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Historic Preservation Commission sets special meeting to discuss historic district nomination

Committee proposes South Cayuga Road as village's first historic district

WILLIAMSVILLE, NY (Sept. 27, 2019) – The Village of Williamsville's Historic Preservation Commission will hold a special meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, Sept. 30, in the auditorium at Village Hall, 5565 Main St.

The special meeting is being held for the purpose of reviewing the commission's intentions of nominating South Cayuga Road as a local historic district. The HPC is also planning during its meeting to render a vote for the acceptance of the nomination.

Should the nomination be accepted through majority approval of the HPC, village code stipulates that no building permits may be issued by the Building Department - except for emergency repairs - until a final determination is made on the proposed designation of the historic district.

In this instance, beginning Tuesday, Oct. 1, there would be a halt to the issuance of building permits for South Cayuga properties within the proposed historic district.

If the nomination of South Cayuga Road is ultimately approved by the Village Board, South Cayuga would be Williamsville's first historic district, encompassing nearly 40 residences along the thoroughfare. The district would extend from near Main Street to approximately several properties south of South Cayuga's intersection with California Drive.

The proposed district would be located within a new zoning overlay, requiring any proposed changes to the exterior of a property that's within the historic district to be reviewed and approved by the village's HPC prior to any construction being conducted. This is the same procedure used for the 35 local landmarks designated within the village.

"The 1997 Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources identifies several areas of architectural and cultural importance in our village that should become historic districts," said Kate Waterman-Kulpa, chairperson of the village's seven-member HPC.

In addition to Waterman-Kulpa, the HPC members are Mary Lowther, village historian; as well as Anthony Bannon, Stephen Dyson, Chuck Akers, Jim Tammaro, and Wesley Stone.

Waterman-Kulpa said the HPC believed a special meeting is needed to allow the committee to concentrate its full efforts on discussing and establishing the local historic district, while also moving forward with its goal of protecting the history, culture and architecture of the community.

The commission has been working toward the establishment of historic districts in the village since 2017, when [an intensive level survey of South Cayuga Road](#) was released by Flynn Battaglia, an architecture and planning firm.

“The Historic Preservation Commission has worked hard over many years to follow through with this recommendation – detailed in Williamsville’s community plan – by advising the Village Board to hire Flynn Battaglia to complete the research to validate the integrity of the historic character of this prominent neighborhood and gateway to the village,” Waterman-Kulpa said. “We have taken this role as facilitator very seriously and we are pleased to finally start the process of nomination.”

Last month, the HPC hosted a [program led by Preservation Buffalo Niagara](#) regarding the definitions and types of historic districts, how they are established, and how they may be used as municipal planning tools.

According to Preservation Buffalo Niagara’s presentation, historic districts provide neighborhoods the ability to intervene in the demolition and inappropriate development of their community. Residences of a historic district will not have increased property taxes due to being within the district.

The designation process is initiated after a historic district nomination form is accepted by the village’s HPC, which would then schedule a public hearing seeking input from the community. Following the hearing, the members of HPC would vote to either approve or deny recommending to the Village Board the establishment of a local historic district.

If the recommendation is approved by the HPC, the measure then moves to the authority of the Village Board, which would then schedule its own public hearing on the matter. Upon closing its public hearing, the final step in the process would be for the Village Board to either approve or deny establishment of a local historic district.

According to the Village of Williamsville’s code, people owning properties that are designated historic must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC if they are seeking exterior alterations, restorations, reconstruction, excavation, grading, demolition, new construction, or moving of a landmark. Material changes, such as new light fixtures, signs, sidewalks, fences, steps, paving, or other aspects that affect the appearance of the landmark or historic district, must also receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission.

Other elements of the Historic Preservation Commission’s authority can be [viewed in Chapter 47](#) of the Village of Williamsville’s code.

For more information about the Village of Williamsville’s Historic Preservation Commission, or to view the presentation recently offered by Preservation Buffalo Niagara, visit www.WalkableWilliamsville.com.

ABOUT THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION: The Village of Williamsville’s Historic Preservation Commission is a panel of appointed members who review and recommend designation of historic landmarks, sites and districts to the Village Board. The commission also conducts surveys of landmarks within the village and reviews proposed work on properties that are historically designated.

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