

VILLAGE OF COXSACKIE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
January 9, 2024

Chairperson Patricia Maxwell (“the Chair”) called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Present were Historic Preservation Commission Members: Michael Rausch, David Dorpfeld, and Nancy Harm. Wendy Warren was absent.

A motion to approve the minutes from the December 12, 2023, Historic Preservation Commission Meeting was made by David Dorpfeld and seconded by Nancy Harm. Patricia Maxwell voted yes. Michael Rausch voted yes. David Dorpfeld voted yes. Nancy Harm voted yes. The motion carried.

New Business

2. Potential HPC Candidates- Chairperson Maxwell stated that the HPC has not received any potential candidates for joining the Commission. The HPC Board Members talked about some potential candidates who may be interested in serving on the Board. They will reach out to those individuals to see if they would like to be considered. In the meantime, the Village has been continuing to advertise on both the website and Facebook page. Chairperson Maxwell stated that the HPC would have to make their recommendations to the Village Board, who in turns approves and appoints them.

Old Business

1. 2-6 Reed Street/33 South River Street- (former Cumming’s Hotel) – Chairperson Maxwell stated that there are no updates on this project at this time.

2. Training- Chairperson Maxwell stated that she has forwarded information on a webinar on Thursday, January 11th at 1:00 p.m. to the other Board Members. This webinar is on Basics of Historic Preservation-2. So, this is a more advanced course with an hour and a half of CPE credits.

New Business

1. Signage in Historic District – Chairperson Maxwell stated that the HPC needs to discuss signage in the Historic District and potential allowances for types that adhere to State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) standards. This issue arose because there is a neon sign and lettering on the windows that was put up in the General Store without an application or discussion with the HPC. It turns out that Amy Bennett, who owns the building, had no idea that it had been put

up. She wasn't consulted for her approval; it was the store manager who put it up. Once Amy Bennett was contacted, the signs were removed. A concerned citizen had reached out to a Committee member about the new signs and their approval. So, it's not something that the Board alone is monitoring; it is something that other people are also aware of. Amy Bennett is aware of the signage rules for anything in an exterior window. Anything that is placed in or shines through the exterior window needs to be brought before the Board.

The one remaining sign downtown that the Board hasn't addressed is the sign at Steve's Vintage Clothing. That one is a little more vibrant than the one in the General Store window. It is a steady light in red, white, and blue. Before the Board addresses the issue, the Chair wanted a consensus of what the members think they should be telling people. The Village Code does not specifically prohibit neon signs unless it is in a residential neighborhood. The Chair doesn't know if an argument could be made that it is residential above the storefronts. In her opinion, she doesn't believe that that argument could be made because it is zoned Village Center, not residential. There is nothing in the Village Center Code to prohibit it, and there is nothing in the Historic Preservation rules to prohibit it. However, she would assume if there were any neon signs, they would have to be in keeping with what was available in the early 1900's. Her concern is that as more storefronts are opened, especially with the Dolan Block, one or two signs isn't necessarily a bad thing, but you wouldn't want to see every storefront with a neon sign.

Michael Rausch stated that the General Store was trying to promote when they were open, but they had "Open" on the door, "Open" on the neon sign, and "Open" on a big red flag. It was overkill. With neon signs, they can either be just straight on, they can flash, or they can revolve. Some of these inexpensive signs that you can hang in a window can do a whole bunch of different things. It is clearly going to become more residential down there with the proposed apartments.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that animated signs or revolving signs cannot be in the Village Center zoning district. In fact, they are not allowed anywhere in the village according to general signage regulations.

Michael Rausch stated that it is too bad that when writing some of these regulations, neon signs were not thought about, because it just hadn't come up.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that also the Village Code is from 2008 or 2009. Other than specific updates to certain chapters, the Code has remained the same for 15 plus years. She asked if the Board should take these items on a case-by-case basis. She asked if the Board should make an exception for someone like Steve's Vintage Clothing, who is on a corner where it is difficult to tell when they are open. They only keep the sign on while they are open, which is also a requirement.

Michael Rausch asked if the Board could restrict the size of the signs.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that the HPC has the latitude to do anything that they think is in keeping with the standards. She said that according to Appendix D-Standards of Visual Compatibility of Chapter 75 of the Village Code-Historic Preservation Districts and Landmarks, it specifically states, "Length, width, overall dimensions, style, lettering, color, scheme, location and/or placement and spatial relationship of a sign identifying an improvement and/or the activity being undertaken therein, and the relationship of said sign to the expression of said improvement, its materials, proportion, and spatial relationships." So, that authorizes the Board to exercise standards over and above what is explicitly outlined in Chapter 75.

Michael Rausch stated that there is another neon sign downtown that they have not discussed, which is at Ravish Liquors.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that their sign was approved through the HPC because it was only scheduled to be illuminated on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The owner turns it off as soon as they're closed. As far as she knows, it is never on when they are not open.

