

Town of Durham

Union Church Committee Minutes

Town Hall, 6:00 PM

August 3, 2023

In Attendance:

Bill Schneider
Paula Erdmann-Purdy
Lois Kilby-Chesley
Emily Alexander
Tyler Hutchison
Neil Berry
John Talbot
Tia Wilson

Absent:

Candace DeCsipkes

1. Agenda Addition

- a. John Talbot requests adding an item to discuss a conversation with MDOT be added to agenda

2. Minutes acceptance

- a. Disagreement that the Durham Historical Society (DHS) \$10k could be used by the UCC for quotes and evaluation which was suggested as a possibility in the previous minutes
- b. Decided that Lois would get transcript results from the town meeting to see what was discussed for \$10k allotment
- c. Update to the minutes to reflect that it was from recall that Northeast Housewrights suggested the impending structural collapse, not reflected in any written report
- d. Minutes accepted, 7-0

3. Presentation on history of the Union Church

- a. Digital copy of the presentation saved with meeting minutes
- b. A number of anecdotes were shared about the union church
 - i. At one point, all historical society items were held at Mae Parker's house, and later moved to the Union Church for museum use
 - ii. Tia will share certain newspaper articles with the group (e.g. the story of the fire inside the Union Church which burned the original floor)
- c. **DHS owns a copy of the Revere bell book at this time, but not the _____**
- d. Question as to whether 'Museum' is a tax or legal classification

- i. Noted that in Durham's Land Use Ordinance this would fall under Cultural Facilities
 - e. Suggested that there is renewed interest in the church and museum from the town now that there is activity
 - f. Noted that the UCC should look back at the repairs in 2019 to see what was done and approved as the original foundation repairs were likely done much earlier so it is unclear what additional steps were taken in 2019
- 4. Purchasing/Procurement Policy Discussion**
- a. Hard copies distributed to the group
 - b. Worry that previously monies that went towards bids in recent repairs may not have been used to fullest extent
 - c. Disagreement that this investigation is a different capacity than this committee's prerogative/charter
- 5. Side discussion on UCC funding**
- a. Question as to whether in our charges include getting quotes
 - b. Suggested that a likely product should be a list of potential outcomes attached to some sort of cost estimate to provide accurate information to selectmen
 - c. Noted that in our accepted bylaws the UCC had decided to that estimated costs would be included
 - d. Attaching costs/benefits with a comprehensive list and costs would tell the story of our eventual decision
 - e. Suggested by this thought, we likely will need funds to pursue some analysis e.g. hiring of a structural engineer
- 6. Side discussion on purview of the Historic District Commission**
- a. Summary is that the Historic District Commission oversees, along with the code officer, the building processes in the historic district (southwest bend historic district)
 - b. Reflecting on Durhams current (8/3/2023) zoning map with a purple outline
 - c. Oversees such things as roof pitch, type of singles, etc which are laid out in the land use ordinance
 - d. Currently necessary for any changes in buildings/properties within 1500 feet of the historic district or any building on the historic register
 - e. Historic District Commission review should be triggered on building permits. Historically this may have been hit or miss, but there have been noticeable improvements lately.
- 7. Review of Meeting with Copp Brothers for Moving the Union Church**
- a. Notes from the meeting will be digitally submitted with these minutes
 - b. Report from the Copps is that it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to move and they would not be interested
 - c. If it is important to move, we could reach out to other companies who might disassemble differently to move
 - d. Copp's could however raise the building, repair the sills, and have others pour a new foundation. Likely estimate is that this would be around \$100k (\$70k in new monies plus the approximately \$31k current available resources)

- e. Town could get together a list of what should be done to the building in totality which could be done when building is lifted

8. Conversation with MDOT about Entrance Safety

- a. Safety officer said the entrance/exit would have to be narrowed for compliance for a single
- b. Uncertain the exact suggestions that will come back, but the safety officer will visit the sight and provide some sort of written information

9. Discussion on Possible Uses

- a. Ownership variability
 - i. Town owns the building (as now)
 - ii. Town sells building to the DHS
 - iii. Town sells the building to a private entity
 - iv. Town sells the building to a non-profit
 - 1. Similar to methodist church which proved it had seed money and then bought from the town for \$1
 - v. Town sells the building only and keeps the land
- b. Structural modifications
 - i. Minimal fixes, foundation, sill as have been discussed
 - ii. Tears down building
 - iii. Complete overhaul with modern buildings, code improvements (ADA compliance, bathrooms, heating, electric
 - iv. Lift building, full foundation with kitchen, archival space, bathrooms
- c. Money allotted is transferred to DHS with the building (and then DHS is on their own to fix)
- d. Owning entity looks into crowdfunding for repairs
- e. Commercial Entities
 - i. Store
 - ii. Collaborative workspace/cubicle farm
 - iii. Kayak rental
 - iv. Rental space (especially coordinated with full foundation replacement)
 - v. Flea market
 - vi. Artisan location
- f. Use for town government
- g. Move the building
 - i. Towards Eureka center
 - ii. Towards River Park
 - 1. Take it down in pieces
- h. Cultural Facilities
 - i. DHS Museum
 - ii. Town library
 - iii. Art gallery
 - iv. Renewed as church again
- i. Recreational facility

10. Requested Agenda Addition - Clarify whether the UCC can use money for the assessment

- a. The main question is whether the UCC use money from either the \$21k in DHS town allotment or the \$10k for evaluation
- b. Lois recalls that Gerry said that the \$21k is earmarked for repairs only
- c. Could pay for a structural engineer if possible
 - i. Lois will investigate town meeting minutes to see how the \$10k was defined
 - ii. Structural engineer could provide a full building analysis for repairs as well as concerns with any updating building features
 - iii. Tyler and Emily will contact a structural engineer they have worked with in the past, Helen Watts, who has historical building specialization

11. Public Comments

- a. No members of the public present

12. Next meeting

- a. Next meeting will be 8/17 at 6PM at the **Union Church**
- b. The following meeting will likely be on 8/31

13. Adjourn, vote 7-0