

**HISTORIC DISTRICT &
HISTORIC PROPERTY
COMMISSION**

Allison Sanders, Chair
Lisa Pojano, Vice Chair
Gilbert Weatherly, Clerk
Lori Fusco

Alternates
Pam Brown
Debbie Fink
Peter Gaboriault



**TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897**

**Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2020
Town Hall Annex Room A: 7:30 pm**

- I. Call to order: 7:34 pm
 - a. Attendance: Commissioners Sanders, Pojano, Weatherly and Fusco attending.
 - b. Minutes: January 4 minutes reviewed. Chair moves to approve. Pojano seconds. Vote to approve is unanimous. February 10 minutes reviewed. Chair moves to approve. Pojano seconds. Vote to approve is unanimous. February 4 minutes reviewed. Chair moves to approve. Pojano seconds. Vote to approve is unanimous.
- II. 200 Danbury Road – update: After discussion Chair will prepare a statement to be sent to Planning and Zoning and copy all members of the Commission.
- III. Project regarding Historic Preservation Tools – report from Emily Innes/Harriman: Ms Innes continues her work, and is incorporating the commission’s comments. She will attend the April meeting.
- IV. Demolition Delay Ordinance Draft – update: Commission will prepare a detailed comparison of the existing Demolition Delay Ordinance to the Proposed Draft. Commissioner Fusco to prepare draft for next regular meeting.
- V. Annual Report of HDC for SHPO: Chair shared the report she submitted and it is included in these minutes.
- VI. Wilton Historical Society: two March events: Chair announces March 21 Panel Discussion “Historic Preservation: Benefit or Barrier to Economic Development in Wilton” and March 22 “Histoury” historic home tour. Details at the Wilton Historical Society website.

VII. Public Comment: A member of the public expressed concerns and offered comments regarding the 200 Danbury Rd. project.

VIII. Adjournment: 9:04 pm

Watch List: 198/200 Danbury Road, 300 Danbury Road

HDC ANNUAL REPORT FOR SHPO, MARY DUNNE:

Wilton HDHP 2019 Annual Report

2019 Commissioners:

Allison Gray Sanders, Chair (continuing) Lisa Pojano, Vice Chair (continuing as member, new as Vice-Chair) Gilbert Weatherly, Clerk (continuing) Lori Fusco (continuing) Marianne Gustafson resigned effective May, 2019

A replacement for Ms. Gustafson has not yet been appointed

Alternates

Pam Brown (continuing) Debbie Fink (continuing) Peter Gaboriault (continuing)

Meetings Held:

Regular: January 8; March 5; April 2; June 4; July 3; October 1; November 6; December 3

Special: May 9; June 21; July 6; August 15, August 22; September 10; November 13; November 26

COA Requests:

Hurlbutt Street Schoolhouse/HD #4 Signage; approved with conditions

Demolition Delay Applications Reviewed:

213 Danbury Road 19 Cardinal Lane 241 Danbury Road 23 Cricket Lane

Demolition Delay Imposed:

213 Danbury Road HRI listed, the c. 1875 Fallow-Ogden House, also known as Orem Farm.

Other work of the Commission:

POCD: Meetings and surveys continued and the Chair attended as appropriate. Commission reviewed final draft. The POCD was accepted and approved by P&Z.

Funding Request to Town: In January, the Commission requested \$7200 for three projects in the next fiscal year: markers for LHDs; Historic House Markers for Town-owned historic properties; Materials for information session for HD owners.

Later, the Commission was informed that the approved budget was \$5,000 and a suggestion was made that it be applied to a project to engage a consultant to research what other towns were doing to offer commercial developers incentives to keep historic structures that are neither National or State register. Commission handled RFP process to eventually engage Emily Innes of Harriman for Historic Preservation Tools Project. First meeting with her held in November.

HDC Pages on Town Website: Entire town website was redesigned; Vice Chair and Chair worked to supply information and make improvements to content and user experience of HDC section.

CT Proposed Bill #1107 Section 2: The Commission prepared a statement in opposition to the bill.

Demolition Delay Ordinance Revision: The ordinance revision had been set aside temporarily as the Commission worked on the POCD. The Commission continued work.

Zoning Change Proposal contingent on saving HRI listed house/200 Danbury Road. Following the adoption of the POCD, which documented the Town's interest in preserving historic structures, P&Z worked with a developer to create a zoning change with incentives for saving antique buildings. HDC submitted two statements.

STATEMENTS:

OPPOSITION to Section 2 of Senate Bill 1107

TO: The Hon. Daniel J. Fox, Co-Chair, The Hon. Mae Flexer, Co-Chair, The Hon. Will Haskell, Vice Chair, The Hon. Michael Winkler, Vice Chair, the Hon. Rob Sampson, Ranking Member, the Hon. Mike France, Ranking Member and the members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee

FROM: Historic District and Historic Properties Commission, Wilton DATE: April 2, 2019

RE: AN ACT CONCERNING THE TERMS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE CONNECTICUT TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND CONSTRUCTION INVOLVING HISTORIC STRUCTURES

The Wilton Historic District and Historic Properties Committee is opposed to Section 2 of Senate Bill 1107 and urges the Members of the Committee on Planning and Development to reject it.

