Commission Members Present:
Chairman Jeanné Chesanow, Vice Chairman Eric Anderson, Joseph Dattilo, Elizabeth Pratt Fox and John Torello – Alternate (arrived at 7:35 p.m., departed at 7:50 p.m. and returned at 8:05 p.m.)

Commission Members Absent:
None

Staff Present:
Jerry Sitko, Economic Development Coordinator

Others Present:
Peter Taylor of 185 Cornwall Avenue; Paul and Phil Bowman of 1191 Marion Road (departed at 8:30 p.m.); Gene Caputo of St. Peter’s Church (departed at 7:50 p.m.); Town Councilor James Sima (arrived at 7:40 p.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Anderson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called.

III. SEATING OF ALTERNATES

There were no alternates seeded for voting during this meeting.

IV. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

It was determined that a quorum was present.

V. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
VI. PUBLIC HEARING

Application for COA #2010-007C
St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, 59 Main Street
Replace exterior signage and lighting

Chairman Chesanow stated that Vice Chairman Anderson would be leading tonight’s meeting as she had just returned from vacation.

Ms. Pratt-Fox stated that she would be recusing herself from this Certificate of Appropriateness application, as she is a member of the Church.

Mr. Sitko read the Public Hearing notice as it appeared in the September 16, 2010 Cheshire Herald.

Vice Chairman Anderson stated that he was pleased with this application from St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. Gene Caputo, a parishioner of St. Peter’s Church, was present to speak to the Commission about this application. Chairman Chesanow also noted that the Certificate of Appropriateness application from St. Peter’s Church looked good.

Mr. Caputo asked if this Certificate of Appropriateness application is approved, what is the next step? Should he go to the Town Beautification Committee’s Sign Committee or to the Planning & Zoning Department?

Mr. Torello commented that the Town Beautification Committee is an advisory group, they may comment on color, size and design. He noted that an applicant is not committed to following the Town Beautification Committee’s direction. Mr. Sitko talked about the option to go to the full Town Beautification Committee meeting or to attend one of their Sign Committee’s meetings. Mr. Caputo commented that St. Peter’s would like to have the sign replaced in November. Mr. Sitko replied that he would recommend going to the full Town Beautification Committee meeting on October 6th and then taking the application to Planning & Zoning.

Vice Chairman Anderson commented that there was nothing inappropriate in this Certificate of Appropriateness application, at all. Chairman Chesanow commented that the new sign will be handsome, she likes the blue that will be used and noted that the hand carving gives the sign more depth. Mr. Caputo noted that only the sign on Main Street will have lighting, the sign that is being relocated to the rear of the property will not.

Mr. Caputo explained that St. Peter’s Church would like to replace the existing lamp post and two existing spot lights with similar lights. They would like to add 2 accent lights to the front façade of the Church to highlight the front entrance, noting that they will not be dramatic lighting, just accents. Chairman Chesanow commented that you don’t find accent lighting on all historic buildings but she felt that this was a significant building. She also asked if there would be landscaping to cover the lighting for the front sign? Mr. Caputo replied that it could be landscaped once the posts are in or
brick trim could be installed. Mr. Torello noted that light-shielding regulations will be brought up at the Town Beautification Committee’s review of this sign.

Chairman Chesanow stated that she was very happy with this application. Mr. Dattilo commented that he thought the applicant did a great job, adding that he has no issues with the application.

Public Comments: None

Vice Chairman Anderson closed the Public Hearing of St. Peter’s Church for a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace exterior signage and lighting.

Ms. Pratt-Fox returned to the meeting.

VII. REGULAR MEETING

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Meeting of September 7, 2010

MOTION by Joseph Dattilo to accept the minutes of the September 7, 2010 Regular Meeting of the Historic District Commission with the corrections noted below; SECONDED by Jeanné Chesanow.

Corrections to the September 7, 2010 regular meeting minutes: Chairman Chesanow noted that the following people should also be listed under “Others Present” on page 1: Lisa Franco of 64 Cornwall Avenue, Martha Connelly of 250 Cornwall Avenue and Lauren Butler of 151 Cornwall Avenue; Page 11, 4th complete paragraph, in the 3rd to last and last sentence, the correct spelling is Mr. Bango; Page 13, 3rd paragraph should read, “…property owners present tonight voted for the Historic District and there was a show of hands.”; Page 15, 7th and 8th paragraphs, first sentences, the correct spelling is Keeler Stove Shop / Keeler properties.

VOTE: In Favor – Anderson, Chesanow, Dattilo and Pratt-Fox
Opposed – None

The motion passed 4 – 0.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications to the Historic District Commission.

3. BUSINESS
A. Application for COA # 2010-007C
   St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, 59 Main Street
   Replace exterior signage and lighting

Ms. Pratt-Fox again recused herself from the Certificate of Appropriateness application from St. Peter’s Church.

