hoffman asked if PVC (trim) would be at ground level and Mr. Careno  
88 replied most of it would be. Mr. Hoffman expressed concern about the use of PVC  
89 at ground level; when viewed up close it doesn't look or feel like wood. He  
90 recommends a rot-resistant wood like white cedar. Vice-Chair Hitchcock  
91 recapped they should use wood on the 1800's part of the building.

92  
93 7. Rehabilitate Steeple: The wood spiral top will be replaced with mahogany  
94 painted white. They are proposing to wrap the original columns with PVC to  
95 protect them from the elements. Ms. Singer asked about the source for the  
96 mahogany and Mr. Hoffman noted it's illegal to purchase rainforest mahogany;  
97 Most likely it will be from the Philippines.

98  
99 8. Rehabilitate steeple copper roof. The copper roof is being refinished with black  
100 rubber roofing. It's exempt from review, since most of it is not visible from the  
101 ground.

102 Ms. Singer said the Church should photo-document “before” and “after” work and submit  
103 photos to the Durham Historic Association (DHA) for their records. She would like  
104 approval of the application to state that it’s unlikely the Commission would entertain  
105 changes in the future to add a porch or portico.

106  
107 Mr. Hoffman asked about water intrusion in the basement since there’s some evidence of  
108 caulking used for water control. Mr. Banks said it’s a dirt basement which is damp in the  
109 summer; only small amounts of water come in. They had a full historic assessment of the  
110 building and it’s in good shape.

111 ***Mr. Hoffman MOVED to accept the proposal as submitted, with three conditions***  
112 ***(specified by Mr. Behrendt below), SECONDED by Ms. Singer, APPROVED***  
113 ***unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.***

114 Mr. Behrendt clarified the motion: The Commission is motioning to approve as submitted  
115 with three conditions: 1.) Baseboard on three sides around original building would be  
116 cedar (or another rot-resistant wood) rather than PVC; 2.) The Church will submit before  
117 and after photo documentation of any changes to the DHA. 3.) There should be no  
118 expectation of future approval for a roof over the portico.

119  
120 **IX. 1 Durham Point Road.** Discussion about condition of the house which has been  
121 vacant for several years. **HDC.**

122  
123 Larry Brickner-Wood resumed chairing the meeting. He invited Mr. Diberto, the owner  
124 of 1 Durham Point Road, to come forward.

125  
126 The Chair said concerns have been raised about the condition of the historic home, which  
127 has been intermittently vacant for several years. The Commission would like to learn of  
128 any plans for improvement and find out if there are ways to support Mr. Diberto’s efforts.

129  
130 Mr. Diberto gave an overview of how he acquired the property, the work that has been  
131 done thusfar and what he’s hoping to accomplish going forward. He noted it was one of  
132 the most complete historic homes that he’s encountered in 50 years of real estate and  
133 contained some of the original contents from the Sawyer family dating back to 1754.

134  
135 The previous owner wanted to empty it out and take everything to the dump. Mr. Diberto  
136 has tried to salvage items of value. He repaired the septic and removed junk cars,  
137 mitigated oil leaks and removed a tenant living in the barn; replaced the porch roof;  
138 removed large trees that were hazardous and installed fire alarms in the house.

139  
140 Mr. Diberto plans to do more work this summer and fall and most likely put the property  
141 on the market in the fall. It’s been difficult getting high quality people to do the work. He

142 owns seven other historic homes and is committed to doing things right. He's well aware  
143 of the home's unique historic value, including a mural by Mr. Hatch.

144  
145 He assured the Commission the property is visited and checked regularly. There's been  
146 no vandalism. In answer to a question about utilities, Mr. Diberto said the water line got  
147 fractured when repairs were done on Durham Point Road. He needs to get the water  
148 turned back on.

149  
150 Mr. Hoffman said the Commission became concerned about the potential for water to  
151 leak into the historic home about a year ago when they saw a blue tarp on the roof that  
152 appeared to be blowing off. Mr. Diberto explained the timing of the roofing project due  
153 to temperatures necessary for the adhesive and said the home is now watertight.

