HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
October 4, 2016
Town Meeting Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT:	**Gail Pantezzi** **John Malone** **Steve LaRocca** **Marcia Rockwood** **Francis Tuoti, Chairman**
MEMBER ABSENT:	**Debby Moore** **Linda Gracie**
ALSO PRESENT:	**Cynthia Curtis, Planning Board Chairperson** **Susie Thompson, Town Historian** **Janice Will, Recording Secretary**

Chairman Francis Tuoti opened the meeting.

Celebration of restoration project/Cat Ridge Cemetery
Cynthia Curtis stated that the Town Board, the Highway Department, the architect, and the contractor should be sent an invitation to this gathering on Sunday, October 16.

The wording of the invitation was discussed; the secretary will send it to those mentioned above.

Approval of minute of May 3 and June 7, 2016 meetings
Motion by: ***John Malone***
Seconded: ***Gail Pantezzi***
All in favor.

Next Meeting: November 1, 2016
Confirmed.

Regulation of solar energy installations/impact on historic properties
Ms. Curtis stated that solar energy is coming; there are already installations on some buildings in Town and there is one ground installation. In a review of the Ordinance, she realized there is no provision for solar installations. Ms. Curtis added that there are solar "farms" upstate, wherein large fields are being utilized, and she also read an article about someone who cleared 10 acres of trees on top of a hill and put up solar panels. She stated that solar energy is a good thing, and people mostly want to have installations on roofs of houses and barns.

Chairman Francis Tuoti asked if a building permit is required.

Ms. Curtis answered that it is; there is such a wave of interest in solar energy now that the State is drafting a Unified Permit in order to simplify the application process/make it clear to contractors what will be required.

Gail Pantezzi asked if there are setback requirements.

Ms. Curtis said the Planning Board decided to handle solar energy installations as accessory uses by right for single-family homes and commercial properties (like generators, sheds, etc.), requiring a building permit and meeting zoning/bulk requirements like setback limitations. She said that if for some reason a roof-mounted system cannot be employed, ground installations of up to 1000 sq. ft. will also be permitted; larger systems will require Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board or some kind of special permit in addition to a building permit. The draft states that as far as is practical, tree-removal, steep slopes and wetlands are to be avoided. In the course of the Planning Board's drafting process, they wondered how to handle historic buildings, and Ms. Curtis decided to consult the HPC about both roof-mounted and ground installations on/near historic buildings. She displayed photographs of solar installations from the Internet.

Ms. Curtis stated that the Planning Board draft allows a solar panel elevation of 4 ft. above flat roofs. She added that the HPC may want specific standards and guidelines for historic properties, or they may find the standards in the draft sufficient. For ground installations, Ms. Curtis said they will be permitted in the side and rear yards, where it is possible they will be visible. She indicated a ground installation on the monitor and described one in Town as having 2 rows of numerous panels/taking up a fair amount of space. The property where this installation is located was discussed, but the actual solar panel installation cannot be seen from the road.

Ms. Pantezzi wondered if a house on a ½-acre lot would have enough room for a 1,000-ft ground installation, and Steve LaRocca said it could if the house is small.

The Chairman asked if there is a maximum percentage of ground that may be covered.

Ms. Curtis said there is not, because only a system large enough to provide 110% of a household's electricity-usage will be permitted; it would be a commercial use/not an accessory one if the property-owner were to sell power. She asked how the HPC felt about going along with the same limitations for historic properties as for non-historic properties, given that property-owners will still have to submit a Certificate of Appropriateness application.

Ms. Pantezzi commented that solar power is both wonderful and horrible.

Chairman Tuoti said that people probably did not like the look of utility poles and lines when electricity first became universally available, but now one doesn't even notice them.

Ms. Pantezzi said there is still an impact; in instances of historic properties, they are cherished for how they look, and putting solar installations on the roof or next to the house will really have a visual effect/change the way things appear.

