

Cruising the Commonwealth
August 2
Pittsfield Senior Center, Pittsfield

Lauren Gaherty, Berkshire Planning Commission

Thank you all for coming - Welcome and Introductions

Berkshire Planning

Background on Western Massachusetts Historic Commissions Coalition

JWI - Thank you LG

JWI - Introductions

The purpose behind CTC, #8 stop.

Goal is to not only hear some of your thoughts and challenges, and what we hope to do is boil this down to four or five priorities,

MHPC - Lowell in September

EK - Background on PM and what the CTC results will be

SC- CR background and what the job is. Preservation 911 vs 411.

connecting local advocates, other preservation professionals, address a variety of issue, people and topics to talk about.

People and resources, case studies, models and best practices.

Introductions -

Thermoexperts - specialize in historic windows
thermoexp.com

Hancock Shaker Village

Blandford

Lenox - 250 year

TTOR - and CPA committee in Pittsfield

Bob Salerno - West Stockbridge - Berkshire County Historical Society

City Planner, Pittsfield

Discussion - What is your biggest preservation challenge in your community

Town - book written in 1962 - Clarksburg

funding for a reprint and incorporate into community in many ways - explore possibility incorporating into a civics course for elementary school and do the reprint, the text book, provide a free copy to registered voters when they come to cast their ballot at the polls. encourage people to participate in their democracy and (challenge) in Berkshires is youth flight. Struggle with programming and participation in

democracy, when youths leave the area, it's an issue. need to give students some sense of place, sense of history, reason to bring a business back to the area after they get their education. (where to find funding... grants or other issues)

Also, preserving historic cemeteries - that is an issue - can you point to funding sources and - resources.

JWI- these are good points, education has come up every stop - educating the youth (tie into community engagement and pride) Programs targeted to youths, instilling pride and what their community

Energize HP and community

Blandford - major success story, a new challenge on top of that. Early 1980's, iconic white church in disrepair. town — local contractor jacked the church up, to re do foundation, talked into selling church to historic society for \$1, Historical society got the church on the NR, had a group that was dedicated to raising the funds necessary, new contractor, now restored in a way that is magnificent (promote and see), open to all and people can rent it. Major fundraiser, an opera

Roof that needs to be replaced. Replaced finials last year, now need to do roof. Some additional matching funds(grants) to do roof replacement.

Success story but ongoing issues and new challenges, sources of assistance for the roof.

Historic cemeteries,

Funding Sources...

SC- get the word out, you can tap into this fair and get your needs known in an appropriate way, you never know who may be able or want to help you.

August 13th a fair, open to all.

Bob Salerno - West Stockbridge - old town hall, turning around the town. Historic Preservation in and of itself does not sell, bring people into the buildings with programming and music, events. Support is local, second home owners, families, etc. Challenge is the town has no preservation structure, no local historic district, no national reg district, historic commission in name only. A year ago, didn't want govt in the face to tell us what to do, people are changing, people are wanting to see their community preserved.

Education, Mass Humanities, grants to take advantage of, you can modify to produce materials to use for schools, talks, to leverage the info from Mass Humanities, status we are at. Learning more about community development that historic preservation.

SC- WMHCC - representation from each regional planning commissions, and state (MHC and PM), and other people from all around western MA, opportunities for people who are interested in HP, etc. Everyone and anyone is welcome to come, to come together, share, and learn from each other. Meet other people who are like minded, sharing experiences and challenges as part of the program we surveyed people with interests in topics. Relatively large geographic area. Meeting was in Lenox and the next is in Springfield.

WMHCC if you are interested please have them contact me, happy to add them and get the word out about upcoming meetings. We can also use it to get information about the meetings out.

LG- email list is good for getting the word out, we will throw it out when a grant source comes out. Annual conferences and workshops.

SC- HNE had some workshops in Stockbridge, helped to publicize through this group.

JWI- When we were in Barnstable, the Cape Towns all wanted their own coalition, so there is better communication between the groups and communities, to encourage sharing, talking and collaborating.

Other regions in the state are going to develop a similar type of thing.

Lenox- big loss with one of historic buildings in historic district, people in historic district (commission?) all they are looking at is the dollar level. Mahana House, he wants to do retail in the building and it doesn't fit the parameters, we fought hard to try to win the developer over. Said he is going to replicate the buildings, it will look similar but won't be the original buildings. Research it probably started out as a wagon barn, then got added on to. Problem is how do you fight something like that, people on the Board, they don't care about the historic value of the thing, they are looking at the dollar value,

(educating historic commission) - general public - understanding...

Historic homeowners - people buying properties to make Air BNB's out of them. A real dilemma. (Zoning?)

Blandford - a historic fair - started as an agricultural fair. Buildings are there important owned by a Fair Association (not a 501(c)3 something else for agriculture).

A friends group? A guild, ability to raise funds for the buildings.

