



TOWN OF DURHAM
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Town Planner's Review
Wednesday, March 9, 2016

- IX. **Public Hearing - Historic District Ordinance - Amendments.** The Town Council formally initiated numerous proposed amendments to Article XVII – Durham Historic Overlay District, pursuant to changes proposed by the Historic District Commission. The changes involve administrative matters, delineation of the district, purview of the commission, procedures, submission materials, review criteria, required maintenance and demolition by neglect, standards for review of signs, and other matters. Following a public hearing, the Planning Board will submit its recommendation on the amendments to the Town Council.
- I recommend the board hold the public hearing, continue the public hearing to March 23, discuss the proposed amendments and any changes it thinks might be appropriate, and request an extension from the Town Council for making its recommendation to May 11.

Please note the following:

- 1) Public hearing. This item was reviewed briefly by the Planning Board on February 24 and set the public hearing for March 9. The public and the owners of two affected lots (which are not presently listed in the ordinance) were notified of the public hearing.
- 2) The Historic District Commission worked on numerous amendments to the existing Historic District ordinance over a number of months. At the HDC's direction, Jim Lawson, HDC and Town Council member, and I crafted the amendments which the HDC ultimately endorsed, with changes. *Mr. Lawson will attend the meeting on March 9 to help present the proposed amendments.*
- 3) Sign provisions. As suggested at that meeting, I met this past Wednesday with Barbara Dill, Planning Board member, to discuss various possible changes to the sign portion of the ordinance. I also met with Andrea Bodo, Vice Chair of the Historic District Commission, who proposes a number of changes to the sign portion of the ordinance. I recommend that the Planning Board continue the public hearing to March 23. Barbara Dill, Andrea Bodo, and I will meet together to try to craft a consolidated set of recommended changes to the sign portion of the ordinance which we would hope to have ready to present to the Planning Board on March 23.

The proposed changes affect most elements in the ordinance, but a significant addition is a set of proposed standards for review of signage. The HDC does currently have purview over signage but there are no standards specifically oriented toward signage for it to use in its review. (*over*)

- 4) Changes to proposed amendments. After the board closes the public hearing, it can determine what changes, if any, it would like to recommend regarding the ordinance amendments initiated by the Town Council. Given that the proposed amendments are extensive throughout the Historic District ordinance, I think that it would be appropriate for the Planning Board to take a fairly broad view of the existing ordinance as well as the amendments proposed by the Town Council, in considering its recommendation.
- 5) Timeframe and extension. After the Planning Board completes its review, we will forward its recommendations to the Town Council, which will then hold its own public hearing prior to prospective adoption. Per the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Board must submit its recommendation to the Town Council within 60 days of the referral to the board. The Town Council initiated the amendments on February 15 so the board has until its meeting on **April 13** (three more meetings including March 9) to submit its recommendation. *If the board needs more time, I believe that it can request an extension from the Town Council, and we will likely need an extension as I expect we will need to schedule a second public hearing assuming the board will propose meaningful changes to the Town Council version.* If the board were to finalize its version on April 13, then set a public hearing for April 27 it could have recommendations ready by April 27 if it did not wish to make any further changes. I would recommend asking for an extension to the **May 11** meeting.
- 6) Other changes. At the last meeting Lorne Parnell questioned the way the responsibilities are listed for the Historic District/Heritage Commission in section 175-91 B. I checked the RSA on respective responsibilities and think that it may be better to list these separately. I will have recommended language on this for the March 23 meeting. The board also discussed: a) removing the reference to a specific property in section 175-96 B. 5. and simply referring to hipped roofs; and b) clarifying language about urethane signs in section 175-96 G. 4. I will have language for these items and anything else for consideration on March 23.