

Town of Bedford
Historic District Commission Minutes
January 9, 2024

A meeting of the Bedford Historic District Commission was held on Tuesday, January 9, at the BCTV meeting room at 10 Meetinghouse Road, Bedford. Present were Kelly Tope (Chair), Lori Radke (TC Vice Chair), Claire Day (alternate), David Clark (member), Lisa Muskat (member), Minn Conant (alternate), Elaine Tefft (member), Kathleen Ports (Conservation Planner). Absent were Michael Strand (alternate), and Steve Clough, (Planning Board liaison).

I. Call to Order and Roll Call and Acceptance of Agenda

Chair Tope called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She asked the Board members to introduce themselves. Ms. Ports reviewed the agenda. Chair Tope asked if anyone would like to approve or amend the agenda.

MOTION: Vice Chair Radke moved to amend the agenda due to the impending snowstorm to address under Other Business Number 1, the Citizens' Petition, Number 2, an update on the CLG grant this evening, and then table numbers 3 and 4 until next meeting. Ms. Muskat seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Tefft said I'm just curious is it necessary to talk about the grant update tonight? If it's not time sensitive, it's snowing like mad out there. I suggest we just do the citizens' petition. It's going to take a long enough time. I move we just do number one.

AMENDED MOTION: Vice Chair Radke moved to amend the agenda due to the impending snowstorm to address under Other Business number 1 this evening, and table the remaining items until next meeting. Ms. Muskat seconded the motion. Vote taken: 4 to 1. Chair Tope, Vice Chair Radke, Mr. Clark, Ms. Tefft, all voted in favor. Ms. Muskat opposed. Motion Carries.

Chair Tope said with that, the motion carries and we will amend the agenda this evening to just talk about the Citizens' Petition to amend the Historic District boundary. Since that is the next item of business, I will ask Matt to come up and present. Ms. Conant has recused herself on this matter.

II. Old Business: None

III. New Business: None

IV. Other Business

1. Citizens Petition to amend the Historic District boundary.

Mr. Matt McLaughlin of 12 Briar Road, Bedford presents: Matt McLaughlin, 12 Briar Road. I started this only because I am the southwest boundary property in the Historic District. My house has no visibility from any street, and I've always felt it has no impact on the character of the Historic District of the Town. So it's just an administrative hoop I've always had to jump through anytime I've wanted to do anything at my house, and I've never had a problem with the Historic District. You've all been very friendly and accommodating. When I learned the process of changing the boundary of the Historic District required a petition, I did a little bit of research. I also talked to all the people west of Wallace Road and I found eleven property owners who are interested in also getting out of the Historic District. I found four who were not home, two who were neutral and one who wanted to stay in. So I did some research through reading the old Town Reports and noticed up through 1985 the boundary of the Historic District was Wallace Road. So sometime between 1985 and 1988, the boundary changed to the power lines that are west of Wallace Road. So I said, well, I'm going to start a petition, see if we can move the boundary back to Wallace Road. I have a full feeling that this committee will probably not want to recommend that. After talking to the Planning Board last night, my guess is they're probably not going to recommend it, but we'll see what the voters of the Town of Bedford say. So that's how this petition got here.

Chair Tope said just as a matter for our Commission here, Planning staff are looking for us to discuss the amendment, consider whether we want to support or oppose it or simply provide information to the Planning Board as it decides whether or not to recommend it. As the gentleman indicated, it will be a ballot initiative. So we are not actually deciding the answer to this question. We're just bringing out points of consideration and I'll call on each of you to individually express your thoughts and ask questions. I think we can start with Elaine. She looks ready.

Ms. Tefft said I do have some questions. Do you know when the Historic District was established? You said you've done research. Mr. McLaughlin replied it was in 1970, and then the Commission was established in 1974. Ms. Tefft said OK, but you only went as far as in the 1980s to check the boundaries? Mr. McLaughlin answered well, I read the Town Reports all the way through the 20 teens. Ms. Tefft said so you do know—but you seem to say that Wallace Road is the deciding factor. You do know that the Historic District encompassed the other side of 101, where it's basically Highway Commercial. Mr. McLaughlin replied I did know that, yes. But that was the southern boundary. That was not the western boundary. Ms. Tefft continued oh, so you only researched the western boundary not the other directions? Mr. McLaughlin said my petition only affects the western boundary. Ms. Tefft said OK, so you're not taking the Historic District area as a whole, just your little section of it is what you're concerned about? Mr. McLaughlin replied my petition will move the western boundary from the power lines to Wallace Road. Ms. Tefft said I'm just curious. Why do they want to do that? Because having buildings in 1955, there is a certain amount of architecture there, and I'm sure there are buildings there pre-1955 and some of them have historic interest. Mr. McLaughlin replied I can't speak for why any of the other eleven did. I can tell you why I did. Ms. Tefft said yes, I would like to know because your family's been there for a long time. Mr. McLaughlin answered that's correct. I feel that my home has no impact on the Cultural Center of the Town of Bedford. Ms. Tefft said I don't know anybody's home who has an impact on the Cultural Center of Bedford. Mr. McLaughlin replied that's one of the criteria of the

