

## **HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MINUTES FOR MAY 7, 2008**

Members Present: Chris Kimberly, Sharon Shattuck, Roland Poirier and Chairman Lynne Langlois

Members Absent: Two vacancies

Guests: Woody Bliss, Gayle Weinstein, Glen Major, Selectmen's Office, Joe Fitzpatrick, Richard Wolf, Allen Swerdlowe, David Coprio, Don Gary, Building Committee; Tom Landry, Town Administrator  
Margaret Wirtenberg, Hal Mathews, Bob Atkinson, Patty Gay (Weston Forum)

Meeting called to order at 8:05 p.m. by Chairman Lynne Langlois

1. Public Hearing required by State Statute 7-147b on an application from the Town of Weston to replace the existing slate roof on Town Hall with asphalt shingles.

Lynne introduced members of the Commission and appointed Chris Kimberly to vote as we have a vacancy and appointed Roland Poirier to vote in the absence of Nikki Bliefeld.

Lynne Langlois called on Woody Bliss, First Selectmen, to make a statement. Mr. Bliss restated that the application was to replace the existing slate roof on Town Hall with asphalt shingles. He pointed out that there were samples of both slate shingles and asphalt shingles in the back of the room. He also noted that there were both asphalt shingles and slate shingles currently on Town Hall and that it was hard to tell the difference. He commented that no other house in the district had slate and stated that slate was not historic at all.

Mr. Bliss talked about the economic results of having a slate roof because of the difficulties of repairing it. The Selectmen went to bid for a slate roof with a "deduct" if we used asphalt and we only received two bids, approximately 600,000 and 900,000 with the "deduct" being approximately \$179,000. Also, prevailing wage might not have to be met, if the cost came in below 400,000. The Selectmen are concerned about spending an extra 179,000 just for the esthetics of slate. He feels that the asphalt shingles would be very satisfactory without having to incur the extra cost.

Ms. Weinstein stated that the roof was something that was a priority for her as well as for the entire Board of Selectmen. However, when you compare the costs, not only with the items that Mr. Bliss mentioned, but with the OPEB Liability, trying to finish the High School Auditorium as well as other projects, it is important to get a roof over our head and a roof that doesn't leak. Ms.

Weinstein felt that her goal was to fix up Town Hall in a way that it is presentable and if we can do that with a considerable savings, then that's what she would like to see done.

Glen Major discussed the historical significance of the slate roof. He stated that there are no other slate roofs in the Historical District and that there are many different roof styles in the district. He felt that since there are already asphalt roofs on other parts of the Town Hall Complex such as the Fire House and the Cell Tower Buildings, replacing the slate on the main Town Hall Building would not impact the Historical significance of the building. From a practical perspective, the architectural style of the building remains consistent with either the slate roof or with the asphalt roof.

Joe Fitzpatrick stated that he had been a member of the Building Committee for 7 years and a resident for about 20 years and that he did understand the finances of the upkeep of buildings. One thing he wanted to point out was that he feels we are finally getting a handle on the upkeep of the buildings. Mr. Fitzpatrick feels that in a small town the Town Hall is a symbol – a symbol of our town. He thinks that there has been a short-sighted view of upkeep of buildings.

He discussed the upkeep of the slate roof and stated that you only send an expert up to repair a slate roof. Trying a "band-aid" repair is a failure. He also felt that the asphalt would have to be replaced long before the slate if the slate is maintained properly and we would maintain the historical significance of this building.

Richard Wolf stated that the Building Committee looked at all the choices and made a conscious effort to try to maintain the character of the structure. He felt that there is no way we will ever find an asphalt roof that will give us the character and the distinction that the slate roof will give us. There is artificial slate on the addition and the 1950's building has the natural slate. Artificial slate now is a plastic material and the Building Committee did not feel that was the way to go. He said the town fathers were looking for an historic look when they designed the Town Hall building in the 1950s. There were asphalt shingles in the 1950's but they came forward and spent the additional money to put in slate. This was probably the same additional cost for them that we are looking at today and they did it for a reason. Town Hall was a significant building in town and the roof is part of the significance. Now the library roof needs to be replaced and the Building Committee is also recommending replacing it with wood even though it is also expensive but it will maintain the character of the building.

Dave Coprio spoke to the Timberline roofing material and said he has not had a good experience with it. He grew up with a slate roof and it was already 75 years old when he was 16. He has been on the roof of Town Hall and the valley had leaked and someone poured tar in it. This is not the way to repair slate. There are many problems with the Town Hall Addition roof and this has added to the problems the Town Hall now has with leaking.

