

## **Fair Haven Planning Commission**

Town of Fair Haven - September 10, 2025 - Regular Meeting

**Commissioners Present:** Robert Richards - Chair, Deborah Laiacona - Vicechair, Ann Finley, Sam Lucci, Linda Sienkiewicz - clerk

**Commissioners Absent:**

**Others Present:** Phil Adams - Zoning Administrator, Jennifer Jackson - Minute-taker, Walter Speer - Vice-president of the FH Historical Society, Lorraine Brown - FH Historical Society

### **Agenda**

#### **1. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:20 pm by Chair Richards. The agenda was modified, due to the absence of the recording clerk, to start with review of the minutes from the previous meeting.

#### **2. Review of Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

##### **Approval of Minutes: Special and Regular meeting - August 20, 2025**

A few grammatical errors were noted in the August 20<sup>th</sup> minutes:

- Page 1 section 2, paragraph 2, 4<sup>th</sup> sentence change "SHe" to "she"
- Page 1 section 2, paragraph 4, second to last sentence change "Mr. Walter" to "Mr. Speer"
- Page 1 section 2, paragraph 5, first sentence change "ot" to "or".
- Page 2 first paragraph change "Mr. Walter" to "Mr. Speer" and uncapitalize the words marble, slate and brick.

Mrs. Sienkiewicz **motioned to accept the minutes of August 20<sup>th</sup> with the noted corrections.** The motion was seconded by Mrs. Finley. All were in favor and the motion passed.

#### **3. New Business:**

- a. Discussion of Historic District regulations for the Downtown District. Ork on a final copy of the proposed Historic District regulations for a future public hearing.**

Downtown Designation Application Packet

([https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD\\_Web\\_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Application-Guidelines.pdf](https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-DT-Application-Guidelines.pdf))

Chair Richards had the PC get copies of the DRAFT Downtown Fair Haven Local Historic District Regulations completed by Local Solomon from RRPC so they could be reviewed completely during the meeting. The meeting was asked to stay within changes for the district announced.

Chair Richards asked if Section 203 (DRAFT) 10. *Fair Haven Local Historic District Purpose* was acceptable to the group. There was no needed change.

Then the PC moved on to Section 929 (DRAFT) - Downtown Fair Haven Local Historic District Regulations. It was noted that the section needs to be changed to "**Section 930**". Chairman Richards stated that the whole section 930 is mandated by the state to be in compliance.

Section 1: "*These regulations are adopted in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4414(1)(F) and shall apply only within the Downtown Fair Haven Local Historic District....*"

- No change

Section 2: Definitions

- Chair Richards stated the building list was sent via email to all people present. Mr. Speer noted a very important building was omitted. "Betty Barnouw" house, which is situated to the left of the Marble Mansion, the little grey house. This home is a good example of what not to do to a historical building. The map at the last page of the report should list the house as number 36 and the garage as number 37. Chair Richards stated the house will be added to the report. Mr. Lucci stated there is a description of the house in the *Fair Haven Memories Book Part II* written by the Fair Haven Historical Society and it will be added to the list. Chair Richards stated the list will be an appendix to the Regulations.
- Mrs. Laiacona asked the question suggested by Mr. Solomon, if there are any houses that should not be on the list? Mr. Speer stated he didn't see any. Mr. Lucci stated he has a comment to add and wasn't sure when to bring it up, but it is derived from a conversation he had with Mr. Solomon about 5 weeks ago, it pertains to boundaries of the Historic District. He feels St. Mary's school has been purposefully left out of the historic district because of the way the lines are drawn on the map; which stops one parcel before the school. He asks why the school is left out? Mrs Brown suggested it was because the building needs to be demolished due to asbestos. She also stated the original school was located where the parking lot is now, and the current building isn't that old. Mr. Lucci stated he only knew the town when this building was around. Mrs. Brown asked if the building were included in the historic district does it mean the building could not be demolished with her belief it should not be included in the district. Mr. Lucci stated his understanding as to why the building was being excluded was because; it was not old enough and asbestos, which in his expertise the building could more readily be remediated if it was included in the historic district and therefore was not a sufficient reason.
  - Chairman Richards stated he believed the PC had to add the Catholic Church back on to the map. Mrs. Laiacona remembered that the St. Mary's school wasn't added as it wasn't "that" old. Mr. Lucci shared the map that was created with the group. Chair Richards stated that the school didn't conform to the architecture that was trying to be preserved.
  - Mrs. Brown asked what would happen to the Convent that is located behind the school if the school wasn't included. Mr. Lucci stated that it as

well looks left out. Mrs. Brown stated the Convent came with the original school and that the current school was stopped being used because of the asbestos and the issues that came along with the flat roof.

- Mrs. Laiacona asked if the building could be included in the Downtown district, but not the historic district and if that would still allow for aid in remodeling the building. Mr. Lucci stated that in current times, it is often more feasible to remodel a building than to raise the building for developers.
- Chair Richards asked if the PC felt the building should be included in the historic district or not. Mr. Lucci stated he felt the PC was mostly in agreement if the inclusion could help the owners of the building to fulfill their needs. He suggested the question be brought to Mr. Solomon for clarification on which classification would add in helping the building the most.
- There was a discussion on how "history" can make buildings "unsellable" and how this particular building should be considered in renovation needs and resale needs.
- Chair Richards stated he will bring the question to Mr. Solomon with the belief that most feel the building should be included in the downtown district, but maybe not the historic district.
- Chairman Richards brought the group back to Section 930.2 definitions. He asked ZA Adams if it was possible to get the PC a copy of the "Local Historic District Report" in color. ZA Adams stated he was unable to print in color and asked if Mr. Richards would ask the town manager instead.

