

Palmyra Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2014

Present: Chair Ellie Drake, Co-Chair Jim Elliott, Commissioners Chris Daly, Michael Haskins, Rebecca Remington.

Absent: Alternate Vicky Daly; Architecture Consultant Mark Vande.

Guest Present: Christine Capella-Peters, representative from SHPO.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00.

Ms. Capella-Peters addressed the group to discuss her audit of the Palmyra Certified Local Government. She said the purpose of the audit was to ensure that our CLG was upholding its responsibilities. Ellie Drake and Jim Elliott were interviewed by Ms. Capella-Peters prior to the meeting, and provided her with copies of the minutes. Ms. Capella-Peters was looking specifically for an inventory of historic resources, meeting notices and minutes, and certificates of appropriateness. She said that CLGs were to be audited every 4 years, however there was a backlog that SHPO is currently striving to work through, and by the end of 2014, SHPO should be back on track with their audit schedule. She also said that she would be sending the results of her audit in a brief summary that would identify deficiencies and recommendations. Our commission would receive a letter signed by Julian Adams, however the deficiencies noted and recommendations would be from Ms. Capella-Peters. She said that our Commission would have 120 days to acknowledge the letter and tell SHPO how we intend to enact the recommendations. Her notes were as follows:

- Survey – our CLG should have a survey of the entire village, not just the historic districts, and the survey should be available on a database and posted on a website.
- Landmark Designations – Ms. Capella-Peters praised the Spotlights as a means to raise the awareness of the value of historic preservation, and in turn to encourage local landmark designation, but has encouraged us to “beef up” the effort.
- Self-training – She praised our review of the Local Landmarkers in our self-training, and has encouraged us to take advantage of our proximity to the Landmark Society of Western NY.

Michael Haskins asked if there were anything we could do to address the condition of the corner row house on Main St. Ms. Capella Peters stated that it would be more of a Code issue than a preservation issue, and recommended that we look into “Demolition by Neglect” in the NYS code. She told the group that Auburn, NY had a similar issue that they successfully addressed this way. She said that Michael Long of the Community Preservation Committee was prominent in this effort. She said that the building in question was on Grove or Grover St. in Auburn. She suggested that we google the community planner offices in the Willard Chapel. She said that the current version of NYS Code may have a “demolition by neglect” provision. She said that Caitlyn Mieves of the LSWNY may be familiar with this. Ms. Capella Peters also recommended that if this approach is planned, that it would be wise to go to our local officials with possible buyers of the property.

Ms. Capella Peters recommended that when the property is evaluated to see what work is needed to make the building habitable, that either a preservation architect or a structural engineer with demonstrated experience with historic preservation be consulted.

Ellie Drake said that we should consult our Code Enforcement Officer to see what he can tell us about demolition by neglect, and possibly talk to the commission at our October meeting.

Cemetery Nomination: Ellie Drake told the group that Gary Hopkins gave her a guide to the Cemetery and information about builder Joseph Blaby. She told the Commission that the Cemetery was honored by the LSWNY about 10 years ago. Mark Vande, Ellie Drake, Jim Elliott joined Gary Hopkins and David Husk to view the chapel. Mark and Ellie took photos. Jim Elliott suggested that if we get a grant perhaps the retaining wall can be repaired.

Jim Elliott asked Ms. Capella-Peters whether there were grants available to repair the stained glass lancet windows in the Rogers Chapel. She said there were, if the site was National Register listed. She said we should try to find out who designed the cemetery, and not just focus on the chapel. She said that SHPO has a program for funds for the restoration of stained glass windows. She did say that religious properties (especially small ones) tended not to be too competitive, as the current state administration is focused on job creation, and tends to reward bigger projects that would put more people to work. She also said that CLG grants usually were 50/50 matching, but 25/75 matching in depressed areas. She said that most of upstate NY qualified for the latter matching grants, and thought that Palmyra would qualify for the 25/75 matching. She encouraged us to contact SHPO after nomination.

Ellie Drake said that she had a letter of support from the local DAR chapter, and she has spoken to the commander of the local American Legion, who agreed to support our efforts to nominate the Cemetery. Ellie has also made the request of the Palmyra VFW and Rotary. She also intends to speak to Supervisor Ken Miller as representative of the Town of Palmyra.

Jim Elliott asked Ms. Capella Peters if the Cemetery nomination should focus on the buildings separately, or if they should be included as part of the Cemetery nomination. She recommended that the Cemetery be nominated as a whole, with information about who designed the Cemetery, the buildings, the funerary art, the archway gate, and gatekeeper's house. She suggested that we contact Julian Adams for a copy of a recent successful rural cemetery NRHP nomination. We could use the information about the history and importance of the rural cemetery movement from the model nomination for our nomination.

Grant wish list: There are grants available from time to time for preservation organizations. We discussed what we might request grant monies for. Training; a comprehensive signage system; plaques; revolving loan fund for preservation work; brochure of historic sites in Palmyra; Pointing for the Rogers Chapel. Ms. Capella-Peters said that SHPO has a grant for plaques.

Other Business: Ellie Drake said that Joan DeCann's NR nomination is currently in Washington DC being reviewed. Jim Elliott suggested that Joan might be willing for her house to be locally nominated. When the nomination is approved we will ask her if she would be interested.

Christine Capella-Peters suggested that we get in touch with the Penn Yan Preservation Commission, as we are similar in size and both rural. She said that CLG grants usually are 10% matching, and they run between \$1,500 – \$15,000. She suggested that we seek one for a historical professional survey. She also said that Cynthia Howk could give us a ball park cost. She recommended that Survey Project Coordinator Bob Englert and Cynthia Howk address our group on how to do a survey.

Michael Haskins made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Rebecca Remington. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm. Respectfully submitted by Christine Daly.