

NASHUA HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Thursday, 9 August 2007, 10:30 a.m. – Room 208, City Hall
Special Informational Meeting

Members:

Roberta Woitkowski, Chair
Michael Findley
Frank Mellen
Bill Slivinski
Greg Williams, Alderman

Also present:

Carter Falk, Planning Department
Marcia Wilkins, Planning Department
Kathy Hersh, Community Development Division Director
Renee Reder, intern, Community Development Division

City Bell

Ms. Reder has researched the bell and the old City Hall history during the past two summers. The Fire Department purchased the 1860's Naylor Vickers & Company bell in 1863 for \$827.25, plus an additional charge of \$48.32 to hang the bell at the old City Hall at 106-130 Main Street. The 55" diameter cast-steel bell had a ringing wheel and a clapper and weighed 2414½ pounds. It was rung for the numerous fires Nashua had during that era, in addition to holidays and events and the deaths of important people. Someone was required to be in the City Hall tower every night to ring the bell in case there was a fire. In 1936 the bell was removed from the building's third floor due to safety concerns and brought to the City Barn. In 1939 the Board of Alderman voted to give it to the Greek church which kept it until 2003. The bell was returned to the City and relocated beside 14 Court Street.

Ms. Reder has designed an area in front of the old city hall location for the bell's display. It will be set on the large bump out area located in the sidewalk in front of 106-130 Main Street. In July, DPW gave permission to move the bell back to Main Street. Granite and flowers will be placed in the area and the request for bid for the granite work was sent out yesterday.

The bell is now at the Nashua Foundry being restored. A special clear coat will be added to the finish to protect it from graffiti and the weather, but it will need to be recoated every several years. Mrs. Hersh wondered about adding a donation box to help with the bell maintenance. The members discussed having granite pavers and/or the brick sidewalk engraved as a fundraiser.

Rehabilitating Streets and Buildings in Downtown

Ms. Reder presented the booklet she has compiled to show her vision of what the downtown area can look like. A lot of her focus was on the Spaulding Block and 188 Main Street, plus the 5-39 Main Street block, which includes the Matarazzo building. She viewed historical records and pictures of the area to get her ideas. Using present and potential pictures, her hope is that many of the storeowners will look at the booklet to give them a place to start and get inspiration.

The members had a few comments for notes regarding historic district buildings.

The Great American Downtown (GAD) Association now has a façade program. They have selected two business owners - Fortin-Gage on West Pearl Street and Castro's on Main Street. Previously there was a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) façade program that was

used for Railroad Square and other downtown businesses. Mrs. Hersh spoke with GAD about the Matarazzo building as a future recipient. Sarah DiSano, Executive Director of GAD, then spoke with Mr. Matarazzo who was receptive to a façade change.

Historic District Signs

Mrs. Hersh showed pictures of signs she had taken in Chicago in their historic areas. She thought the idea might be good for Nashua. Besides the historic district, she would like to put signs in the Tree Streets area due to its cultural history.

She also suggested having another historic district or neighborhood district in the city. She wondered if the HDC would want to be the oversight committee if there was another north end neighborhood district. Mr. Slivinski thought it would be more under Mrs. Hersh's jurisdiction.

Mr. Slivinski would still like to have a common sign for houses. He also would like to see local banks offer lower interest loans for those that want to do historic renovations.

Resignation

Ms. Woitkowski gave her notice as chair and as a member of the HDC effective with the end of her term in September 2007. She wouldn't mind helping out with little projects, but doesn't have the time to be a full-time commissioner.

The meeting ended at 12:00 noon.

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