Bedford Historic District is to maintain the educational, cultural and economic value of the Town, Center of Bedford. That's one of the things in your Charter. Ms. Tefft said yes, and I understand your problem. Saying what a cultural effect is, is a really tough definition to come up with. Mr. McLaughlin said my house also has no economic impact. It has no detriment or enhancement to the character of the Historic District of the Town of Bedford, in my opinion. Ms. Tefft continued but it's a history of how that part of Bedford evolved. I mean, it started out as a small house as I'm sure you know, and I won't go through the whole family history, but it evolved into almost a Kennedy compound. It was the evolution of what a small town used to be like and historically, we don't have many of those anymore where the focus is on the family and developing it. It may not be architecturally jazzy, but then not all architecture is meant to be jazzy. But there is such a thing as a decent, nicely done and maintained home. But you felt that you didn't want to... Mr. McLaughlin answered I felt that I don't like the administrative burden of anytime I wanted to do anything, having to jump through the hoop that other members in the Town of Bedford don't. Ms. Tefft said well, everybody in the Historic District does, but that's only... so do you feel that they've intruded on the interior of your property, or it's just the exterior? You can hang the world's ugliest chandelier in your house, and we can't say a word. Mr. McLaughlin replied I know that. I'm fully aware of that. Ms. Tefft added, and I hope you won't tell us if you do. But it's just that you felt that the paperwork, in the event you wanted to change windows or something... Mr. McLaughlin replied not just the paperwork, but again, if my house was opposite the Presbyterian Church, I'd feel a little different. My house is the southwest corner next to a highway that has 40,000 cars a day. I have a Walgreens across the highway from me. There's nothing about my house that speaks, that really adds to the character of the Town of Bedford. Ms. Tefft said I hope you understand with the evolution the traffic in Bedford is, everybody is inundated with tons of traffic and that was never like that. And if you can file a petition that would get rid of some of this traffic, boy I'll sign it. Mr. McLaughlin said I'll keep that in mind. Ms. Tefft continued, one of my concerns is that if you feel that way, maybe other people feel that way, not just the people who signed the petition. You know, I can just see this snowballing and some of the other members saying, wait a minute, he's standing up for his own right of privacy and the ability to do what he wants with his property. Why don't we have that same right? Because I think there is something about equal rights someplace that governs what we do. But it wasn't any specific thing. It's just basically the potential burden was too much for you? Mr. McLaughlin replied that, and I don't feel, again, that my house is integral to the character of the Town of Bedford.

Chair Tope said and I think that's been your answer from the beginning. He started with his own house not meeting the requirements of what we say the Historic District is meant to protect. And then adding on the administrative burden. I think our consideration needs to go beyond specifically his house and he drew, I think, a fair boundary in recommending Wallace Road, not just asking to exclude his property or his neighbors'. But I think that's kind of the totality of what we need to consider. Mr. McLaughlin said I did find in reading in the historic history or the Bedford Town Reports, that was one of the original boundaries up through 1985 at least. Ms. Tope said OK. And for the folks who arrived after we started, due to the weather conditions, we amended the agenda and we're only going to do item one, which is the citizens' petition. So we started with the Board asking questions beginning with Elaine and then we'll open it for public comment following the conclusion of the Board's comments. You may proceed, Elaine.

Ms. Tefft asked is there anybody else here who has a different reason other than the one that Matt stated? I assume you signed. Vice Chair Radke said Elaine, they'll get their opportunity during the public hearing. Ms. Tefft replied oh, they will. Oh, OK. Vice Chair Radke said the chair was asking for the Board to make some comments and then after that we'll open up to the public. Chair Tope added and you can ask questions when the public come up and speak, the Board can ask questions to the public. Chair Tope asked are you finished, Elaine? Ms. Tefft said yes.

Mr. Clark said Mr. McLaughlin, I spoke last night at the Planning Board meeting and there were quite a few people that spoke against this. Mr. McLaughlin replied I agree. Mr. Clark said OK. If you were successful in having this petition granted, do you have plans to do something to your property? Mr. McLaughlin answered not at all. Mr. Clark said OK, that's number one. Mr. McLaughlin continued and like I said, all my dealings with you people have been fine.

