

Historic District Commission
Sherman, Connecticut



August 8, 2011

BUILDING INSPECTION IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

At 7 PM on August 8, 2011 there was a pre-meeting inspection of municipal buildings located within the Historic District looking for maintenance concerns on the exterior of the buildings. Present were Janet Hopkins, Jim French, Robert Boone, Alice Schneckenburger, Betsy Scholze, Robin Szendy and Helen Bray, Clerk.

The first stop was at the **lamppost** that had several issues. The lamp had some broken glass and there was rust on the iron holding the glass. The sign and the bracket holding it was corroded with rust. The lamp and the sign can be cleaned up and repainted. There was concern for the locust post and its stability. A new locust post would take a year to age.

The **Old Town Hall** had several minor issues. Paint peeling on north side where the siding meets the stones. Prairie window needs maintenance. The down spout on the south west corner was damaged and there was a broken door handle.

There were some issues with the **library** but the buildings are going to be renovated. The roof shingles on the barn should last until the renovation.

There were no major issues with the **Playhouse**. Further in the minutes Andrea presented repair work that is planned for the patio.

The shingles n the **Scout House** roof should be cleared of mold and painted with a clear wood finish.

The shrubs at the town hall should be cut back from the building.

It was suggested that the town have a building and grounds maintenance department.

The **Historic District Commission Meeting** at the town hall was called to order at 8:06 PM on August 8, 2011.

Present: Janet Hopkins, Chairman, James French, Robert Boone, Alice Schneckenburger, Betsy Scholze, Robin Szendy, Helen Bray, Clerk

Guests: Lazlo Fohn, John Taylor, Andrea O'Connor

PLAYHOUSE

The interior of the Playhouse is not within the jurisdiction of the HDC but the First Selectman has asked for input from the HDC for the proposal to renovate the inside of the Playhouse.

John Taylor, President of the Sherman Players explained that Lazlo Fohn, a designer for GB Interiors, approached him about renovating the interior of the Playhouse. The seating was uncomfortable, the ambiance was bad, comparing it with a prison cafeteria and Mr. Fohn wanted to make some suggestions. Mr. Taylor replied that the board was conscious of the improvements that should be done but it would take a considerable amount of money. The board had heard complaints from other patrons. Mr. Taylor was willing to present the plans, after Mr. Fohn prepared them, to the Playhouse board. The board, not unanimously, was in favor of exploring this project further by presenting it to the town. After presenting the plans to Andrea she suggested Mr. Taylor present the plans to the HDC for their review and opinions.

Janet asked how many Playhouse board members were Sherman residents. Betsy replied there were two, John Taylor and Betsy Scholze. There are twelve members on the board, ten coming from the surrounding areas.

Mr. Fohn then presented pictures of the design. There was a design for the new ceiling, which will be painted. The stage opening and the front of the stage will be changed. There will be fabric on the walls, in a floral design on a red background. The balcony cannot be used because of the fire code.

All the windows will be covered with a shade in the same fabric as the walls so the windows will not be visible when the shades are down, but can be raised to let in the light.

There were pictures of a very ornate chandelier which will be 4 feet long and 5 feet wide. There were three different pictures.

There will be new chairs with a fabric matching the walls in a solid color. Pictures and fabric were shown. The curtain on the stage will be the same design and fabric as the walls.

When the commissioners commented on the saloon type of decor Mr. Fohn answered that it is a theater and this is typical of theater design from the 1890's or Victorian era and it was taken from Europe. Jim commented that there was a total disconnect of the interior from the exterior. Mr. Fohn answered that this was a church and now it is a theater. Jim went on that this makes the design of the foyer very important for the transition. Mr. Fohn explained they will keep the foyer simple and will remove the two doors to give a sense of more space.

Janet asked what will happen if the Players go belly-up. Mr. Taylor answered that this possibility has been discussed. The cost is estimated \$200,000 which will be raised by donations. Jim pointed out that this is interior decorations which can be readily removed if the building changed use. Also, Jim commented on the windows saying it was important to keep the windows clear except during a performance. He would not want to be looking at the backs of shades from the outside. Otherwise, since it is a theater he finds the decor neat. Other commissioners commented. Bob - not his taste. Robin - too much contrast to the exterior of the building. Alice - too elaborate.

The commission did point out that the fire codes and building code must be looked into.

Mr. Taylor would welcome any comments that come up during discussion so that he may accommodate the HDC suggestions.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

The C of A with plans were e-mailed to the commissioners and Andrea was at the meeting to submit the application for lighting in the lower parking lot. Janet had pictures of fixtures taken around town. Andrea explained the many uses the firehouse will have and therefore there will be a need for parking with lighting. Andrea chose the same fixtures used around the IGA area on a timer coordinated with the town hall. Janet suggested sensors.

Jim made motion to accept the application seconded by Betsy and so moved.

Janet still preferred the fixtures at the school. Jim did not like three to four different fixture styles in the one area.

Betsy made a motion to issue C of A as presented for lighting in the lower parking area. Seconded by Jim and so moved.

PLAYHOUSE

Andrea informed the commission about some maintenance work on the playhouse. Two Brothers Masonry proposed removing the existing deteriorating patio and the front stoop and the steps. Also repair existing disintegrating concrete blocks on both stoops and steps. Patio will be dug 10" deep with 4" of compacted gravel, 4" concrete with steel reinforcements, topped with 1 ½" bluestone. Replace all treads on the steps. Betsy mentioned needing railings in certain areas.

OLD TOWN HALL

Jim and Janet questioned the useless third railing next to the railings on the main entrance.

PLAYHOUSE WINDOW PROJECT

Andrea mentioned that the town is in agreement with the state and she just needs to know what they are doing. Bob commented that the roof issue should be resolved before going ahead with the windows. Janet proposed just writing up a description of what the commission wants done.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The approval of minutes was postponed to the next meeting.

PLAYHOUSE DISCUSSION

Janet and Jim pointed out that the HDC has no jurisdiction over what is done inside the playhouse, but Janet said that they did ask for HDC input, but Jim said that they can do what they want since it is all a matter of personal taste. Bob commented there is a simplicity and beauty in the architecture and this should be seen. He did not like the chandelier and doubted it would be kept clean. He liked the new seating for the comfort. Betsy gave some history on the building and pointed out that with each addition and improvement they maintained the character of the building (1830). The steeple was brought back to the building, the windows and steps were also in keeping with the building and appropriate. Her comment was that if all these people tried to hang on to all that is precious and dear and a representation of the time gone by it should be continued. Betsy was the only one at the Playhouse board meeting that thought this new design was inappropriate for this building.

Janet pointed out that this is a town owned building and Andrea directed the project to the HDC, therefore the HDC should express their opinions but it will ultimately be up to the town to approve or turn down. The presentation will go before the Board of Selectmen.

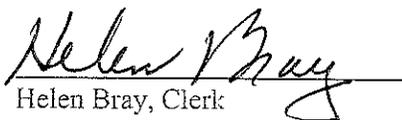
Janet suggested the commissioners e-mail their comments to her and she will compose one letter and send it back for editing, then send the finished letter to the BOS.

A meeting was scheduled for Saturday at 1 PM at the Playhouse so the commissioners can really look at the interior of the playhouse and discuss further the Sherman Players proposal.

There being no further business Jim made a motion to adjourn seconded by Betsy and so moved. Meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM.

THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING IS ON OCTOBER 17, 2011

Respectfully submitted,


Helen Bray, Clerk
Historic District Commission