Commissioners reviewed the Certificate of Appropriateness application from St. Peter’s Church to replace exterior signage and lighting. Chairman Chesanow stated that she was in favor of approving this Certificate of Appropriateness application. She added that she would suggest concealing the lighting with landscaping but she didn’t feel it needed to be made into a stipulation.

**MOTION** by Eric Anderson that the Historic District Commission approve, as submitted, the Certificate of Appropriateness application # 2010-007C from St. Peter’s Episcopal Church located at 59 Main Street for the replacement of exterior signage and lighting. SECONDED by Joe Dattilo.

VOTE: In Favor – Anderson, Chesanow and Dattilo
   Opposed – None

The motion passed 3 – 0.

B. Chairman’s Report

There was no Chairman’s Report this evening.

C. Follow-up to Meeting with Property Owners

Chairman Chesanow stated that some Commissioners have been invited to attend the next Town Council Ordinance Review Committee meeting in early October to talk about what the Historic District Commission can do to make life less burdensome with regards to repairs and replacements in kind for Historic District property owners. She noted that with some types of projects, the Commission is bound by the State Statue to review.

Chairman Chesanow stated that she has started to work on updating the list of projects that require “no review” by the Historic District Commission and “minor work” that requires only notification to Staff and a Commissioner. A copy of the list as it currently stands has been distributed to the members and Chairman Chesanow asked them to review the list and prepare possible suggestions for the list. Chairman Chesanow also noted that the Town Attorney will be looking into the discussions regarding what does or does no make a “public way”.
Commissioners talked about the proposed Fee Schedule for the Historic Districts. Vice Chairman Anderson suggested that there be minimal fees for any Certificate of Appropriateness projects. Chairman Chesanow has heard of a suggestion that if there is a fee for a building permit on a project than there will be no Historic District Commission fee or perhaps a minimal fee such as the current $25 fee. Ms. Pratt-Fox commented that she didn’t believe property owners in a Historic District should not be charged more because they live in a Historic District, it should be 0 for all Certificate of Appropriateness applications. She added that she knows the Town pays a fee for the Public Notice postings and results after a Public Hearing but the Town also receives the benefits by having a Historic District.

The Commission was asked what does the Historic District Commission want to do next? Chairman Chesanow commented that the Historic District property owners were very clear at the last Historic District Commission meeting that they want no fee. Mr. Dattilo commented that the simplified process will be helpful for the property owners and he thinks that this situation with the property owners and Commissions can be rectified.

Mr. Sitko suggested that the Commission stay focused on this topic; he noted that the Commission has had some lengthy agendas in the past but he believes they must stay on top of this situation. Chairman Chesanow asked what else should the Historic District Commission be doing? Should the Commission be communicating with the property owners at this point? Vice Chairman Anderson suggested that the Commission meet with the Ordinance Review Committee first then send out a communication to the Historic District property owners. Mr. Sitko replied that if the Ordinance Review Committee meets next month, that would be fine but if not then some type of communication should be shared with the property owners.

Councilman Sima noted that anyone can attend the Town Council Ordinance Review Committee meeting, it is a public meeting. Mr. Sitko noted that he would post the Ordinance Committee also as a Historic District Commission meeting, in case more than 2 members of the Commission would like to attend and contribute to the discussion.

With regards to reviewing the listing of “Routine Maintenance, Minor Works, Major Works” that was distributed to Commissioners to review and comment on, it was agreed that Commissioners would review the lists later in the evening.

Later in the meeting, Chairman Chesanow suggested that Commissioners e-mail her any comments or concerns so that they can be reviewed all together at the October 4th Historic District Commission meeting. Ms. Pratt-Fox asked if this list has been compared to the Historic District Commission’s Guidelines and she was told no, not yet.
D. George Keeler House and Stove Shop

Commissioners reviewed the September 15, 2010 letter they received from Paul Bowman regarding emergency repairs at the two buildings located at 178 South Main Street referred to as the George Keeler House and Stove Shop. Mr. Bowman explained that he was contacted by Mr. Conti, the current property owner of these buildings, to have some emergency repairs done. The buildings are deteriorating and in very poor condition, work is needed for the porch roof and the corner of the stove shop.

Chairman Chesanow explained the process for emergency and/or temporary repairs to property in a Historic District. Within 90 days of any major temporary work being done, a Certificate of Appropriateness application must be filled out. Mr. Bowman explained that it will be tough to determine what needs to be done, at this point, until he is in the building doing the actual work.

Vice Chairman Anderson reminded Mr. Bowman that when he does permanent repairs to the buildings, it is only the exterior work that will need to be reviewed by this Commission. Chairman Chesanow explained the Certificate of Appropriateness process for work that will be done past the temporary, emergency stage. Vice Chairman Anderson noted that if materials are being replaced, a Certificate of Appropriateness would be required. It was noted that if roof shingles are being replaced with the same material, than it is OK.