Michael Rausch stated that Ravish Liquors' sign is a true exterior sign protruding beyond the building, and visible from both sides.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that their sign is also vintage. She said that she wanted to discuss the sign regulations with the Board and get a consensus before she approaches Steve's Vintage Clothing, because she would like to say to the owner that based on what the Board has decided, they may have to come up with an alternative that is not so glaringly 21st century.

Nancy Harm stated that it should be only a single message, not rotating texts or flashing lights.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that the sign does not do that now.

Michael Rausch stated that neither did the General Store's sign, and it was half the size of the Steve's Vintage Clothing sign.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that the extra "Open" signs on the General Store were really the catalyst. The owners asked about the sign on the door, but that is really something that the prior owners put in place and was approved as part of their exterior improvements. So, that signage isn't an issue.

Michael Rausch stated that everyone is entitled to some sort of signage to indicate when they are open or closed, but it went a little overboard with the flag etc. There will be more businesses

down the road, and the Board needs to keep on top of it. It is a little bit of “shame on the Board” for not noticing sooner.

Nancy Harm stated that down in NYC there are corner stores with out-of-control neon and LED lights.

Michael Rausch stated that that is why it is very important to let store owners know that they can't just do whatever they want. If they are located in the Historic District there are rules laid out to follow, and they must get things approved.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that the Town of Coxsackie Code also doesn't allow for animated signs and yet there are businesses with them all along Route 9W. She said that the problem is going to expand if the Board doesn't pay attention and be uniform. If they are going to make an exception for Steve's Vintage Clothing if the owner feels it will be a detriment to their business, then the Board has to be very particular about what they think is appropriate.

Michael Rausch stated that he would like to see a smaller sign, not multi-colored, not revolving, and not flashing.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that the Board is going to have to do this on a case-by-case basis and she really wants the Board to be on top of it, because this is going to come up again, and again. If the Board is going to make an exception, then they are going to need specific reasons why.

Michael Rausch asked how the Code verbiage can be changed to limit sign sizes, color, and lettering.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that one of the reasons that the Village Attorney recommended that the HPC does an Appendix as opposed to amending the Chapter, is because every time you amend the Chapter you have to go through the process of SEQOR and a Public Hearing with the Village Board. Whereas, the HPC, subject to Village Board approval, can recommend adding a specific item in the Definitions and Standards appendices that provides the limitations of what our Board is looking for.

Michael Rausch asked what if the Board added one for internally lit neon style signs.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that she will take what they have talked about and draft a subcategory in the Appendix and share it with the other Board Members.

Nancy Harm asked what they were thinking of dimension wise. She said that looking online, 19”

x 10” looks common. Slightly bigger than an “Exit” sign.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that personally she wouldn’t want to see one that big.

Michael Rausch stated that the Board has to make sure to focus on what the sign is capable of doing. No flashing even if multi-color, and not revolving.

Nancy Harm stated that 16” x 9” seems to be another common size of signs online. That at least is smaller than the 19” x 10”.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that she will do some looking, but if anybody sees anything vintage online that they think would work to send her an email. They can’t discuss it online, because that is considered a public meeting, but the Board Members can offer information.

Michael Rausch stated that he is sure that if you look online, you could find signs that are modern but made to look vintage.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that she will work on this and may have a draft by the weekend.

Michael Rausch stated that it does not need to be particularly long in verbiage, but it has to be to point as far as what the focus is. Such as size, and you could do color so long as you researched first.

Nancy Harm stated that you don’t want to see people using those flat panel LED changing signs.

Michael Rausch stated that he knows that it doesn’t conform to the time period, but you don’t want to see anybody put LED/LCD screens in their windows.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that that is not going to happen down there.

Michael Rausch stated that they include it as well, even though it doesn’t conform at all.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that she thinks she will also reach out to Linda Mackey, Certified Local Government Coordinator for NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, just to see if she has any suggestions. She is sure that Ms. Mackey has probably come across this before.

Michael Rausch stated that the last thing the Board wants to see anybody do is spend a considerable amount of money only to be told that they cannot have that sign.

Chairperson Maxwell stated that part of the responsibility is for the property owner to check the

rules and regulations ahead of time.

Public Comment Period

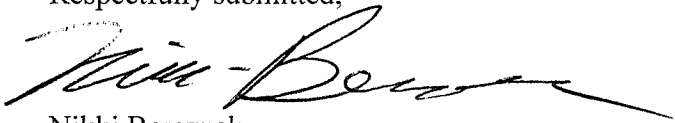
No public comments were offered.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the Historic Preservation Commission meeting was made by David Dorpfeld and seconded by Michael Rausch. Patricia Maxwell voted yes. Michael Rausch voted yes. David Dorpfeld voted yes. Nancy Harm voted yes. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nikki Berezna", written in a cursive style.

Nikki Berezna
Clerk