Mr. Clark said I'm wondering why you would insist on dragging twenty-one other properties into your need, and I know you're going to say that you've got the Briar Road people whose houses were built in 1955, and you've got other houses that are not of an historic nature. But why? Why are you going all the way up past the Van Loan Preserve? Mr. McLaughlin replied I'm wondering that myself. Well, and to answer your question, the reason is as I spoke to many of the people west of Wallace Road and I did find eleven who were interested in getting out of the Historic District and I found Wallace Road being a previous boundary of the Historic District. I thought it would be a natural boundary to put in the petition. Mr. Clark said OK. In going through the petition, I saw the signers. And were these eleven people, were these eleven different properties? Were these eleven people husband and wife? Mr. McLaughlin answered some were husband and wife. I think it represented eleven parcels.

Mr. Clark said OK, which leaves another ten or so parcels that are kind of a question mark as to what their attitude was. You applied for permission from our Committee several months ago, for a carport, for a renovation, and I think I remember you're being granted permission to do that. Mr. McLaughlin replied I was, yes. Mr. Clark continued, and I have gone through the Historic Commission three times and gone through the same process you had to go through in getting permission to do things. I didn't find it to be a nuisance or hardship. And as a matter of fact I was really happy that I had some controls and not only did they help me with the design and some of the other peculiarities of these projects, but I did it right and that was important to me because across the street from where I live, I've got a very historic the Woodbury House. And what I do in my neighborhood impacts my neighbors. And I'm very concerned for the people in that corridor. We're going to call this a corridor. I'm very concerned for the Van Loan House, for 64 North Amherst Road, which I had verbalized last night. A very good friend of mine lived there. Very old barn. Very well-done restoration work. Potentially an Underground Railroad corridor for the slaves going up to Canada, and I think of the Muscat House which is the... is that the William Riddle House? That's on the east side of Wallace Road. Whatever you do on the west side of Wallace Road is going to impact the east side of Wallace Road. So I'm just wondering why you would suffer these other people with these... Mr. McLaughlin replied along that train of thought then, there's always going to be a border to the Historic District. So what you're saying is a border property could affect the property that's one house inside the district. And that's true now. So that's not going to change. It's just going to move that boundary in. Basically, one parcel from the west,

from the power lines to Wallace Road. But what you're arguing is true now with the properties that are just outside the Historic District.

Mr. Clark said well, I don't know too much about it, but I do know enough that you don't usually split a district such as this using a road. Mr. McLaughlin answered well, that was the original boundary through 1985. Mr. Clark said yes, well, it's not what it is now. Mr. McLaughlin said I understand that, but that was ... I don't know what you're questioning me on as to my motivation, I guess. Mr. Clark said yes, I guess I am. Why drag the rest of these people into your petition? Mr. McLaughlin answered again, I found eleven of them who were interested in it, and I found an old boundary that used to be the boundary, so I thought it was a natural fit.

Mr. Clark replied OK. Now did Walgreens have to apply to the Historic District Commission when they built and the and the bank as well? Vice Chair Radke replied they did years ago. Yes, I was on the Planning Board. That was in the early 2000s. Yes. So they did. I might have been on the Historic District at the time back then. And they, the Historic District and Planning Board really grilled them. That's why it looks as beautiful as it did along with the bank, the barn. There was the big Curry barn, if I remember correctly. They had to go through a lot to get that out there. Mr. Clark added they had to assemble it board by board, plank by plank. Vice Chair Radke said yes, so that was a very long process for those—Walgreens and the bank. At that time I forgot the name of the bank. But yeah, they had to go through it because they were in the Historic District at the time. Mr. Clark said so I mean, you haven't always been at the fringe from the eastern side? Mr. McLaughlin answered from the southern side, but from the western boundary, I have always been when the boundaries expanded, it became the power lines and that's all.

Mr. Clark said can I just ask, how long have you lived on your property? Mr. McLaughlin replied in 1993, I built the house. Mr. Clark asked you built the house in '93? And I heard compound. Are there other family members that live? Mr. McLaughlin replied we have 8 houses that touch each other. Mr. Clark said eight houses, OK. Hence the seven or eight different signatures on the petition. OK. All right. That's all. Thank you.

Ms. Tefft asked are eight of the signatories... did each house owner in the compound sign the petition? I can't read the signatures. Other than you. Mr. McLaughlin replied I think so. Ms. Tefft said so eight of the twenty are your family, basically? Mr. McLaughlin responded seven. I think there were a total of 30 some odd signatures, but yeah, eight of them roughly, I think. Ms. Tefft replied they look the same.