154  
155 Chair Brickner-Wood thanked Mr. Diberto for the update and wished him well on the  
156 project.

157

158

159 **X. Revolution 1774. Raid on Fort William and Mary.** Update on planned events in  
160 Durham. **HC**

161

162 Joanie Osborn came forward and identified herself as a resident of 21 Newmarket Road,  
163 and chairperson of Revolution 1774.

164

165 She gave an update on the latest developments for the Celebration of the 250th Raid on  
166 Fort William and Mary. The date is June 15, 2024, with a rain date of June 16th.

167

168 Ms. Osborn said coincidentally two books were published this year relevant to the  
169 celebration. One is Mike Geanoulis' *The Assault & Raid on Fort William and Mary: A*  
170 *Battle in Search of a Poet*. He will be the speaker for the indoor event in December. The  
171 other book is *Wentworth Cheswell's Ride: Chasing an American Patriot* by John Herman  
172 of Newmarket.

173 She said Doug McLellan, an expert on John Sullivan, will be mingling on the dinner  
174 cruises and then she gave an update on other details:

175

176 ■ The website is live. Recent changes haven't been made due to issues with the web  
177 developer.

178 ■ Notices will be in Friday Updates. A PR executive in NY is working pro bono to  
179 help publicize the event in the local press.

180 She said since this was (arguably) the first military action of the American Revolution, it  
181 could be of national importance; however, she doesn't think it will garner attention at that  
182 level.

183

- 184 ■ All events will be live-streamed.
- 185 ■ All abutters have agreed to allow firing of a cannon. Reenactors will do musket  
186 drills. Everything was cleared by the Fire Marshal.
- 187 ■ DPW has given approval with two caveats: one is for police protection and the  
188 other is for an evacuation safety plan.
- 189 ■ Ground volunteers will help crowds get into position for the parade; point out  
190 bathrooms and sell raffle tickets, etc.
- 191 ■ Businesses weren't willing to give cash, but rather offered in-kind donations for  
192 raffles. They are waiting for final permission to sell raffle tickets. Before the  
193 event, tickets will be sold through Freedom Café website. Typical prizes have  
194 \$250 value, like spa treatments; tickets to Fisher Cats, etc.
- 195 ■ Four porta-potties have been ordered; two regular and two handicap accessible.

196

197 Ms. Osborn said she needs to find out how large banners will be hung in the downtown  
198 and Mr. Behrendt offered to follow up.

199

200 Ms. Singer asked about the mission of the Freedom Café and Ms. Osborn replied “to  
201 eradicate human trafficking.”

202

203 Ms. Singer said she believes there's a missed educational opportunity to link modern day  
204 slavery (trafficking) to slavery that existed at the Sullivan property. Ms. Osborn said they  
205 are aware of the history. The theme for the day is “Freedom for All” and the issue of  
206 slavery will be addressed in formal remarks before the parade.

207

208 While the public won't be invited onto the property, she believes most people should be  
209 able to see the monument to slave quarters on the Sullivan property from across the river.  
210 She added that other groups also need to be recognized for the sacrifices they made for  
211 our freedoms. It was clarified she was referring to the indigenous population here.

212

213 She added that Wentworth Cheswell, the first African-American to be elected to public  
214 office in NH, will be featured during the event as well.

215

216 Vice-Chair Hitchcock said she recently attended a meeting of the NH Historical Society  
217 focused on the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Dover and Portsmouth are  
218 also holding celebrations on the raid of the fort; It's good that Durham is holding theirs in  
219 advance, so that everything won't be concentrated on one day.

220 The Chair and Mr. Behrendt thanked Ms. Osborn for the wonderful work she’s done in  
221 coordinating and organizing the upcoming celebration and she noted it’s been a  
222 collaborative effort.

