



**Town of Woodbury
Historic District Commission**

281 Main Street South
Woodbury, CT 06798
203.263.3407 • www.woodburyct.org

MINUTES – September 9, 2024

Work Session and Discussion

6:30 PM –Shove Building, 281 Main Street South, Woodbury, CT 06798

MEMBERS PRESENT

MEMBERS ABSENT

Maureen Donnarumma, Chair
Lois Y. Fiftal – Vice Chair
George Messier
William Hickey
Judith Kelz

ALTERNATES PRESENT

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Marc Kroll
David Newell
Ed Winters

OPENING OF MEETING

- **Call to Order**
Chair Donnarumma convened the workshop meeting session at 6:30 pm.

MEETING WORK SESSION DISCUSSION

Planner Agresta was present to provide a work (“training”) session to the Commission on the application process, meeting process, and procedures.

Planner Agresta reviewed the basics of what membership shall be for the Historic District Commission and how many Members and Alternates they will need to have a meeting quorum.

There was some discussion about what categorizes a conflict of interest. He stated that if there is a personal or financial conflict the member is responsible for disclosing that information and stating a reason. When you do recuse yourself, it is suggested you fully leave the room.

Member Hickey asked what is considered a conflict of a personal nature. Planner Agresta stated that if you go out to dinner, go over to each other’s houses, or do social activities it typically would categorize a recusal. It is also more about the perception of a conflict.

Under power and authority, the Historic District can adopt rules and procedures. The Historic Commission does not have any rules or procedures right now, just Regulations, but they can adopt them. This would lay out expectations for Commission operations or application guidelines. Another word for this is bylaws, and in those bylaws, they can also add guidelines to lay out the rules for the applicants.

Member Kelz questioned if they should have a timeline every 5 or 10 years where they will review the Historic District Regulations and look at establishing additional areas within the Historic Districts.

Planner Agresta stated that there are three ways they can do this:

- 1. Put it into the rules*
- 2. Just do it as time goes along*
- 3. Build it into the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)*

Member Messier questioned what the procedure is to obtain a new Historic District. Planner Agresta stated that he doesn't have a direct answer, but if they want to expand a District, there is a process that would involve mapping, having hearings, and contacting the property owners to get their feedback if they would want the property to be in a Historic District.

Vice Chair Fiftal asked if there was a list of properties that are in the historic district now that she could pass along to Preservation Connecticut. Staff will create an updated list.

Some additional powers the Commission has are providing property owners with newsletters or mailings about the Historic District. They can have workshops and invite people from the district to come and they can make suggestions to the POCD and Zoning Regulations.

Along with the regular meetings, they can have special meetings and site visits (a form of special meeting). If they do not have a quorum for a site visit or the property owner does not want the public on the property, then they cannot have a coordinated site visit. If this is the case, they can go individually. Since the site walk is a meeting, it is best not to talk because it is not being recorded. No decisions will be made, the main purpose is to observe.

Alt. Member Winters asked, what if an owner will not let you on the property can they just flat-out deny the application? Planner Agresta stated they can deny it for lack of information.

The application process is tough for this Commission because they only meet once a month. The statute says the application process time is 65 days from the date an application is received, but it does not state when that clock starts specifically other than receipt. It is possible to receive an application the day after a meeting and it would be 30 days before having a meeting eating up nearly half the available 65 days.

At the first meeting on an application is when the Commission should review the submission and identify the need for any additional information, plans, details, assessments or reports. At this point they can ask questions, schedule site visits, see if it falls under exemption or not. The Commission needs to be objective and not prejudge for or against an application at this point.

Vice Chair Fiftal questioned; if someone came to them and asked for something that they knew they would never approve. Can they tell them that? Planner Agresta stated they need to state the response in the form of a question, i.e., Would you consider using wood? You will need to stay objective.

Part of the application process is reviewing the request for an exemption. They need a good reason for the exemption. Exemptions can be given by the Land Use Office or the Commission.

The next step in the meeting process is the Public Hearing. These must be notice in the paper 15 days before the Public Hearing. The public hearing involves the public speaking and asking questions or commented reasons for or against it.

There was some discussion as to when the public could speak about the application. Planner Agresta stated that it is up to the Chair to allow this, but they shouldn't allow the public to speak under the new application step on the agenda. If they allow for that, then they need to allow it for all applications.

Chair Donnarumma stated that is what the public comment period is for, but Planner Agresta said that the public comment period is not for items on the agenda, particularly if there is a public hearing on the matter. All application specific comments should be during the time it is on the agenda, and certainly not outside the public hearing as then it is not part of the application record. He gives an example; the applicant presented the application and then they left the meeting. The public then speaks about it during the public comment portion. The applicant is not there to hear the conversation or respond impacting their due process.

The procedure for the public hearing should be that the Chair lets the public know the process of the hearing. The clerk will then read the legal notice. The clerk should note that receipts of the certified mailing to the abutting owners. The applicant makes their presentation. The commission can ask questions but stick to factual questions and how they fall within the historic regulations. The Chair notes any letters received but does not need to read them aloud but can. Then the public can speak, followed with the applicant respond to the comments. The hearing is then closed and nothing else can be received thereafter and no further discussion with the applicant or public.

The decision-making or Deliberations are only for eligible seated members. When making approvals, you can approve something as presented, or with modifications or changes. When denying an application, a reason needs to be stated. An appeal can be filed up to 15 (fifteen days) from the date of the decision notice sent to the applicant.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 7:22 pm.

RECEIVED & FILED
IN WOODBURY, CT
This 14th day of Sept 2024
at 7:00 o'clock P M
Maria M. Mancini
Town Clerk