Chairman Chesanow suggested that Mr. Bowman review the Historic District Commission’s Regulations regarding the look of the South Main Street residential areas. She reminded Mr. Bowman that this Commission does not regulate interior renovations. It was also noted that a Certificate of Appropriateness application, if approved, will allow an applicant 1 year to complete an approved project, but with the proper notifications, an extension can be granted. Chairman Chesanow also noted that a Certificate of Appropriateness application could have multiple projects listed on one application for a property.

Mr. Bowman commented that in reviewing the last few months of minutes for the Historic District Commission the George Keeler House and Stove Shop are mentioned quite frequently, he asked what the Commission has envisioned for the property? Chairman Chesanow replied that if the buildings are not torn down and could look like they did in the 1980’s, she would be thrilled! Vice Chairman Anderson added that he has a picture from 1986 of the property and the buildings looked great.

Chairman Chesanow noted that anything that can be seen from Route 10, on the exterior of the house would be under review by the Commission. She noted that if the wood clapboards need to be replaced, they would like to see wood used again and urged Mr. Bowman to use like materials. Vice Chairman Anderson explained that repairs would be the first choice vs. replacing items on the house. Mr. Dattilo added that when working on the Keeler property, Mr. Bowman should try to preserve as much as possible and
if items need to be replaced, items should look as close as possible to their original. Vice Chairman Anderson commented that repairs are cheaper in the long run, although they may be more time consuming.

Mr. Bowman commented that in a historic building of their size, the Keeler buildings, which could eventually be used for both commercial and residential use, make it difficult to balance the life safety building codes. Mr. Bowman asked how this should be handled. Chairman Chesanow replied that safety always trumps the Historic District Commission's concerns for preservation. Mr. Torello noted that there are some State exemptions for historic building renovations. He added that in most cases it is easier to, for example, cut another door closer to a parking area than to try to change the original sizes. The appearance of the buildings should be the same when the repair work is done, the historic architecture should remain as well as the overall look. Vice Chairman Anderson suggested that Mr. Bowman drive through Historic Districts in other towns to see how residential buildings are used in commercial zones to get a feel for ideas for the Keeler properties. Mr. Dattilo suggested researching products that will help to keep the historic nature intact. Mr. Torello commented that there are not a lot of unusual historic features to these buildings; they are fairly simple in their details. The house is typical to its time period; there is a balance to it.

Mr. Bowman asked about the windows in the buildings, adding that he wouldn’t use them if he were to do major updates on the building. Vice Chairman Anderson talked about preserving the wood windows with the use of epoxy. If the windows cannot be repaired, then the replacement windows would have to be made out of wood. He reminded everyone that this Commission is charged by the State to help preserve the look of historic buildings.

Phil Bowman asked the Commission, what is more important the look or the actual materials? There was some discussion on the use of “hearty planks” as an alternative to some wood products. Chairman Chesnaw commented that the hearty planks are more pleasing than vinyl.

Ms. Pratt-Fox commented that there are people on this Commission that have done a lot of research on products that would be helpful to historic property owners as well as suggestions for windows in historic buildings. Mr. Paul Bowman commented that if something is not done with these buildings soon, they might not be here next year. He and Mr. Conti will have to find a balance of what will economically make sense. Chairman Chesnaw commented that substitute materials might be OK if the original materials are not economically or technically available. She added that there might be some give to bigger projects that may need to be done.

Mr. Dattilo asked if an in-depth assessment of the properties have been done? Mr. Paul Bowman replied no, not yet; he has only been in the buildings 2 or 3 times. He noted that he did the renovations for the former Squire House building and the two historic homes located at the entrance to Stonegate. He added that hearty products are very durable and that you can’t tell the difference when they are used as replacements. Mr. Paul Bowman
noted that he has engaged James Sexton to do an assessment of the property. Chairman Chesanow noted that she has a high regard for Mr. Sexton. Mr. Torello urged Mr. Bowman to preserve as much as possible with the Keeler property.

Mr. Sitko noted that this is an extremely good development for this property. Mr. Dattilo stated that he agrees and was happy to hear that repairs will be done to help stop the deterioration of these buildings. Chairman Chesanow commented that the Town would be proud to see the Keeler House and Stove Shop looking good again. She also noted that no permit from the Historic District Commission is needed for temporary repairs to these buildings.

E. Other

Chairman Chesanow suggested that the Commission’s November bus tour be of the 50 oldest buildings in Cheshire. It was agreed that the bus tour date would be set for November 6th at 9 a.m.

Ms. Pratt-Fox stated that there was a list of Cheshire barns provided to the CT Trust for their barn research grant. The CT Trust is still looking for volunteers to submit a photo of each barn and a listing of the type of barn that it is. Commissioners suggested that this could be incorporated into the November bus tour of Cheshire. Ms. Pratt-Fox commented that she would like to see Cheshire represented in the barn research.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Joe Dattilo that the Historic District Commission regular meeting of September 20, 2010 be adjourned at 8:55 p.m. SECONDED by Jeanné Chesanow.

VOTE: In Favor – Anderson, Chesanow, Dattilo and Pratt-Fox
Opposed – None

The motion passed 4 - 0.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracey M. Kozlowski
Recording Secretary