Ms. Curtis asked if someone with a historic house wanted to take off their asphalt roof tiles and replace them with a metal roof, would the HPC research what the original roof was made of and insist on that or allow the metal roof or new asphalt.

Ms. Pantezzi said she believes the roof of her house was originally slate; she changed it from white to dark asphalt shingles. She added that she also had solar panels put on the back side of the roof during the energy crisis in the 1970's; it was not a good system and she had it removed later.

The Chairman asked how Mr. LaRocca (an architect) would handle the appearance of a house when incorporating solar panels.

Mr. LaRocca replied that he hasn't done this yet, but he would treat it as a contemporary device; either it would go with the rest of the house or he would recommend it be put elsewhere.

Marcia Rockwood commented that some of the examples displayed by Ms. Curtis looked fairly subdued.

Ms. Curtis stated that the technology is changing all the time; in time perhaps the panels won't have to be so shiny. She suggested that maybe the HPC would want to specify that roof-mounted systems must be as flat as possible to limit the visual impact.

Chairman Tuoti thought efficiency might dictate how the panels must be installed.

Ms. Thompson stated that it is already difficult enough to persuade people to have their homes designated historic landmarks; the HPC should not want to be seen as overly negative. She recommended working with the Planning Board guidelines, adding that a C of A will be required also.

Ms. Curtis said the HPC should have a particular approach to solar installations; the front of the roof should be the last choice, but they could also suggest another building or a ground installation. If there are no alternatives, the HPC should help people find a way to put the panels on the front. Ms. Curtis suggested the HPC look ahead and consider historic roads and possible future historic districts when thinking of what to put into the Code.

Mr. Malone asked what the Town would say if someone wanted to put a ground installation in one of the fields on Mills Road/would screening be required.

Ms. Curtis replied that when the historic road chapter was first developed, it was desired to be for historic and visual preservation, but the Town did not want the scenic-aspect to be included.

Ms. Pantezzi stated that they were actually discussing scenic issues. She said the countryside is beautiful, scenic and green; solar farms/large ground installations would make for a jarring change.

Ms. Curtis said that where trees have already been cleared and the proposed installation will not be in the front yard, it is hard to comment; the ordinance will limit the clearing of trees and steep slopes/if tree-removal is necessary, they should get involved. She also felt strongly that people should be restricted to solar installations that provide just the power they need, which will help to limit the size of them.

Mr. Malone commented that a large horse farm uses a lot of power.

Ms. Curtis said she spoke to the owner of 260 Hunt Lane (a large horse farm), and their solar panel installation can scarcely be seen from the road; the panels cover the entire roof of a barn except for the edges, and doesn't look very different from a metal roof. She explained that some areas have to be left uncovered so that fire fighters can break through to the roof. Ms. Curtis said she expects that what has been installed at 260 Hunt Lane provides enough power for conversion to electric heat.

Ms. Rockwood thought installing panels on a roof might be more compatible with how the Town looks, as opposed to ground installations.

Ms. Curtis said that sometimes they just can't be put on a roof.

The Chairman asked how far panels may need to be raised away from a flat roof.

Ms. Curtis said there is something specific in the draft code addressing the degree to which the panels may be raised from a roof.

Chairman Tuoti did not think the HPC could stop someone who feels a greater angle away from the roof will be necessary for their solar installation to be efficient.

Ms. Curtis said they would have to abide by whatever rules are implemented in the Code regarding solar installations; they would have to apply to the Board of Appeals for a variance if they wanted to dome something different.

Ms. Thompson asked when the Planning Board intends to forward their recommendation to the Town Board.

Ms. Curtis answered that they will be ready as soon as they know what, if anything, the HPC wants added for historic properties in addition to the C of A requirement.

Ms. Thompson thought the C of A would cover solar panel-installation/perhaps something could just be added to that application.

Ms. Pantezzi thought even that would not be necessary; it would be covered by a change in materials attached to a roof.

Ms. Curtis said the solar regulations the Planning Board is writing will state that a C of A will be required.