*Section 3: No Structure within a designated historic district may be rehabilitated, substantially altered, restored, moved, demolished, or changed, and no new structure within a historic district may be erected without approval by the Fair Haven Planning Commission...."*

- Chairman Richards stated the importance of this section and asked if anyone saw any changes needed. Mrs. Brown asked about boarding windows. Chair Richards stated it as ok as long as they were painted to match the building. Mr. Speer had concerns about the length of time the windows could be boarded. Mrs. Laiacona emphasized that it can be costly to replace the windows in the downtown buildings as they are of unusual sizes. Chair Richards stated the timeframe was included to make sure something was done and that windows were left open and forcing glass replacement might be restrictive. Mr. Speer noted the timeframe was mentioned further along in the document.

*Section 4: The Planning Commission shall approve an application if it determines that the proposed work will not materially impair the historic or architectural significance of the structure or its surrounding area within ..."*

- Mrs. Laiacona asked if these regulations were only being drafted with exterior history in mind. As she believed the vaults in her building were of historic value as well. Chair Richards stated there are regulations on what can happen inside the buildings. Mr. Lucci suggested this question be brought to Mr. Solomon as

well. Chair Richards suggested possibly changing Section 2a to include interior significant features like the vaults or the opera house space. Mrs. Brown stated that as a property owner sometimes to make the space usable you need to be able to change the inside. If there are too many interior restrictions then there begins to be infringement on landowners rights. Mr. Lucci suggested that there may already be restrictions due to State and National Historic Registers. ZA Adams quoted the Zoning Bylaws Section 926 (He also noted a conflict of interest in the section that needs to be addressed at a later date)

- *Section 926 – Dwelling Units in the Downtown District*
  1. *Dwellings are allowed in the Downtown District as conditional use on all non-street-level floors.*
    - i. *Off street parking is required for all Downtown District dwelling units that are on non-streetlevel floors.*
  2. *Dwellings are allowed in the Downtown District as conditional use at the street-level provided that no more than 50% of the gross square footage can be used for residential purposes.*
    - i. *Storefronts must be maintained for commercial use.*
    - ii. *Dwelling entrance and exit may not face Main Street.*
    - iii. *Dwellings must have adequate parking accessible from Liberty Street or Maple Street.*

*Section 5: For any application, the Planning Commission shall consider ..."*

- It was noted that many parts of this section may help preserve interior historic sections.

*Section 6: For any application, the Planning Commission may consult the Fair Haven Historical Society, Vermont Historical Society, any relevant historical materials or ..."*

- Ms. Finley stated that here other society's requirements may help preserve the history. Mr. Richards noted the Historical Society as an interested party.

*Section 7: Exterior Modifications.*

- ZA Adams asked if exterior signage is covered in this section with the Historic District. Mr. Lucci asked wasn't that already under the PC purview? Mr. Speer stated these regulations are vital. Mrs. Laiacona suggested to add "including signage" to section 5 b and c. Mr. Lucci suggested that Section 7 g already talks about signage. There was a discussion as to the meaning of obscure or conceal in regards to signage. Mr. Lucci believed that the unclarity would allow the PC to be the deciding factor on signage. Mrs. Laiacona stated there were problems in the past due to the fact that there aren't any restrictions on signs that can be put downtown and they are needed restrictions and that this whole document is supposed to be showing the state that we are preserving the historic district. The PC discussed the benefit and hazards to adding signage restrictions. Chairman Richards summed up the argument with the question to the PC, are we comfortable with changing 5c to state " *The general compatibility of the proposed exterior design, arrangement, texture, signage, and materials proposed to be used.*" The majority of the PC was comfortable with the change.
- Section 7 c
  - change "alter" to "alters"
  - lii. change "it's" to "its"
- Section 7 d
  - Change "it's" to "its"

- Section 7 f: Mrs. Laiacona suggested that 120 days is a long time for windows to be left. Mr. Speer suggested 60 days and that with an application to the PC the time could be changed to fit needs.
- Section 7 h: Chairman Richards stated there will be a couple grandfathered in rooflines.

#### Section 8: *New Structures*

- 8 e Chair Richards suggested adding "in residential". Mr. Speer countered with what if the opera house wanted to add a second or third floor balcony?

#### Section 9: *Demolition*

- Mr. Speer suggested a photo series documenting an approved demolition. Stating that documenting the demolition process completes the story of the structure.
- The PC decided to change the wording to "As a condition of approval for demolition, the Planning Commission shall require the applicant to photographically document the structure before demolition occurs and provide the photographs to the Zoning Administrator before the Zoning Administrator may issue a zoning permit for demolition. *The applicant must then also promise to supply photographs of the demolition process to completion to the Zoning Administrator.* The Town should provide the photographs to the Fair Haven Historical Society.

Section 10: *The Planning Commission shall be strict in its judgement of applications by referencing the Fair Haven Local Historic District Report.*

- No change.

Chair Richards asked for the rite up of the minutes as soon as possible to be able to send them to Mr. Solomon with the needed corrections.

ZA Adams asked for the agenda needs for the next meeting.

- Final Historic Dist Draft
- Approve Report Local Historic District
- Possibly start 5yr Plan development

Mrs. Laiacona asked the PC to please review the Hardwick 5 yr plan and compared with the Fair Haven town plan.

#### **4. Other Business:**

- Review of Mail: None**
- Other: None**
- Public Comment: None**

#### **5. Adjournment:**

Mrs. Sienkiewicz **motioned to adjourn at 9:16 pm.** Mrs. Finley seconded the adjournment motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer Jackson, Minute-taker

\*\*\*The Next Commission Meeting will be held on September 17, 2025 at 7:30 pm\*\*\*