Chair Tope asked Mr. Clark, do you have any further questions? Mr. Clark replied no, thank you.

Vice Chair Radke said what I'm about to say, I'm probably not going to be very popular with some of our friends out there. And I apologize for that, but I totally understand, Mr. McLaughlin, where you're coming from. I get it. I always thought the same way you do. I don't understand why... I guess let me take this back a little bit. Bedford has changed over the years, a lot. It's changing and I think we need to evolve with that change. Years ago in the 80s and 70s, there weren't many houses in the area, and I can understand where the Historic District came from and why it was expanded as much as it was. But over time, as things have changed, it started to decrease. We've seen that. It's been on the warrant many times. We got rid of the Commercial, and we got a bit

smaller. And I visualize, I think our Historic District is even smaller. So I apologize to my friends who probably don't want to hear that. So I understand your thing and I actually support it. I apologize for that in advance, but I support that. I think it should be moved over a bit more. Because those houses aren't, in my mind, historic at all. I don't think it's the houses that are historic. I think we need to think about where the location of the Historic District is not so much the houses itself. So when I leave this building and I drive around the house where the Keyes used to live, probably don't know these folks, but I just know from when they, the Presbyterian Church, all around that to me is historic. I would die on a hill fighting to make sure that that stays an historic area. But as you start going out, you lose that. You start to lose that historic feeling and why we need to put folks through hoops, as Mr. McLaughlin says, I don't understand why we need to do that. Because you've lost that as you start moving out of that area where we are currently sitting right now. I don't know. I guess that's all I have to say. I understand. I get it. And I would probably be the only one sitting here who would support that. Mr. McLaughlin replied thank you. I just think we need to rethink the Historic District and really focus what we really want and the purpose behind it. So that's all I've got to say.

Ms. Day said I was here last night at the Planning Board meeting and there are four very historic homes that are included in the part that you want to pull out. I just happen to be President right now of our little Historical Society, and there are books and books of some of the most beautiful homes in this Town. They're long gone, and the reason they're gone is because they weren't protected by a contiguous area that was set aside. They were down on Back River Road or in the enterprise area now. So the thing about a Historic District, it will capture these homes, and it will protect them. If they're pulled out, the chance of them being around 50, a hundred years is lessened. So there are four properties here that are very historic. Mr. McLaughlin said I agree. Ms. Day continued the other thing is years ago my mom moved out of the house that I grew up in and moved to a new property after my dad died, moved to a lovely neighborhood down in Massachusetts. Lovely neighbors moved in, older neighborhood, and they promptly painted their house this wonderful lilac color. It can happen, and it does happen. One of the things the Historic District does it moderates that, and, unfortunately, Bedford, we don't have a Main Street. We don't have a downtown. And for that reason, I think it's really important that we protect this area. I get what you're saying. But I'm going to be honest with you, I haven't heard a really clear, powerful reason why you want to do this.

Mr. McLaughlin replied my reasons stand. I can't make up a new one as we speak. The first comment I would make on your comments is there are old houses throughout Bedford. Because it was an agricultural community, they're scattered around. So the Historic District of Bedford doesn't capture all the old historic homes. And I love the four homes that are in the district. I don't want to see them razed at all, either. Ms. Day replied Absolutely, but I'm saying that when they're outside an area like this, the chances of them being saved lessens considerably. I think that's important to keep in mind. So if we're we were to remove them, that's not saying that we're going to protect them. This gives them some protection. Mr. McLaughlin replied I don't disagree with that. Ms. Day continued and I'm just going to say as an American, I don't think we think as carefully and as thoughtfully about our own history as we should. And I'm just going to say that I live in history. Mr. McLaughlin said those are great thoughts. I don't want to tear down the whole Historic District, just on my corner of it.

Mr. Clark asked so, you want to tear it down? That's a concern.