The Chairman asked about wind turbines, and Ms. Curtis replied that in the past it was not felt that they would be efficient enough in an area like North Salem.

Chairman Tuoti asked if the ordinances of other towns were looked at.

Ms. Curtis said the Planning Board did do this, and most are similar; some are more restrictive and some are less so. She went on to say that any commercial property in Town that wants a solar panel installation will have to go to the Planning Board first, because it will be considered a site plan change. She said that a large corporation in North Castle cannot have solar panels on any of their roofs (it will not work), so they will be having it installed on 10 acres of fields.

Ms. Thompson asked if the Planning Board wants the endorsement of the HPC for their proposed solar regulations.

Ms. Curtis said they want to know if the HPC is comfortable with solar panels as an accessory use by right with the requirement of a C of A for historic properties, or if they want additional standards. She suggested the HPC read the draft regulations to see what the Planning Board proposed for panel-distance from a roof.

Mr. LaRocca said he would rather insist that on a historic house, the panels must follow the existing roof pitch if installed on the front. He admitted this would be restrictive but felt the HPC should consider it.

Ms. Curtis read from the draft regulations that panels mounted on the front of a roof must have the same pitch as the roof and be no more than 18 inches from it.

The Chairman thought that limiting the distance from the roof would not control the angle, as a narrow panel would have a wider angle than a wide panel would at the same number of inches from the surface of the roof.

Ms. Curtis said the Planning Board did not go into panel-sizes, but they are trying to control aesthetics. She agreed that a panel installation could be like a louvered blind.

Mr. LaRocca said 18 inches from the roof is too much on a historic house.

Ms. Curtis agreed that it might be. She said the Building Inspector has installed solar panels on residential properties and knows a lot about what is needed for them to work, and she recommended the HPC consult him on technical issues. She said she will ask the planning consultant and the Town attorney if stricter regulations for historic properties should go in the general law or in the historic section of the Code. Whichever section they think is right, the planning consultant might be willing to draft something.

Ms. Pantezzi asked about the Secretary of the Interior site that Ms. Curtis had on the monitor at the start of the meeting.

Ms. Curtis said she had just happened upon it/not read it yet, but the HPC should probably read it. She also suggested Googling roof-mounted solar panels on historic buildings for photographs.

Ms. Pantezzi said the HPC needs to do some research before deciding what they want.

Ms. Curtis said that in the meantime she would tell the Planning Board that, generally, the HPC does not want to be prohibitive/will require a C of A; they will review the Planning Board's standards and see if they want stricter regulations for historic buildings, and she will ask which section of the Code should include any additional standards.

Mr. Malone asked if in the context of C of A's, all these standards need to be covered.

Ms. Curtis said it will be safer/not seen as arbitrary if the standards are written. She suggested the HPC members read the minutes of the CAC meeting attended by David Sandbank of NYSERDA for general information about solar installations.

Ms. Rockwood remarked that it is interesting that the HPC will do whatever they can for the historic houses in Town and still try to be flexible, and yet the whole Town is going to change as a result of solar power usage; old houses may be left alone, but there may be fields of solar panels next to or behind them, changing the view.

Ms. Curtis said there might not be so many, because solar installations are expensive and it takes several years to recoup the investment cost.

Ms. Pantezzi said she thinks it will have an effect on future construction/houses will be sited/built with solar power in mind.

Ms. Curtis added that some people don't mind taking down old trees that are near their houses, because they are old enough to pose a threat.

Ms. Pantezzi said she hopes there are more companies to do repairs/maintenance work on solar installations than there were when hers was put up in the 70's.

Mr. LaRocca said the systems that don't involve water are nearly maintenance-free.

Ms. Curtis said the Building Inspector could answer a lot of technical questions.

The secretary will email the HPC members the draft regulations, Secretary of the Interior site and CAC meeting minutes discussed; the Members may share comments via email in advance of their next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:15.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice C. Will

Janice Will, Recording Secretary