223

224 **XI. Preservation Month.** Discussion about potential activities in May. **HC**

225

226 Vice-Chair Hitchcock said May is Preservation Month. They probably should have  
227 discussed ideas for an activity months ago.

228

229 The Chair said in the past the Commission has recognized individuals who had done  
230 significant work on historic properties. He asked for suggestions.

231

232 Ms. Behrendt said they’d recognized at least two parties in the past: Lori and Steve Lamb  
233 on Bennett Road and also Suzanne who is doing work at 10 Newmarket and another  
234 property. He noted the Letourneaus have done significant “adaptive re-use” at Tideline  
235 and suggested they could be recognized at the June meeting.

236

237 *Mr. Hoffman MOVED to recognize the LeTourneaus for adaptive re-use at Tideline;*  
238 *SECONDED by Mr. Lund; APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.*

239

240 Mr. Hoffman commented it’s important to do this for Preservation Month each year since  
241 some people spend a lot of money and DNA to enhance their historic properties.

242

243 Ms. Hitchcock suggested submitting weekly articles to Friday Updates during  
244 Preservation Month. One piece could be on the town farm burial grounds at Riverwoods,  
245 for example. She agreed to write and submit three short articles.

246

247 The Commission discussed the best time to review yearly goals in part to be sure they  
248 start planning for Preservation Month earlier. The Chair suggested January as a good time  
249 to look at goals.

250

251

252 **XII. Updating the HDC Ordinance.** Zoning amendment to update the Old Map and Lot  
253 numbers to the current ones in the Historic District Ordinance. **HDC**

254 Mr. Behrendt said Vice-Chair Hitchcock pointed out the tax map and lot numbers are  
255 out-of-date in the ordinance. Changing it requires a zoning amendment.

256

257 Members had received an updated amendment, showing the new lot numbers.

258

259 Ms. Hitchcock asked if these changes should be bundled with other ordinance changes  
260 that have been discussed briefly in the past, such as changes to signage and solar energy  
261 in the Historic District.

262 The Chair said the lot number changes are custodial in nature and he would like to move  
263 it forward. Other changes will take more deliberation and time.

264

265 ***Mr. Lund MOVED that the amendment be referred to the Planning Board to make a***  
266 ***change in the zoning ordinance; SECONDED by Ms. Singer, APPROVED***  
267 ***unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.***

268

269 **XIII. Oyster River Raid Sign. Update on Roundtable Discussions. HC**

270

271 Chair Brickner-Wood said the Roundtables went well. While there were some hard  
272 conversations, the group reached general consensus on the wording for the sign. He feels  
273 the facilitators did a good job moving the discussion forward

274

275 Since then, the State Division of Historic Resources has offered alternate wording and  
276 there's still no agreement on final wording, but the Chair believes the two versions are  
277 close.

278

279 Vice-Chair Hitchcock commented that communication was poor, in her view. She said  
280 the consultants sent a report to those who took part in the Roundtable, but the rest of the  
281 Commission didn't initially see it.

282

283 Mr. Behrendt said he forwarded emails from the NH DHR – one from March 18th and  
284 one from April 16th, which he only shared today. He apologized for the delay.

285

286 Ms. Hitchcock said she's concerned the Division of Historic Resources hasn't  
287 incorporated important changes to the wording from the Durham Historic Association.

288

289 Chair Brickner-Wood said it's been clear from the start that the State has the final say on  
290 the wording. In his view, the Commission shouldn't review what the Roundtable group  
291 came up with.

292

293 Vice-Chair Hitchcock said she found the Roundtable wording excellent, with every word  
294 carefully chosen. She thinks Janet Mackie's latest corrections to the DHR version should  
295 be followed. She would like to see the Commission push back on this with the State.

296 Mr. Behrendt noted the April 16th version from the state did incorporate most of the  
297 changes; there are only a few small grammatical corrections to be made. He went over  
298 them briefly. The state chose to omit the line, "The surprise was complete."