Ms. Muskat said I think for me, what this type of a petition represents is that of course, there are boundaries and boundaries change and they move just like we're seeing here with the Historic District. But when something moves like this and sort of it's going to move backwards, right, it's going back to 1985. It represents an erosion of a district that we've all been sort of fighting to protect and quarters of this Town that we've been trying to preserve for everybody's benefit, not just for the four homes or whatever, separate more idyllic properties that everyone appreciates. But in my opinion promoting this would be the beginning of a big erosion because why wouldn't someone come in next year and say the same thing? Or oh, he didn't have a problem. I'm going to go in. I want mine carved out. Especially, I think we all need to appreciate what we have and try to protect what's left. And it is about a district, not about necessarily buildings, right, but about it was an agricultural community. Yes, there's been development over the last couple of 100 years. That's what happens. But that doesn't mean we can't appreciate what was contiguous farmland. Without that, your family probably wouldn't have the eight properties that they have now that are all together. So at some point right, that was probably doled out to family members and protected and appreciated by your family. So as a Town, I think we're able to sort of do the same thing without being continuous owners and try to preserve what we can for as long as we can. I love old homes. A lot of people do. That doesn't mean you want to live in one. And I find it particularly interesting too that you haven't said one negative thing about coming before the Commission asking for approvals because we try to make it easy for people to live in 2024, right? We're not saying you can't have electricity, and everyone has to work by candlelight. That's not what we do and if it hasn't really been burdensome for you, I just don't see why there can't be the appreciation for what the Town is trying to do in keeping certain things intact.

Mr. McLaughlin replied well, I do appreciate the Historic District, but in my opinion, it should be centered on the Presbyterian Church to the Town Hall and a bit broader around there. That's my opinion on it.

Vice Chair Radke said I think over time we've lost a little bit about what the Historic District is supposed to do. We've got houses with vinyl siding. We've got houses with solar arrays. So I wasn't on the Board at the time when all those things were approved. So what exactly is the role here now? As far as the Historic District?

Ms. Muskat replied I think that's a very big question and we probably won't get that answered.

Vice Chair Radke said so I'm wondering if we've already crossed that line... Chair Tope said well, I wouldn't say we have. I was there for a couple of those and where we've allowed solar arrays, just like Ms. Muskat was saying, we're trying to live in 2024 and we've allowed it in areas where it's not visible to the property abutters or visible from the front of the property. And I believe in areas, I don't recall specifically the vinyl siding, but I know what other materials we've discussed, whether it looks similar and also being considerate of the residents and the cost of the materials, the ability to attain materials and do we want people living with insulation that they would have had in the 1700s? No. We are trying to both modernize and protect, and I think we're in a difficult position because as you mentioned, there's historic homes that are outside of the district. There's homes in the district, like some of them mentioned here built in the 1950s that are less historic in

value. Probably, perhaps, the failure to create a Historic District and preserve the other properties earlier and other contiguous areas has left us in the position where we are now, where they're dotted everywhere. And we're having to have some of these tough discussions and recommendations of whether you're overly inclusive of some properties that maybe don't add to the historic nature or protect anything in order to protect contiguous properties, or whether you go down that slippery slope of doing away with swaths of area because you have a home or two that's not affected. I don't think there's a perfect answer to that.

Ms. Tefft asked am I correct when I say some of the Historic District is across 101? Ms. Ports said yes, on Meetinghouse. Ms. Tefft continued so actually, as nice as it would be to center it on the church, without completely gutting it and just having a handful of houses, you could never have a compact Historic District. I think that's why if you read the minutes of the meetings from the 70s, that's why you'll find out that they spread a wider net in order to include not just the 18th century houses, of which there are very few, but also the 19th century houses which most of the people here have. I don't think anybody in this room had, well, maybe you do. I forgot you were here. Sorry. There is an architectural style from the 1870s. There is an architectural style from the 1930s. And I think it's historic and I think it's when I say historic, it symbolizes the way people lived and evolved and I would hate to see it shrink. I understand. Believe me, Matt, no one is more territorial than I am, OK? I don't like the idea of having to go asking anybody if I can do something. But I'll tell you, the people who bought Miss Christlieb house are spending a fortune and are doing wonderful gardening and stuff. They've made me up my game on trying to do something with my yard and even to the point of, sorry God, spending money and asking people to help me do it. Because I think it improves your game. And I only have an old farmhouse. And there are other houses. Oh, gosh, who's the guy? Harold who made that house down on Meetinghouse Road, who got bits and pieces of various houses and pretended to make it an 18th century building. And I apologize. I can't remember his name. But I think that's the kind of evolution and history and what people do with their homes that I think is important for us to see. We can't all live in one-story or three-story Gothic or anything like that. But I think it's important that they are part of our history.

Mr. McLaughlin replied I don't disagree with you. I don't know if there was a question there.

Ms. Tefft said and that's why I think it's important to keep the Historic District. We've shrunk it a couple of times and I was sorry to see that because it made some of the commercial property owners and developers really pay attention and really pull their socks up and put their money where their mouth is. And I think we're the better for it. They don't go in your house. They just want to see the outside. And I don't think it's a good idea to shrink it.

