

**Community Meetings at Starr Library with CPC Subcommittees
October 12, 2022 6:00-8:00 pm**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING WITH THREE BREAKOUT GROUPS**

(n=47 participants, plus 10 presenters and volunteers)

Presenter: Lydia Slaby
Facilitator: Donna Warner
Recorder: Kathy Marryat

SESSION ONE:

LYDIA INTRODUCTION: *[recorded for first session only]*

Lydia introduced herself as a Village Trustee with a focus on building planning and zoning . She is stepping in this evening for the historic subcommittee representative, Rachel Cavell. She is personally very interested in historic preservation and shared her academic background and projects related to preservation.

In New York State, legally, zoning and land use laws must be adopted or modified in accordance with a comprehensive plan. The plans typically include values, principles, and goals, based on broad community input, which guide municipal boards in making future decisions.

We are considering how best to think about our large historic district:

- The 1979 historic district encompasses 344 structures. This includes South Street to Chestnut Street east of Route 9, on Route 9 from Mulberry Street to South Street and a small portion of West Market Street. Three individual properties are on the National Historic Register: Astor Home, Delamater House, and the Post Office.
- In 2021 the historic district was expanded by New York State and the federal government. The new 2021 district has over 500 properties (added Oak Street and West Chestnut, Platt Street and the connecting parts of Mulberry and Parsonage, and part of Mill Street up to the Astor Home).
- The Village Board is currently working to resolve some zoning code issues that have put the two historic districts in conflict with each other.
- Key considerations: What is defined as historic? How to preserve assets while moving forward, preserving [opportunities for] change? Do we continue to expand the district? (the village is only 1.9 square miles). We want to create a living, breathing district while preserving its charm and history.

Historic districts are not protected by any state or federal law. The Village decided in 2009 to pass two laws:

- 1) Chapter 64: Requires a separate application process overseen by the Planning Board to demolish in the historic district;
- 2) Chapter 120-39: The Village Planning board was given additional oversight authority over the whole district. For more information, click on link to Historic District Overlay:

<https://ecode360.com/33463105>).

- A map of the original and expanded historic districts is included at the end of these notes.

Defining Contributing Structures:

- Original definition: Buildings/homes built on or before 1930 are generally considered contributing inside the 1979 boundaries.
- 2021 definition: Buildings/homes built on or before 1970 are generally considered contributing inside the 2021 boundaries.

History Update:

- The work on updating Rhinebeck History is being done in partnership with Bill Jeffway from the Historical Society. A member of the society is helping to update the 1993 history of the Village to include “pre-contact” history and a broader view of history to be more inclusive. The team is working with a Bard intern and local historical societies. [Note: the Dutchess County Historical Society is about to launch a virtual walking tour of Oak Street.]
- For example, Oak Street wasn’t part of the original historic district. The history of this neighborhood focuses on people who haven’t typically been recognized (enslaved people, Irish immigrants, etc.). This is one example of updating the history of the Village to reflect these important aspects. The Native American community also needs to be recognized for their contributions.
- There is a report with maps on the Village website which shows each property and contributing designations. This will help zoning, building, and planning in years to come.
- For more information, click on link to report:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f94961e3f1c910b7ac2136e/t/61e98a12e483142a8bd420a1/1642695198881/Historic+District+-+NY_Dutchess+Co_Rhinebeck+Village+HD+Boundary+Increase_Form.pdf.
- The original 1993 VoR Comprehensive Plan is also available on the website:
https://ecode360.com/RH1002/documents/Comprehensive_Plans

QUESTION AND ANSWER / SESSION ONE:

(13 people - 8 from Village, 5 from Town)

- **Question: What is the rationale/trigger for the historic district to be updated?**
- Answer: The first school building in the Village, on Oak Street, was sold in 2018. There was great concern about what might happen to the building when people realized that Oak Street and its resources are not protected within our historic district. It became clear that other areas of the village are also important and deserved recognition as part of the historic district.
- **Question: What is the benefit of being recognized as a historic district?**
- Answer: A benefit to being listed as a state or federal historic district is access to grants and tax credits for renovations to a “contributing building” in a historic district. It also prevents buildings in a historic district from being torn down. Note: it can be expensive for homeowners to maintain – repainting, maintaining sidewalks. Rotary and other services help people to stay in their homes.
- **Question: Why was 1930 the definition of contributing?**

- Answer: (In 1980) it included assets that were 50 years or older. Typically, resources within 40-60 year age are in the most danger of being destroyed, and the Department of Interior uses 50 years as the general age for when an asset can begin to be considered for historic recognition.
 - **Question: Are there things in your work that you want to hear about from us?**
 - Answer: The presenters polled the group: How many of you live here because of the Village historic character? (a few). How many live in the historic district because of historic character? (1 or 2)
 - **Question: Someone mentioned concerns with housing costs and availability.**
 - Answer: Housing availability, costs and affordability are being addressed in another committee.
 - **Question: Someone asked why updating the lens of the history of Rhinebeck is important to the plan? Why is it not a separate project?**
 - Answer: This work helps to understand our history more clearly. Comprehensive plans are required to include a history. A consultant to the Comprehensive Plan Committee in attendance provided additional comments on the role of history in municipal plans.
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QUESTION AND ANSWER / SESSION TWO:

(12 people – 9 in Village with 4 in historic district; 3 in Town)

- **Question: What are the big changes between the 1979 and 2021 districts?**
- Answer: In 1979 the district was from South Street to Chestnut Street, the Mobile station to Route 9 and the cross streets in between. Three buildings were individually listed on the national register – they fall under different laws than the historic district. In 2021 the new district added Oaks Street, West Chestnut, Platt Avenue, part of Mill Street up to the Astor Home. It expanded what a contributing structure would be to 1970 (from 1930). Every 50 years is the timeline that the State/Federal governments use for updating historic resources. We need to make sure we don't tear down history before it can be recognized as historic.
- **Question: What are the three individual buildings?**
- Answer: Astor Home, Delamater House, Post Office
- **Question: Is the black house [on Platt near Route 9] included?**
- Answer: The black house is now in the historic district but is non-contributing (built in 2020).
- **Question: There used to be walking tours of Rhinebeck? Are those still happening?**
- Answer: No, but a new virtual walking tour of Oak Street was just built and will be released soon.
- Participant Comment: It's exciting to update the historic perspective. It's important to recognize the density of the population and the nature of those who lived here.
- **Question: How does the conversation about creating workforce housing interface with historic preservation?**
- Answer: Note that much of the housing that is in the historic district didn't used to be single family homes. Recognizing the history of 2- and 3-family homes in one building is part of the

conversation about workforce and affordable housing. Examples are shops with modest apartments above them on Market Street.

- **Question: Will expansion of the historic preservation district allow for affordable housing?**
 - Answer: Typically, historic preservation is thought to be for the wealthy, and it can be expensive. The flip side is an example of new historic assignments on Platt Avenue. Several properties are over one acre with 1500 sq ft modest homes on them. Now these properties are protected by a historic demolition code, making it difficult to tear the house down if you want to build a bigger one – preventing people with a lot of money from buying them, tearing them down, and building bigger homes. But yes, the CPC is examining how to make owning a historic home more affordable.
 - **Question: Would some lots get variances to add more to property?**
 - Answer: The updated CPC will inform zoning code changes. The current residential code allows for accessory dwellings – with no more than 35% of the total lot covered by impermeable surface. (restricts development in Village, not just historic district).
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QUESTION AND ANSWER / SESSION THREE:

(13 people - 9 in Village with 4 in historic district, 4 in Town)

- **Question: Does this group have any involvement with the Secretary of the Interior regarding standards for treatment of historic buildings re: alterations?**
- Answer: Yes – the current code refers back to those standards. Recommendations from the CPC will refer to those more fully. We are getting recommendations to develop a “pattern book” (examples from Tivoli and Red Hook) i.e., what a Victorian home looks like with definitions, what can/can’t be changed, what a Queen Anne looks like, etc. There will be a guide as to the best way to renovate historic resources.
- **Question: I have a 1950’s house on Manor – does this mean that it is historic based on the definition? (It originally was an airstrip.)**
- Answer: It is not subject to our historic zoning laws because it is not in the historic district. That being said, it is a historic home because of its date of construction.
- Note: Platt Avenue is very historic (i.e., the old Violet industry greenhouses were removed and their lots turned into houses). The architecture of Rhinebeck has changed a great deal over time. Mentioned again of the new virtual walking tour of Oak Street that is coming out soon.
- Lydia asked how many lived in village (9), historic district (4), and how many moved here b/c of historic nature (4).
- Participant Comment: Question of preservation has to do with properties around it, not just the property itself – there need to be qualitative measures/metrics as to what is worth preserving. Sometimes the rules are too strict which is onerous for residents. Need some restrictions so we don’t change the character of the district.
- Answer: Yes, it is a balancing act.

- **Question: Is there any discussion about the murals in the post office? It is a federal building – is it included in the CPC?**
- Answer: No, this is not part of the plan. The authority as the Village Zoning code for historic properties is the *exterior* and what it looks like from the street. The Federal Government has backed away from their original plan of painting over them. The topic has gone quiet.
- **Question: There are several Hitching posts and Mounting Blocks (historically for horses) – is there any compiled list of where they are located? (Maybe it could be a student project.)**
- Answer: They are part of the streetscape. Some have been repurposed. Some have been moved. Inventorying them would be a great student project.
- **Question: Looking at the history of the land use of the parks would be educational. Are there ways to make the small parks more evocative of our interesting history? (The present Crystal Lake was the site of a paper mill.)**
- Answer: Great idea – could be part of recommendation work.
- **Question: Ten years ago, there was a “Historic Rhinebeck day”, which informed everyone about the buildings and the lands from a historic perspective. Could we do that again?**
- Answer: Likes the idea
- **Question: Many cities have walking tours of their architecture, with brochures, walking tours, etc. It gives a deeper sense of history. Could we do that here?**
- Answer: Likes the idea

