

January 20, 2021

**Historical Commission - Preservation of Historically Significant Buildings
Bylaw Town Staff Review**

Concerns

- Unclear definition of Demolition. How is the 25% calculated? How are “important architectural elements” defined? Do we just want to consider total demolition? In essence, as written, this version of the Bylaw treats the whole town like a historic district as many architectural changes are subject to review.
- The Building definition does not include fences, garden furniture, public art, etc that might be historically significant. Staff would be in favor of incorporating fences.
- 18-month delay might be more appropriate if the Commission controlled a pot of money used for rehabilitation and preservation.
- Designation of a Building as Preferably Preserved should contain more specific criteria. Criteria should not focus on the future use of the property as the Commission’s scope is on preserving the existing building, not influencing future development. Preferably Preserved designation should focus on the loss of the Building being a detriment to the Town.

Suggestions

- No standard language in Amherst about how permits are treated during a change of ownership. This may be an unnecessary component of the Bylaw and create more confusion.
- As it stands now, the *action* taken by the Commission is to allow or delay the issuance of a Demolition Permit by the Building Commissioner. This action is not appealable.
 - We suggest that instead, the Commission issue a new “Certificate of Demolition” and then we specify that the Building Commissioner can only issue a Demo Permit for Buildings 50 years or older that have received a “Certificate of Demolition.” This certificate will be filed with the Town Clerk and included in the applicant’s application to the Building Commissioner for a Demolition Permit.
 - We will then need to spell out an appeal process – such as a third party (PVPC) or another Town board, or court.

Questions

- Who will be the sponsor of this Bylaw change? Staff and/or the Commission?