Vice Chair Radke said can I just follow up on... if you were not in the Historic District Elaine, would you try to up your game? Ms. Tefft replied oh yeah, I'm very competitive. Vice Chair Radke said OK, so it didn't matter whether or not you're in the Historic District, you still would have upped your game. Ms. Tefft said oh, I wouldn't have spent money. There's a difference between upping my game and spending money. But would I had looked at Deidre and Nicola's wonderful gardens if I wasn't... they wouldn't have done it if they weren't in the Historic District. Vice Chair Radke said you don't know that. Ms. Tefft replied oh, I do. She's southern, you know. But anyway, no. I've always had gardens, you know that. Unfortunately, I was eating vegetables that were grown in contaminated soil and watered with contaminated water, which was a sad thing.

But yeah, I've always been gardening stuff, but I didn't want her to have to look out at a falling down rock garden. Vice Chair Radke said, and I think no matter where you live, people try to have their properties look like their neighbors, keeping up with the Joneses. No matter where you live, I think people do that so that was just my comment. Mrs. Christlieb never got me to rake the lawn once and they lived there a lot longer.

Chair Tope said all right let's move on then.

Ms. Ports asked can I just share something really quickly? The Ordinance acknowledges that things are going to change over time. In Section 275-52 under the review criteria "I" says appropriate changes: changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building structure site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected. And then under "N", it says contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when those alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and such design is compatible. So, I think that the Ordinance is written to acknowledge that some of these changes happen and are OK, especially solar. We don't want to discourage solar.

Chair Tope said all right. Thank you for that information. I'll now call on members of the public to speak, and I ask that you come up to the microphone and state your name and address.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY:

Mr. Richard Moore of 27 Bedford Center Road, Bedford: Richard Moore, 27 Bedford Center Road. A couple of comments I'd like to address. The first, the idea of shrinking it because the old houses are spread out so much. Bedford was an agricultural Town and that's the way they were back then. If you were to say they have to be close together, that means, well, Bedford shouldn't have a Historic District, period. Because they were spread out. That's pretty much what it means. What they did, if you look at the old maps, is they looked at where the houses and the population over the years, the historic ones are more densely populated. You can look at the 1903 Town History Map or the 1853 Town Map and it will show where the houses were. And you look at it. And there were like two areas that were more densely populated. They picked one to try to preserve, and that's our Historic District. The other one, which was almost was about the same density, was South River Road where they had to go commercial, and you can see what a difference it made giving it the protection of the Historic District. But they picked the areas that were more densely populated with old houses and it's just a given that people are going to subdivide and populate it with other houses and that area is going to be developed. But these rules have been put into place to try and keep it in keeping with the older houses and making it protect the older houses, but also protect the whole environment so that it's more compatible and acknowledges the changes, but kind of controls it some. My feeling there is it should stay with the larger area than it presently has and not shrink it. The other thing specifically to the area being proposed to be removed. It's an example of this where there are some older houses scattered about because that's where they were, but it captures some of the history that's important to Bedford and it shows the early development of putting in mills along the rivers. They follow that Riddle Brook goes up through that area and they put mills on Riddle Brook, the Riddles did, which is where they got the name for the brook.

Two of the oldest houses from the 1700s, one built just prior to the Revolution, when there was a big clamp down on the large timbers being used for the King's masts, Governor John Wentworth. So it was cracked down on a law of preserving the King's forests for the tallest trees. So anyways, there was a crackdown on that. So, available timbers were not as select. But anyways that's reflected in the houses before and after the revolution, and that's reflected in these two houses in that area. Once the revolution came, nobody cared what John Wentworth thought. The two oldest houses, they're both little houses, had had mills associated with them. So not only do you have these old houses, but you have the mills. One of those mills is associated with one of the real houses that's in this area. The other one is just off in the Van Loan Conservation area. You can see that one if you go up Wallace Road, come to the intersection with North Amherst as you're heading north, you'll see mills on either side of the road as the river crosses. The one on the left for sure is associated with the older of the two Riddle houses. So there's this history that's being preserved and how the Town grew, and I think would be a tragedy to take it out of the Historic District. So I'd recommend that you not support this move to remove it. Thank you.

