

10/16/14 Stockade Association (SA) General Meeting Minutes

Guest Speakers

1. Julian Adams, Director of Bureau of Preservation Services from NYS Office of State Historic Preservation (SHPO). SHPO manages federal and state historic preservation programs. One of their primary goals is to help prevent unnecessary demolition of historic buildings as of result of development projects and other reasons, including post-flood mitigation.

Elevation is a mitigation option as is “flood hardening” or renovation to reduce water damage to protect first floors. Elevation of houses needs to raise them above “base flood elevation” which is determined by FEMA. The use of elevation has been less common in the northeast than locales such as New Orleans, especially with houses close together and no open spaces underneath houses.

Flood streets such as Ingersoll, North, North Ferry, Washington and Governor’s Lane are considered “extreme risk” by FEMA and funds may not be paid for future repair and replacement without hardening or elevation to reduce risk. Flood insurance rates are already increasing significantly.

SHPO looks for plans in historic neighborhoods for mitigation or demolition that are based on a neighborhood consensus. Special flood mitigation funding may be available through federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) that are awarded to Schenectady. The State’s New York Rising program includes funding for community planning to move forward with flood mitigation, but that program appears to be in a holding pattern. There are also grants for home elevation, which were listed on the NY Rising website, which some individuals in the Stockade have successfully applied for. The existence of these grants was unknown to SHPO until two days before this meeting.

2. Matt Smith, Assistant Planner City of Schenectady. The City has similar concerns as SHPO. Elevation of houses would require approval by Commission, and by the Commission and SHPO if public money is used. The Commission was also not aware of grants to individual owners for elevation and has no specific plans at this point as to how they will deal with elevation. Homeowners would have to apply for a permit to the City and Commission to elevate their homes as part of the normal approval process.
3. In the discussion by attendees, questions were raised about standards for elevating houses including the costs of various options. Concerns were also raised about developing a comprehensive plan instead of individual homeowners moving forward separately on their own. Others were concerned about delaying mitigation for houses at risk. There was discussion about identifying funding for an emergency study and/or planning process to coordinate efforts to elevate certain homes and integrate them with the surrounding neighborhood. It was suggested that amendments to the Historic District

boundaries be made to exclude flood threatened homes, Mr. Adams cautioned against doing that, but he did state that demolition of homes sometimes makes sense in a historic district.

SA Business – Meeting was called to order 8:30 pm

1. Spy – Looking for writers/contributors
2. Walkabout – Successful event. \$11,095 total revenue collected. SA should receive about \$6,000 after expenses.
3. Treasurer's report – Bank balance -\$27, 242. The Garden Tour collected \$1948 resulting in \$538 profit. (submitted after meeting)
4. Oral History Project “Voices of the Stockade” premieres November 4th at Proctor's.
5. Block Grant award for SA from Downtown Improvement Special District (DISC).
6. Website - meeting minutes published in the Spy will also be published on the website.
7. Traffic Committee – met and discussed traffic calming strategies and plans developed by Stockade residents to reduce cut-through traffic and risks from speeding cars.
8. Membership – Sign in sheets at meetings will be a regular occurrence. Currently 49 members.
9. Nominating Committee – two positions will be open on Nominating Committee in March. There are currently two Directors vacancies on the Board and the Committee is seeking applicants for those positions.
10. Audio Walking Tour – the tour will be updated with new sites.
11. Preservation – The Heritage Foundation is sending a letter to the bank that is paying taxes and insurance for 26 Front St. regarding the deterioration of home . The historic sign project has less than \$100 to meet its final goal, contact Beth Petta to contribute. The Heritage Foundation Haunted House tours are popular and additional tours were added. 1st Pres. Church project on Green St. will use shrubs not trees.

Adjourned at 9:17 pm