

**Town of Essex
Architectural Design Review Subcommittee**

Tuesday, April 5, 2011

**7:30 PM
Essex Town Hall - Meeting Room A**

Chair Neil Nichols called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. In attendance were Neil Nichols, Hope Proctor, Cotty Barlow, Tom Rutherford, Jane Piro, and Janice Atkeson. Tom Danyliw, Bill Jacaruso, John Beveridge were absent. Deanna Pinnette has withdrawn from the Committee,

1. Discussion by Jerry Roberts - Director - River Museum regarding National Battle Site Designation for the Museum and Lower Main Street

Jerry Roberts from the River Museum shared that they have had a long interest in the Burning of the Fleet. It is not on the U.S. Navy's Heritage Trail for the War of 1812. Essex has never been nominated. Steamboat Dock is on National Register. As the bicentennial approaches, the River Museum is 1) looking to become a State Battle site through the State Office for Historic Preservation, then 2) a National Battle site, and 3) through the National Park Service be recognized as an American Battlefield site. There will be a presentation at museum on this project. The tasks require an accurate narrative of the battle, and that has been written. It defines the proposed historic district that would encompass the Battle site, and documentation of the structures within the district. Within 4 months they should have State designation. This district would extend from waterfront to just beyond the Griswold Inn, will be the State Battle site. This is an honorarium district, not a historic district with restrictions. Property owners do not need to agree. Work will be continued to work towards national level recognition. Grants to support the survey, which is necessary to document for the application at the national level, are being pursued. State archeologists will be looking at the site and also in the harbor. This would be a State Historic District referenced to the Battle site. They have never done a district based on an event, so the State is quite excited. There are 13 houses in the district and each one has to be related to the battle. National recognition will be just the Museum property, since property owner support will probably be difficult to get. Jerry Roberts then related the story of the battle, which involved hundreds of men and many militias. It was a strategic mission to burn 27 ships and the greatest single loss of American ships during the war. The Museum didn't exist during the battle. Federal designation is based on physical evidence, and gives some advantages to property owners. The hope is to have the National Park Service process done before 2014, the Bicentennial of the Battle. Many events are planned leading up to the Bicentennial. The Museum has several artifacts, cannonballs, a sword, and a piece of the ship Osage. The Osage was found in the 1960's. There are

over 90 newspaper articles from that time. With State designation, property owners will be notified, but do not need to agree. Most are excited about it. The British went as far as the Griswold Inn, which was then the Bushnell Tavern. It is not known if they went farther. If more structures are included, it would take longer. This is good for the town and its legacy. Essex should be recognized for what took place. It's a market tool, and good for heritage tourism. This enable application for additional Battle site Preservation grants. This is an exciting project for the State, and why the docks are being rebuilt through a grant. It was in process when the fire happened. This should bring pride and help with the national level application. The State said the Town would easily qualify for national designation. Jane Piro thinks that the State signed off that Essex was nominated for inclusion in National Register back in 1978. It's going to take teeth pulling for the national level designation.

Motion by Janice Atkeson to support Jerry Roberts and the River Museum in their quest for historic designation. Seconded by Jane Piro. Motion carried.

Janice Atkeson and Jane Piro expressed concerned that this may make it difficult for Architectural Design Review work. They have purposely not including Historical Society in this project. It is a Battle site designation not a district, and national recognition is being sought only for the Museum property. The landing site has been examined by an archeologist to determine that nothing was under the docks before rebuilding. Militia mustered at Griswold Inn so that is why it goes from landing up to there. There will be a Historic Trail. An 1854 map was recently brought to the Museum's attention and is the earliest that has been found. The waterfront wasn't changed dramatically until after the 1850's from 1812. This was traitor's map, found in England, and includes a watercolor of the port.

2. National Historic Property Survey

Jane Piro reported that the Draft Reports for the National Historic Survey are in hand. This is one of the most interesting histories of Essex. Economic social, political and architectural history is woven together and covers all the villages. It is really good reading. Phil Esser's assignment from the Sate was to select 100 structures in the core village areas. The report itself is very comprehensive. Appendix A talks about National Register recommendations. The application of 1978 is included. It was a much larger area that was considered. It talks about the different villages and what he sees as potential for the National Register. Phil Esser was very excited about Ivoryton. Centerbrook does not have National Register potential. Essex was beyond the scope of the project. He used Don Malcarne's work as well. The maps are the most helpful in identifying what the committee might want to do. Prior to this Survey, the Historic Society was to continue documentation as per Committee decision, but Jane Piro suggested that a grant be submitted for the Town to continue the documentation.

Janice Atkeson sees that it is missing certain things such as commercial buildings. It does give "the story" of why architecture is important in telling the history of Essex. Neil Nichols will have excerpts from the CD put on the town website. Hope Proctor feels it would be effective to have public presentations to share the information in the report, perhaps through the Library. It could generate enthusiasm within the town.

4. Final plan for letter to focus group invitees

The letter is ready to go back to John Guskowski to be put on the website and sent to the newspapers as soon as the date are decided.
This should be done by the end of May.

5. Final plan for the media letter re the focus group phase of the ADR study

The Committee reviewed and commented on the focus group methodology.
The guide was reviewed. Letters would be sent to every nth person until there are 20 acceptances.
There will be 3 or 4 residential groups and one with all villages combined. The Board of Selectmen, representatives from Board of Finance, Zoning and Planning Commissions would be invited as a 5th group. Commercial interest should also be involved. The letter would be in the newspaper. Letters are sent to double the desired number and if not enough people respond then more letters would be sent. There may be some "volunteers", and then there will be another group.
Potential moderators were discussed: Phil Esser, Milone and MacBroom, Centerbrook Architects. Moderators should be objective and not from Essex.
Only selectees should be allowed to speak.
Dates proposed were through May, possibly the 5th, 7th, and 12th, at 6:00.

6. Approval of the March 2nd Meeting Minutes -

Motion by Hope Proctor and seconded by Cotty Barlow to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2011 meeting.

Motion to adjourn at 9:15 by Janice Atkeson and seconded by Hope Proctor.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Meinsen
Recording Secretary