Ms. Susan Tufts-Moore of 27 Bedford Center Road, Bedford: Hi. Susan Tufts-Moore, 27 Bedford Center Road also. Laurie, I wanted to address your comment regarding solar power. Of course the house that we live in, we think, was built in 1786 and we came before the Historic District Commission a number of years ago now to ask for permission to put solar panels on the front. We have a hip roof, and to put solar panels on the south side of that roof. And it was just after some members of the Historic District Commission had attended a lecture, I guess, up in Concord about evolving with the times. And I think one of the main things that that conference did was to recommend that the Historic Districts allow solar panels as long as they were not intrusive. Our timing was perfect because we came in right after that. Vice Chair Radke asked did you end up getting them? You got solar? Ms. Tufts-Moore replied yes, we have them. Vice Chair Radke said well they must be well hidden because I never noticed them there. Ms. Tufts-Moore said it helps with our electric bill; I'll tell you that. I feel that the citizens' petition would be a grave mistake if it were voted in by the Town. There are four houses within that area that would be removed. Two of them date from 1890 but one dates from 1770 and the other some 1780, and there are, as Rich mentioned, there are still millstones where those mills were so long ago and also the Town Pound is in that area. So there really are quite a few very historic things about that area west of Wallace Road. And we live in the Historic District, and I feel it's an honor to be in the Historic District. I am thrilled. In fact, when the Historic District was established in 1974, my grandfather, we live in the house that my grandparents bought in 1943 and my grandfather was asked if he wanted the house to be in the Historic District when they were determining where to make the boundaries, and he said he would love to have it be in the Historic District. Now, a little bit farther down Bedford Center Road, of course, is the Bedford Village Inn. And the man who owned that at that time was Mr. Fletcher, and he was asked, and he said no. I do not want to be in the Historic District because he was getting older, and he knew he was going to be selling the house. And I think he wanted to have absolutely no strings attached so that he could sell it to somebody for commercial use. But my grandfather wisely said yes, we'd like to be in the Historic District, and I'm thrilled, and I feel it's a real honor to live there. And I also wanted to mention that I think the Historic District gives us a wonderful sense of place and actually Bedford's 2021 Master Plan update has a reference to the Historic District. It says: The Historic Town Center quote has a strong sense of place and is a source of community pride, and it goes on to say that the Town Center is further protected by the Historic District Overlay. So I think during all the planning for

the last Master Plan, it was discussed, and it was felt very strongly that our Historic District is very special. And I would just hate to see the houses west of Wallace Road taken—houses and properties, the pound, the mill sites. I'd hate to see those taken out of the Historic District. I hope that you folks will recommend not to have the Planning Board support this petition. And I think that's it. Thank you very much.

Chair Tope said thank you. Thank you for your attendance and comments.

Ms. Beverly Thomas of 51 Ministerial Road, Bedford: Beverly Thomas, 51 Ministerial Road. My property is just outside the district on Ministerial Road. But as I said last night at the Planning Board, I wish we were in the district. Fortunately for our house, we bought our house in 1988 and it was basically a teardown. Had we not bought it, it would have been torn down. I'm sure. We've spent 30 whatever years restoring it, and I'm really proud of what we've done, and we've saved the property and I kind of wish it were in the district to protect it.

Also, I wanted to comment that I was on the Historic District Commission when the whole Walgreens project was going on and that was quite a project. Had that property not been in the district, we would not have the barn and we would not have Inside Scoop, which was the original cape on the property. So that's a perfect example of where the Historic Districts saved two very important significant historic properties. So I, too, am very concerned about eroding the boundaries. I really feel strongly that we should keep it where it is. I do kind of have a question about the fact that you thought the boundary line was in the middle of Wallace Road or right on Wallace, because I always thought it was always 250 feet to either side when it was established. I don't know if that's... because I remember, even on Chandler Road when we bought our house, I was like oh, maybe we are in the district. How far is 250 feet? So anyway, I work for the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. I'm not here representing them, but we're the statewide organization. So I know a little bit about this stuff, and we put out the Preserving Community Character Handbook that I think I loaned to Claire last night. She might have it right there, and it is also on the Town website. In that it does say when you're establishing a Historic District, it encourages you to include both sides of any road to protect the houses on both sides so historic houses aren't looking at development or something, commercial development on the other side of the street. So that's something else I want you all to consider. I also feel like the Historic District helps guide. It doesn't prevent or freeze history and time. It helps guide the development in the district, and I know you guys are very helpful with that and you help. If a new house is being built, you help with the plans and you help the developer figure out what will be compatible in the district. That's really important. Also, the protection of the landscape features. It's not only the buildings, it's the stone walls. It's the significant trees. So pulling something out of the district, you're losing all those protections. So I feel like the district was established for a purpose and it's been working very well since 1974. Let's keep it the way it is. I would encourage you not to support this citizens' petition. Thank you very much.

Ms. Susan Tufts-Moore 27 Bedford Center Road: I did forget to say one thing that I wanted to. I so often think of the late Maurice Goulet, who was on the Historic District Commission for many years and its chairman. He was a longtime state representative, and he was a tremendous citizen because he did so much volunteer work and made so many contributions both in Town and in the State on a state level. And he loved the Historic District. And I so often think of him because

of that. And he did a lot to raise awareness of the Historic District. So I like to keep Maurice Goulet in mind when I think about the Historic District.

