

Historic Preservation Commission
February 21, 2011
7:00 pm
Town Building Department Conference Room

Present: Josh Randall, Michael Sullivan Smith, Barry Benepe, Susan Puretz
Excused: Myles Putman
Ex Officio: Audrey Klinkenberg, Town Historian
Liaison from the Town Board: Jimmy Bruno
Guest: Vernon Benjamin

1. Approval of minutes of January 17, 2011: Puretz/Smith. Josh, aye; Michael, aye; Barry, aye; Susan, aye. Unanimous approval.
2. Update on Opus 40 and possibly Winston Farm: Vernon Benjamin

Josh introduced Vernon Benjamin, who spoke first about the Winston Farm. He informed the Commission that the town is waiting for the owners to come up with the money to carry out the environmental review.

Susan asked if an Indian Casino was still on the table and Vernon stated that an Indian Casino is not a possibility based on the present laws of the State of New York.

On Opus 40, Vernon mentioned the article written by Greg Helmsmoortel, Supervisor, in the local papers last week. There was a meeting on March 12, 2010 at Opus 40, which was attended by many persons, including Michael Sullivan Smith, who is also on the Committee to Create Opus 40 Inc.

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) granted \$400,000 as a matching grant for the purchase of the property. There is no contract at this time. The town will need four appraisals, including the art work and surrounding not-for-profit property. The town can only purchase the property that is on the tax rolls. (2 parcels) which includes the house, lawn area, museum and the parking area for the house. There is another parcel behind the sculpture to the right, probably owned by Tad Richards. The other three parcels are owned by Opus 40 Inc. and included the sculpture, and two woodlots. As a part of the application, the town assessor was asked to look at the property and to come up with a potential value which was 1.3 million, \$332,000 for the property which is actually for sale, which does not include the "view amenity". How does it become a town park? Opus 40 Inc. owns the property. A Committee to Create Opus 40 Museum, Inc. was created as a non-profit group, and is trying to get IRS approval for donations. If the sale goes through it would merge with Opus 40 Inc, and donate the 3 parcels to the town of Saugerties, which then would allow the property to become a town park. Vernon says it is 59 acres. The total 70 acres would then be able to be fully used as a park. Josh asked how can a town set up a not for profit under its own guise? Vernon actually set up the not-for-profit, and all the work done by that committee is unpaid. Josh stated that the Commission designated the sculpture area in 2005.

The town cannot pay more than the appraised value of the property. Opus 40 museum would have to purchase all the moveable items from the museum, tools, papers, etc. The museum would embrace the history of quarries in general.

Susan brought up the fact that Michael Catalinotto had a letter arguing against the purchase and asked if Vernon could address some of Catalinotto's points

Vernon responded that the letter was nicely written. Michael feels that the town will have to pick up the bill at some point in the future. Vernon believes that this represents economic development for the town. There is a possibility of relationships with the culture and art of New York City. Vernon thinks that there could be corporate sponsorship and money coming into the town. Vernon talks of a targeted approach. Vernon sees a 5 million endowment fund in the future with the interest dedicated to the running of the property, which would ensure funds in the future.

Josh asked, "How was the committee formed?" Vernon: it developed organically, with more involvement it seemed as if the way to do this, to protect the property was to have the not-for-profit. An arts and cultural facility needs to be run by a professional.

Josh: "Who is on the committee?" Vernon replied that he is president, Johanna Hall, secretary, also Michael Sullivan Smith, with his expertise in history, Marjorie Block, President of The Saugerties Historical Society, Bridget Walsh, owner of the Walsh Group, Inc. which organizes art and cultural events in NYC, Jennifer Berkey, deputy planner of Ulster County, Jimmy Bruno and Greg Helmsmoortel, Cindy Saparito, treasure, Gary Bischoff, Cornelia Seckle Steiner. Hans Gunderund, retired building inspector from Westchester Co.

Josh asked "When do you anticipate that there will be a contract?" Vernon replied that Greg Helmsmoortel, supervisor has mentioned that there would be a public hearing. The town has hired an attorney, George Rodenhausen, with a max of \$5,000. The town will come up with appraisal, the owners can get an appraisal if they want to, there should not be serious negotiation, as the appraisal will be the price.

On the day of the closing, the town creates Opus 40 museum, which is gifted the property (non profit parcels) from Opus 40, Inc. in return for the stewardship agreement.

Josh stated that he is for this plan, with the following provisions:

A. The Historic Preservation Commission should be on board, with Michael as its representative. Vernon mentioned the certificate of appropriateness which is held within the Commission's purview. Josh would like to see Conservation Advisory Commission participating in the group.

B. Before negotiations are started the Opus 40 museum should be in place.

Vernon responded that it can only happen with the OPUS 40 museum with a temporary charter, usually for 5 years, before it can be made permanent.

3. Update on Historic Guidelines: Michael got “homework” responses from Josh and Susan. Michael says we should comply with the requirements of the grant, which means that the booklet should be mailed out by October. Michael demonstrated a new CD containing The Pearl, the 1881 Birdseye View of the village of Saugerties and the Survey of homes. He gave a copy of the CD to the Commission members.

4. Update on Stone House Tour: Susan reported that the committee is still undecided on which houses will be on the tour. Michael has been very helpful with information about the houses. The committee will meet again tomorrow (Feb 22) to make the final decision. There was a visitation to a school house, a 1839 building, to determine whether it should be included since the tour’s theme was houses standing when the town was incorporated

5. Discussion of Possible designations: Tabled until the next meeting

6. New Business: Josh reported that the amendments to the Local Law were adopted by the Town Board and that the Commission is now operating under Local Law #1 2011. The changes included allowing one non Saugerties resident to be a member of the Commission, and changed the requirement for sending out notices from registered mail to certified mail with return receipt requested.

Marjorie Block emailed Josh asking for assistance for the exhibit at the County Office Building, a montage of the designated properties and the Stone House Tour Books. (May 1, through August)

Marjorie is also planning an exhibit of maps at the Kiersted House. She has asked Barry to assist with that project.

A motion was made by Puretz/Benepe that Michael Sullivan Smith be the Commission’s official representative to the Committee to Create Opus 40 Museum, Inc., and adopted unanimously.

7. Old Business: None.

Motion to adjourn: Puretz/Smith. Josh, aye; Michael, aye; Barry, aye; susan, aye. Unanimous approval.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p. m.

Audrey Klinkenberg
Secretary