

Town of Sutton
Historic Commission Meeting Minutes
May 30, 2023

Meeting Started at 7:06 p.m. via Hybrid

Members Present:

Keith Downer – Chairman

Mark Brown – Clerk

Rochelle Forsythe – Member

Donna Rossio – Member (Remote)

Christopher Leary – Member

Members Absent:

Paul Dunn – Member

Review and Approve Minutes:

March 28, 2023 minutes were approved by vote. Vote carried a yes, by 4 out of 5 voting members present, D. Rossio noted a typo and disagreed with some of the wording, no planned changes at this time.

Public Forum: None.

Public Hearing: None.

Board Business:

K. Downer, discussing Inventory Continuation Sheets from D. Rossio:

- 53 Burbank Rd (2 forms), D. Rossio, second (newer) version should be used due to corrections in writing.
 - D. Rossio referring to 120 Burbank Rd in connection with 53 Burbank Rd, but, appears to be in the 134 Burbank Rd form, some confusion resulted but cleared up.
- 134 Burbank Rd
- 33 Buttonwood Ave., was tabled from March 28th meeting.

Board approved forms no additional comments.

Old Business:

K. Downer, American Sycamore Trees. Emergency action was filed by Sutton Tree Warden regarding 3 Sycamore trees along Boston Road (1 near Unified Parkway and 2 across from Galaxy Pass) were accessed after the top of one of them broke off damaging vehicles at the property across from Galaxy Pass. All 3 trees are on Town property so a core test was performed that showed significant hollowing in the tree trunks posing a public safety concern. The Tree Warden has the right to immediately remediate this problem, however action was delayed until the next Planning Board to communicate the plan to remove all 3 trees.

D. Rossio feels that there should be Historic Site Marker placed at the site across from Galaxy Pass to commemorate Elijah Johnson the first settler to survive the great snow of 1717.

K. Downer, Overlay District update concerns from D. Rossio were supposed to be included on this meetings agenda but were accidentally left off, asks whether this should be discussed or tabled until officially on the agenda. D. Rossio agrees with delaying until the next meeting when there is an agenda item for it. M. Brown asks that D. Rossio provide an outline of her concerns to the board in preparation for discussion at the next meeting. D. Rossio agrees to provide. She goes on to reference in relation to the Overlay District (*Clerks Note: there was a lot of verbal information covered during this ~15 minute segment of the meeting starting around the 41 minute mark, I am rewatching the meeting, as I always do to produce these minutes, and doing my best to summarize this in a bulleted form*):

- Its a great bylaw for what its meant to do, define the Sutton center business/commercial area.
- The "Beehive" property was in poor shape and no one wanted a "Brand" store (CVS ...) to be built on that site.
- A woman wished to purchase the "Brick Block" (also referred to as "Polly's Antiques") to put in a Florist Shop, which was not currently allowed by Sutton's zoning. She tried unsuccessfully to get that changed. That property was later purchased by James Marran.
- The bylaw was originally intended to contain more properties then it currently does. It was a study that had to be done to see what the people wanted. The response was "a resounding no, we want to just live where we live". Refers to photos of "touristy" areas with open flags lining the streets.
- The main intent was to insure that whatever proceeded the "Beehive" was appropriate for the location and the bylaw does that to a "T".
- There are things about the bylaw that D. Rossio loves, the problem is; once you sign up you are part of that district and sooner or later "the Graham's house is going to be a Pizza place". Does not matter that it does not look like one, it is.
- A tavern might be appropriate at the "Beehive" site, would definitely have been appropriate for K. Downer's property back in the 1700's, as taverns were needed on heavily travelled roads (as Boston Rd was prior to the Central Turnpike).
- Restaurants and home businesses are currently allowed in this area without being part of the overlay district.
- The site review is GREAT as it requires review of single family development (*Clerks Note: garbled recording*).
- K. Downer asks if D. Rossio agrees that 80 properties were included in the original Overlay, she does not.
- K. Downer clarifies that: It was a larger area that was shrunk to 3 properties based on the "Beehive" issue and 1 or 2 individuals that opposed the entire proposal. The Planning Board agreed to start with these 3 properties and work their way out in the future as the need arose.
- D. Rossio states that economic growth is the main interest of the town at this point. That will take precedence over any properties in the overlay district, perhaps not with the current owners but with the 2nd generation buyers.
- The current bylaw adds a new residential building type with max of 6000 sq/ft and 4 families (describes the "Beehive"). D. Rossio would not like to see 4 of those in a row on Boston Rd either...
- With or without the overlay, demolition is not addressed, filling out a building permit allows the destruction of any property currently.
- D. Rossio believes this is actually a Business District due to this point: on properties under .3 acres "...A-F is not allowed...which is a...stand in your front yard to sell your tomatoes or zucchini or whatever...". The only residential area where that is not allowed is in a Business District.
- D. Rossio believes its a mistake to: enlarge the historic growth patterns of the Business District, the Civic area and the more densely populated Residential situated at the cross-roads (Sutton Center), typical of 18th century village configuration.
- A 2/3's vote at the Town Meeting is required to pass this overlay update and D. Rossio will do all she can to keep that from happening.

Board questions/comments regarding this discussion:

K. Downer, asks if D. Rossio feels the overlay is more for business or business use only and not a historic architecture use? D. Rossio, no she does not believe that, but, feels the town planners do wish the center to look historic, and, the business district to grow. The people that attended the original meetings did not want to have businesses in their residential areas.

K. Downer opens discussion to the rest of the board.

M. Brown asks for clarification on the status of this topic of discussion which was tabled for the next meeting yet D. Rossio has now made all the points she wished on the subject. K. Downer states that as this was an agenda item on a previous meeting we can complete the discussion at this time.

M. Brown, there is a lot of gray areas in the current overlay, D. Rossio has made her points and I can agree with at least some of them. Ultimately, this will be decided by the people attending the Town Meeting.

R. Forsythe, wishes to keep it "countrified" here and keep the businesses in the current business districts (along RT 146, Wilkes and Manchaug). Is business going to be restricted to RT 146? Looking at the historical shape of the building and there is a mix of ultra-modern with stuff that is trying to recreate Sutton Center. After we are gone someone else will take over and things will change.

C. Leary, looked into this briefly, would have been better prepared had it been on the agenda. Sees both sides of the argument, but is a staunch preservationist.

K. Downer, can't comment as his is a contributing property. But states that the language clearly states that elements of historic architecture must remain or be exhibited. With that protection, once he is gone his house (which has been there for 304 years) even if changed must continue to exhibit historic elements such as wood siding contributing to that property. Without that protection it could just become another vinyl home.

D. Rossio, states that no where in the bylaw does it state anything about maintaining historic elements. K. Downer refutes that statement. D. Rossio counters that the design review is regulatory in nature not mandatory.

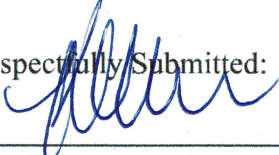
New Business: None

Announcements / Correspondence:

K. Downer received this years publication of the State Register of Historic Places is available if any wish to look at it.

* A motion to adjourn was made by M. Brown and seconded by R. Forsythe at 8:11p.m., it was carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted:



Keith Downer, Chair