The proposed legislation is an unnecessary act of over-reach by the state. Localities are much better judges of which structures are locally important. It is an alarming example of the kind of thoughtless "one size fits all" approach that will further erode the few protections available to

locally important historic structures.

In Wilton, continued development of the Route 7 corridor has drastically altered the streetscape, destroying much of the distinctive character so many residents have moved here to enjoy. Tourism will suffer as well, if Connecticut's historic past is allowed to be demolished piece by piece.

Specifically, this bill will:

- reverse decades of work that preservationists have accomplished to make the preservation of historic resources an important tool in reinvigorating our communities;
- allow the state to unfairly sanction the demolition of historic structures that local municipalities have

identified as important and meaningful to their community;

- set up a system of "demolition by neglect" where historic buildings will be allowed to decay to the point of destruction, increasing blight in neighborhoods and decreasing property values and local tax revenues
- allow indiscriminate destruction of historic assets; and
- set a dangerous precedent and expose the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act to future disastrous amendments.

Sincerely, Allison Gray Sanders, Chair

STATEMENT:

Opposition to Proposed Zoning Change on Rt 7:

TO: Planning and Zoning Commission

FROM: Allison Gray Sanders, Chair, HDC

DATE: February 10, 2019

RE: 200 Danbury Road LLC Request for Zoning Amendments

The zoning amendment request by 200 Danbury Road LLC is another slippery slope which, if granted as described, is highly likely to lead to the loss of more historic structures on Route 7 and will certainly change the character of the area.

The applicant's attachment "Zoning Statistics for Parcels Within DRB Zone" includes 11 historic properties which are documented on the historic house survey (including one very significant one at 198 Danbury Road, on the hypothetical site), plus an antique barn. Without any provisions or incentives to encourage the retention of historic structures, or forbid their demolition, developers are free to destroy the town's historic landmarks with impunity.

Why is this acceptable? While it is true that an individual owns a property, the town – meaning all its citizens – owns the history of Wilton, its character and sense of place. These historic structures are part of the value of living here. There are not many remaining and are disappearing fast on Route 7.

Recently, a POCD survey asked, “How important were Wilton's historic architecture and landscapes, scenic vistas, and character to you when deciding to live in Wilton, or in deciding to remain in Wilton?” The results: “Over 70% of respondents said the historic architecture and landscapes and scenic vistas, and character were a somewhat or very important consideration when deciding to move to or remain in Wilton.”

The historic streetscape was part of the developer’s consideration in choosing Wilton. It makes no sense to destroy historic structures, an important part of Wilton’s character, which are irreplaceable. A short-term cost savings in design and construction for the builder is a long- term and unfixable loss for the town.

Surely both development and the retention of historic structures is not incompatible. P&Z should immediately develop zoning incentives to save our town’s character and implement an ARB.

STATEMENT

HDC provided this statement to P&Z regarding a proposed zoning modification on Rt 7:

TO: P&Z FROM: HDPC DATE: June 23, 2019 RE: 198/200DanburyRoad

Please consider adding the following provision to the proposed modified zoning regulations under discussion: Where the historic building(s) are incorporated into a larger plan of development, the following guidelines shall apply;

Add: In order to preserve the building’s integrity, the historic structure(s) should, if at all possible, remain in their original location on the site.

Comment: When assessing a historic building, preservationists evaluate the following seven qualities of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of these aspects. Note that the first listed characteristic is location, soon followed by setting. There is tremendous historic value in allowing a building to stay exactly where it was built, in the original location, in the original setting. In the case of 200 Danbury Road, not only will the historic building be spared the stress of moving, but the developer will reduce costs by leaving the Raymond-Morehouse House in place. In addition, the historic structure will remain in its setting, adjacent to its neighbor at 196 Danbury Road, the c. 1840 Charles Comstock House (listed on the Historic Resource Inventory), preserving integrity. In this example, each historic building provides context for the other, which is one of the goals of preserving local character. There is also a higher probability of preserving mature trees by leaving that area of the property undisturbed.

And modifying the following to read: The Property shall have frontage on Rt 7, be served by

sewer and water, have a minimum lot size of 1.75 acres (vs 2 acres), and a minimum lot frontage and width of 150 feet. Comment: There is at least one other property on Rt 7 which, if redeveloped, could preserve the historic structure on the site and take advantage of these modified amendments if the minimum lot size were lower. Also, in the future, a developer may combine undersize properties with historic structures to meet the minimum lot size, and subsequently be able to save the structure(s) and take advantage of the proposed new amendments.

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