Pittsfield Issues -

Biggest issue, most of western MA, we have plenty of desire to preserve historic buildings, but compliance with (depressed property values) difficult for homeowners to recoup investment in buildings without deep subsidies. Plenty of interest in property (downtown) we would be seeing more if it was not so difficult to make the numbers work for the developers,...

Very few communities that do not have that issue

JWI- it's not all that easy to make the numbers work...

Low property values without the drivers of other areas (like commutability),

How to make the numbers work, making the nearby connections, makes it difficult to people can live here.

Clarksburg - being depopulated - in 40 years the population on current trends.

There is a supply and no demand -

How can you fund an effective preservation program where more and more buildings will be vacated for no use?

Developers have made projects work with historic tax credits, developers won't even apply for MHRTC's because of the process.

Depopulation - bringing the resources (how to make the connections).

JWI- know the frustration of the developers with the MHRTC - the process is not easy and forces people to wait, project collapses.

What is supposed to spur economic development is hurting it instead.

Clarksburg - tinker with the methodology on how to select the applicants. Can't build houses fast enough in Boston, can't knock them down fast enough in the Berkshire. Houses here are worth saving.

Should be giving additional points to Berkshire projects -?

Need transportation in the Berkshires.

Lenox - Rail Roads- 1800 lines, into walking and bicycle paths, using them to connect North and South Berkshire County, have more commuter rail. Infrastructure and it needs to think outside the box (how does preservation fit in?)

We need to get more agencies and other partners involved.

Free up money to do more.

JWI- tax income is so off in the state, any increase was not feasible.

Preservation in the net 10-15 years, use it or lose it.

Success breeds success... when things are flatlined...

How to shift the perception around historic preservation. come to the table and be part of the solution.

JWI- federal lobbying efforts.

Uncertainty in Washington.

LG- historic tax credits, most historic properties are the neighborhood properties, and the individual homeowners are the ones with the burden for caring for the main streets. its them and taking the care to maintain the quality of the property. They have no help at all.

Feasibility study years ago about trying to help the homeowners, they are the ones that carry the weight, and they frame our landscape, esp., in the Berkshires, the small lousiness owners and historic homeowners that have no help and resources.

Finding the resources that people can do the right thing.

There needs to be more help for the historic homeowner and small business owners...

Trying to find contractor, helpful out here to get help in some way (looked at historic loans, low cost). The most help can be made. Those people that want to do the right thing

Abatements in tax code in MA. Can this be considered extending an abatement for historic homeowners, multiyear abatement help offsetting the cost of restoring an historic home.

Resource guides - for historic properties

Old Home Fair - vendors -

How to be able to do it yourself

LG- how to do it yourself... Old Home Fair

Do it yourself workshop...

Perhaps partner with Dept. of Energy Resources, and together you can do it to fix drafty window or weatherproofing, or help fund it, partnership between to agencies.

The Federal HTC that addresses smaller projects: main street properties.

smaller project and properties.

Neighborhoods, the maintain the charm and the character. the new England characters.

What are the community needs that these buildings can serve?

Building programming.

Older building problems and issues.- how to make them more energy efficient.

Does an historic district help with funding...?

How can a statewide preservation group support group?

TA- Hancock Shaker Village, asking us to take a position on the solar panel installation.

Important preservation situation, why not?

JWI- conversation with director of HSV, discussed the program (representatives are here). Unaware of this issue until now, already underway, planning, the community was in favor of it, beneficial to the village, tree plantings being done, it will be shielded from a visual standpoint. going to be done in a nice way.

defer to HSV- Facility

TA's family had a very extensive collection

HSV-conversation is around money today. history world is aging you have to be creative, and think outside the box. Solar rays are thinking outside the box. Rented three sites, lots of planning was involved. Not in the historic center of the village, in agriculture fields. (Hancock, Richmond and Pittsfield), can't compare the money for the hay for the resonating the buildings. 24 buildings on site. All is original, correct mortar and correct paint. You need to have the right person and the price quadruples for historic preservation, once you start replacing parts with substandard parts, it's no longer historic.

Shaker village is 780 acres, maintain it all (director of farm and historic facilities) Been at the village for 12 years. The income that it will draw substantially supports all the work that the village is doing. This is less intrusive (Berkshire museum is selling pieces) different ways to make money. They could have sold the land, they would never do that. I have it written into the lease and it will go back to the hayfield in 20 years. Will have sheep on it, totally green. structure and water for sheep . solar companies approached us, looked it all over, found the best one, that is where we are at. The screening involved is intense, natural trees will hide the panels.

Is it something that is up to the individual and up to the need. This is a way to reuse historic resources... difficult, you need to be careful about what you do.

the HSV has made the village accessible. They are the first ones to say the buildings can't be changed... If there was enough money available, the operating costs are so high, just not enough to go around, we must think of other ways to make money.