Don Gary discussed the Kaestle Boos report and he is afraid that because it is so huge, we are looking at doing each one as quickly and cheaply as possible. He feels we should look more long term, even lifetime, and when we correct something, we should do it right and only have to do it once. He also feels that the key building, the first building people come to, should be kept historic.

Alan Swerdlow mentioned that the Town Hall Building was one of the few Historic Buildings that the Town has. He understands the fiduciary responsibilities of the Town Administrators, but he feels that we also have to look at the historic significance of the Town Hall Building.

Hal Matthews stated that the economic times should cause the administration to make decisions that are fiscally responsible. Not all residents have the ability to continue to pay and pay. Joe Fitzpatrick made the comment that the long term way to save money was to be responsible when we look at the repairs that have to be made and look at how long they would last.

Mr. Matthews suggested anodized aluminum for the roof. Mr. Fitzpatrick stated that anodized aluminum would be almost as expensive as the slate.

Mr. Fitzpatrick also stated that because Silktown is known to be a low bidder and that this is a prevailing wage job might have turned away other bidders. Mr. Matthews asked about using synthetic slate and the Building Committee stated they had investigated this and did not feel that it would stand up because it has not been around long enough. They have already read that it curls easily and that the color bleeds.

Ms. Weinstein stated that when she comes to Town Hall, she looks more at the inside of the building than at the roof. What she sees is that the money that would be saved by doing the asphalt roof could be used to take care of the carpet that needs to be replaced, the water stained walls, the ceiling tiles that need to be replaced and the bathrooms that need to be replaced. There is a lot more inside the building that we can do to be more concerned about Historical Restoration than the roof. Ms. Weinstein stated she is not looking for cheap way out, is willing to spend money to make the roof work, a lot of people use asphalt roofing and it works out well. Lynne Langlois asked how long the asphalt shingles would last and the building committee felt 20 years or 30 with prorating.

Glen Major stated that the structure is only 49 years old. The roof that is being proposed is the same one that is on the Fire Department. He feels that since the Fire Department is part of the Town Hall and that a lot of significance is being placed on the smaller part of the building that has slate. He feels that we have to work within a budget and that a 600,000 budget to replace a small portion of the roof is excessive. In order to honor the Kaestle Boos report, the selectmen have a duty to follow through with being fiscally responsible and looking at the fact that the building is not an antique and that by removing the slate and replacing it with asphalt we are doing our duty.

Sharon Shattuck asked if we did replace the slate with asphalt and saved 179,000 but then had to replace it again in 20 years, what did we really save? The Building Committee stated that if the slate roof lasts 50 years, it would be a "break even" proposition.

Woody Bliss stated that we seem to be talking about the material instead of the system. Ms. Langlois stated that the Historic District Purview is the material – not the system. Mr. Bliss continued that the slate might last a thousand years or longer but that's not the issue. He stated that when you review the economic implications, one must look at all the factors. How do we know that we have the right kind of maintenance people to work on the roof?

Margaret Wirtenberg stated that the Town Hall deserves to retain its slate roof because it is the most important building in town.

Chris Kimberly stated that he did have a complaint about the Fire House when their roof was built. He also said that if we had maintained the roof properly we would not be here having this discussion.

Discussion followed regarding the life expectancy of asphalt shingles. Ms. Langlois also looked at the life expectancy of the slate and shingles. Even from an economic view it is not a long term

savings to use asphalt shingles. She stated that we are looking at different styles and roofs that were appropriate to the time that these residential buildings were built. Mr. Bliss thought that it was hard to do a long term cost analysis on the Town Hall Building because it might be “torn down” or completely rebuilt. Mr. Matthews mentioned using solar roof panels. Ms. Shattuck mentioned the “special” look of Town Hall and that the slate adds to that special feeling of Town Hall. She felt that the slate is part of what makes the building special. It is a monument so to speak.

Since there were no further comments, Ms. Langlois asked for a motion.

Sharon Shattuck made a motion that the Historic District Commission not approve the Town of Weston’s application to replace the existing slate roof on the Town Hall Building with an asphalt shingle roof.

Roland Poirer seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Sundlof  
Sharon Shattuck, Member

Correction to the minutes made on June 3, 2008: Lynne Langlois made a correction because the corner stone shows that Town Hall was erected in 1952 which makes it 56 years old.