

Community Preservation Panel May 1st, 2024 Regular Meeting

This meeting was held at the Aurora Firehouse meeting room at 7:00 PM

Present: Chairperson, Jim Burkett, Jeff Blum, Chris MacCormack, Claire Morehouse, Julia Rossmann, John Wendler, (Observing alternate)

Village Official: None – Ann Balloni was absent due to an emergency Fire Dept. meeting. J. Rossmann took minutes.

Guest: Alexis Boyce

Consultant: Linda Schwab

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM

Approval of Minutes: Old minutes were approved.

Changes to the Agenda: Mr. Burkett moved that New Business be dealt with first so that the guest would not need to stay through the Old Business. All approved this.

Announcements: None

New Business: 403 Main St. Seawall Project. Questions have arisen regarding a stone wall constructed by Matt Bianconi and Alexis Boyce near the coastline of their property. It was previously overgrown, “a mess”. Matt has cleared the mess, and in the process found a quantity of old stone (a mix of cement, limestone, shale, granite, etc.) He has stacked the stone into what some have called a seawall. Mr. Burkett pointed out that the code has been vague in regard to seawalls over time. He thought that perhaps now would be a good time to begin to clarify the code. There was discussion about this, and we were reminded of other recent seawall projects within the village. Linda provided her write up from Sept. 2020, “*The Aurora Sea Wall as a Cultural Landscape*”.

Discussion continued about seawalls vs. retaining walls. Seawalls act as a barrier or protection from action of the waves. Retaining walls are more of a garden feature and are built to hold soil in position. There are different types of seawalls: placed and built.

It was determined that the Bianconi/Boyce structure is not a seawall because it is too far up from the lake. The material used to construct it probably at one time functioned as a type of seawall many years ago. Questions were asked if plantings have been considered for the newly cleared area to help with possible erosion.

Discussion progressed to the issue of adding the Aurora seawall as a Historical Landmark. Linda pointed out that the railbed vista site unifies things. Jim remarked that the Kirkwood and Arleo seawalls look out of place now, they are so new. But one day far into the future they may not. Mr. Wendler brought attention to the difference in scale of the available rocks in different locations along the lake shore, behind the United Ministry, the rocks or rip rap are boulders basically and wouldn't be able to be moved by hand as the rocks are at the Bianconi/Boyce location.

It was agreed that if anyone wants to build any kind of wall on their property, the Panel would like to help them. Perhaps with a checklist or guidelines: dry laid, horizontal orientation of rocks used, local stone, etc. This is a work in progress and more thought will be put into it. Meanwhile, the Bianconi/Boyce wall is fine, it doesn't require any further action on the part of the CPP. As Mr. Burkett said, “They just stumbled into doing it right.”

Next, Mr. Burkett asked about the 700 Section. The body has been redone and is ready to go. The hope is to avoid a double public hearing. Mr. MacCormack made a motion to submit our recommendations to changes to Section 700 of revised zoning law. It was seconded by Clair Morehouse. Carried by all. Lakefront railbed historic site will be put together in the coming months, as well as the Historic Neighborhood District of Court St. and Cherry.

Mr. MacCormack made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Blum seconded. The meeting concluded at 8:11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Rossmann