299

300 Vice-Chair Hitchcock noted that line is important because the English were unprepared  
301 and surprised by the raid. There was consensus among Commission members that this  
302 line should be included.



303 There was brief discussion of the dates on the proposed timeline (for side two of the  
304 plaque).

305

306 *Vice-Chair Hitchcock then MOVED to support the consensus wording from the*  
307 *Roundtable and to add, “The surprise was complete.” It was also noted the*  
308 *Commission was speaking as the hosting body for the Roundtable; SECONDED by*  
309 *Ms. Singer, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.*

310

311

312 **XIV. Oyster River Dam.** Update on discussions about mitigation for the dam. **HC**

313

314 Mr. Behrendt said DPW put out a request for construction bids due in March; he believes  
315 removal of the dam will start this summer.

316

317 The Chair asked about the status of the Section 106 process and Ms. Singer replied  
318 they’ve concluded meeting on this. She believes there will be a working group to address  
319 specific mitigation projects.

320

321 In answer to a question from the Chair, Mr. Behrendt said he believes there will be a  
322 Section 106 report issued.

323

324 **XV. Wagon Hill Bickford Chesley House.** Update on plans for renovations. **HC**

325

326 Ms. Singer reported Steven Bedard withdrew from the project, but price estimates are  
327 being finalized with Milestone Construction. They haven’t been formally retained yet.

328

329 Ms. Hitchcock gave some background about Milestone Construction, noting they are  
330 highly qualified. She said since they have multiple construction teams, it will be easier  
331 for them to oversee and complete the project rather than the Town relying on one  
332 individual to do the work.

333

334 **XVI. Old Brick Town Hall Plaque.** Update on creating a historical plaque. **HC**

335

336 Vice-Chair Hitchcock met with the Durham Historic Association to get information about  
337 the building. She distributed copies of preliminary language for the plaque, noting the  
338 draft still needs work. She’s proposing a square plaque with an arched top for the seal,  
339 like the one at Smith Chapel.

340

341 There was discussion about the personal histories surrounding some of the building’s  
342 previous owners, including Mary Pickering Burt and Reverend Coe. The town acquired  
343 the building in 1840.

344 Vice-Chair Hitchcock proposed mounting the plaque on the left side of the building  
345 where a window was filled in. It's a blank area and would be readable from the ground.  
346

347 There was discussion about including a QR code so that more information could be  
348 available. Ms. Singer said people at Preservation NH in Manchester have suggested a  
349 solid removable square in case the [QR] technology changes.  
350

351 Mr. Behrendt said he does not believe it's correct to say the building "was entered into  
352 the National Register." It was a contributing resource to the Historic District but has  
353 never been nominated for the National Register.  
354

355 Mr. Hoffman said the town of Newmarket uses a woman with a PhD in English to edit all  
356 their historical markers. She often corrects small things that were missed. He suggests  
357 that Durham do the same. Ms. Hitchcock said there are retired professors at Riverwoods  
358 who might be able to help.  
359

## 361 **XVII. Election of Officers. HC/HDC**

362

363 *Mr. Hoffman MOVED to nominate the current officers to continue: Larry Brickner-*  
364 *Wood as Chair and Charlotte Hitchcock as Vice-Chair; SECONDED by Mr. Lund,*  
365 *APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.*  
366

367 Both accepted the nomination and Ms. Singer thanked the officers for their willingness to  
368 serve.  
369

## 370 **XVIII. Other Business**

371

## 372 **XIX. Adjournment**

373 *Mr. Hoffman made a motion to adjourn at 9:12 p.m.; SECONDED by Mr.*  
374 *Wolfson-Slepian, APPROVED unanimously, 6-0, Motion carries.*  
375

376 Respectfully submitted,  
377 Lucie Bryar, Minute Taker  
378 Durham Heritage Commission  
379

380 *Note: These written minutes are intended as a general summary of the meeting. For*  
381 *more complete information, please refer to the DCAT22 On Demand videotape of the*  
382 *entire proceedings on the town of Durham website.*