TA- preserve a pristine site from day one, central mission of HSV to preserve a historic site. NHL status given. Installation of solar field has undercut the NHL and rational for HSV's existence. HSV has sold parts of its resources that they were set up to preserve. The good part of the solar field is right in the middle of Hancock, within 100 feet of the stone barn, they are behind the Shaker cemeteries. All the files are clustered around the center of HSV, the idea that you are shielding them is ironic because you are supposed to be able to view. Characteristic of the 19th century Shaker community, last place they should have been installed in MA. An NHL site and it would not qualify for that status today.

Land that was sold, sold to the state, still have access to it, land sold in 2010. State forest, can't be built on.

Shaker ideology and inequality, they embraced technology.

And the way they need money.

TA- rationalization for work that has partly destroyed the character of HSV. This is about the preservation of Hancock when it was a viable community in the 19th century. Not a bonafide argument.

JWI- wanting PM to take a negative position with the solar array.- we will not. You can certainly come to talk to staff.

-Why is PM not taking public positions on situations like Hancock. It's not just Hancock, not seeing it as taking an activist role in recognizing when an important law like the NHL has been violated, they are backing off from looking the situation straight on and taking a position on it. This is part of what PM should be doing, a watch dog for existing important federal and state legislation. They have not done this with other situations, (what other situations). if there are other things that do arise, we will have some contestations on it.

Solar panels have been discussed at length by historic preservation communities. HP generally looks at this (20-year lease) no guarantee it will be reversed.

TA- option to extend

HSV- if the parties agree

TA- no guarantee the it will go back to the 19th century set

LG- some people feel PM is not taking a positing, getting down to site specific, a little beyond the scope... be a watchdog on this issue.... and other issues. We have heard that. The listening.

PM to be a watchdog and take public positions on certain issues.

Representative- thank you for being here and take time to know Pittsfield and consider the local tragedy years ago, took down Union Station - we don't want to lose historic treasures, not every historic building has to be preserved to be a museum, we have many downtown buildings that are being redeveloped, downtown residences are being created.

Restoration... thoughtfully renovated for a good reuse

Hotel on North - Tsongas Award this past May.

People do good work there, community center, Colonial theater, Beacon Cinema, (Kinnell Kresge Buildings).

Two ongoing projects, one is an active renovation as Holy Family Church (originally a barrel maker shop) now with the preservation and renovation (MHRTC applicant) need to keep both uses in mind (KK referral for MHPC). St. Mary's church, drive by Tyler Street, their TDI St. Mary's church in the center, a campus, a convent, a rectory and a school in the space. Two years ago, there was a lot of interest by Dunkin Donuts, projects were pulled back and now there is an interest from the same developer doing work. Market rate housing. Terrific for the neighborhood.

This is one piece of the puzzle, our work, in redeveloping gateway cities, grateful for the partnership.

JWI- talked a lot about the historic tax credit, watchdog it as best we can. Lobbyist on Beacon Hill, know him for a long time and he has been our lobbyist pursuing betterment of the MHRTC, difficult and hard to get through. Standpoint of needs and amounts... difficult to get cap increased. Several bills. Pittsfield can certainly benefit tremendously from these kinds of projects.

Working our way across the commonwealth, finishing in Boston next week. Statewide preservation conference on September 22 in Lowell.

2015 in Lowell... do a conference in Western MA, Pittsfield.

Statewide issue message, like people start turning the prism when they view western MA. Funding and initiatives can't get past 1-91... It's not usually for money to not get spent in the Berkshires...

We need to think of this as the Berkshires. more regionally focused, less of split the state.

We have heard a lot of constants but some unique circumstances.

Conversation about lack of transportation... how to work through. Leverage it.

Learned a lot and it has been great, and the turnout has been good, people have really cared about this.

Create something that can be of use to the entire community.

TA- raise another issue, like the CR program. talking to people around Richmond, very grateful for it. How do you handle so much work?

Acting as a conduit can accomplish a lot, putting people into the resources. People need it

Idea, start a program that would persuade historic societies to fund a circuit rider salary... sympathetic with the issues they are facing. The need to make it a full-time position and add more.

Would they give it...

CPA outreach as well.

Capable tech schools, in addition to , component of course work on historic carpentry construction and methodologies. Might want to offer a winder when you can get structures.

Might be able to get some instructional assistance, masonry work things are consistent with historic nature and character of the structures.

JWI- gentlemen in Springfield who live-in Holyoke, when to a tech school, could get some students interested in doing the work to do.

Students doing work on town hall, did wonderful job. Did a nice job, Taconic and McCann have great reputation. Have the ability and capacity.

Workforce training, exposing them to the concept. the challenges that it is different than modern construction, so if they don't personally go further for it, and they know that they shouldn't do because they know why.

IT's the Why... it's the number of people who call about windows, the why, can be as good if not better?