Ms. Min Conant of 316 Wallace Road, Bedford: Min Conant, 316 Wallace. Our property is one of the ones that would be removed from the district if this passed. My husband James and I moved here in June very excited to move into the Historic District. It was a major draw for us, even to the extent that I joined you fine folks on the Commission. Our biggest concern here is the the protection of our home. We are very much looking forward to restoring this home and protecting it for years to come for our lifetimes. But if it's removed, what happens after we move on? We are currently dealing with issues that we're hoping the Historic Districts will help us protect this home. We're not sure what's coming next. We do have a number of concerns what will happen to this house if it's removed from the district. It makes it a lot harder to protect it. And who knows what happens next. We totally understand, Matt, where you're coming from on this. We just think it's too wide a swath to remove. I mean, if it was a smaller area, heck, I might even sign your petition to get the family compound out of the Historic District. But we're very concerned for our home with this. Thank you.

Chair Tope said OK. Do we have any other comments from the Commission members? Responses? [There were none]. OK, then next I'm going to ask if someone has a motion from one of the Board members. I just want to remind people and Kathleen, correct me if I'm incorrect, but we're either making a recommendation to the Planning Board for or against the amendment as it's written. We don't have any ability to amend the boundaries unless we choose to not recommend for or against and instead just provide information. So I'm looking for a motion. We're working for a recommendation on this specific proposal or decline to provide a recommendation one way or the other on this proposal and provide information.

Ms. Ports said I think I would suggest that you make a motion with your suggestion to the Planning Board that they either approve or deny, and then based on which one, you can cite, the minutes from today or the testimony that you received or the concerns of the Commission as factors in supporting your recommendation to the Planning Board.

Vice Chair Radke asked can I just add one comment? You said approve or deny. The Planning Board cannot approve or deny. They can only recommend. I just want to make that clear. They can't deny the petition.

Chair Tope said we're either going to recommend the passage or not recommend the passage. Vice Chair Radke said on the ballot, they are required to put a recommendation.

Chair Tope said I just wanted to note, I don't believe we can amend the language of the petition, so we shouldn't make a motion that says, well, let's vote for, but move the boundary. We can't do that. So we need either support or not support. Ms. Ports reiterated you should support or oppose the petition. So that's all you need to do to support or not support. That's all you need to do for a motion. Chair Tope said OK, so now that we have that understanding, do I have a motion?

MOTION Ms. Tefft moves we ask the Planning Board to NOT recommend the petition. Mr. Clark duly seconded the motion. Vote taken 4 – 1. Chair Tope, Mr. Clark, Ms. Tefft and Ms. Muskat voted in favor, Vice Chair Radke opposed. Motion Passes.

Ms. Tefft asked can we send the minutes of this meeting to them? Chair Tope replied we can send the minutes, I believe. Well, actually procedurally, I'll let Kathleen tell us exactly what we can do. Ms. Ports said yes, you can do that. Ms. Tefft said I didn't want a long motion. Vice Chair Radke said no, it's fine. That motion was perfect.

Ms. Ports said I do want to put out there that at any point within seven days prior to the vote, there can be a protest petition filed. And there are criteria that that petition needs to meet. But if those criteria are met, then that changes the requirement for approval of this petition to 2/3 majority vote. So that might be something as individual citizens or residents of Bedford that you might want to consider pursuing.

Vice Chair Radke said just to clarify, is it abutters that can do a protest petition? Ms. Ports replied it's either 20 percent of, I believe it's the land area within the affected area, or it's 20 percent of the properties within 100 feet or across the street. Vice Chair Radke said OK. So it's in that area, so people that live over on... Ms. Muskat asked Kathleen, are you saying that within seven days we have the ability to make a more detailed recommendation? Ms. Ports replied no. So between now and seven days before the election, you could work to try to get the signatures you need that would have a citizens' protest to the petition. Ms. Muskat said OK, in support of our recommendation. Ms. Ports said no, all it would do is it would—right now this could pass 100 to 99. What it would do is change that criteria so that it wouldn't pass unless 2/3 of the voters approved it. Chair Tope added and just to clarify, you're saying anyone could file a petition? You're not saying this particular Board do it, but any of the homeowners in Bedford? Ms. Ports replied so the owners of 20 percent of the area included in the proposed change, or 20 percent of the area within 100 feet immediately adjacent or across the street. Chair Tope said that's for informative purposes, not for action by the Board. Ms. Ports said thank you.

Chair Tope said OK. I'm going to stay on the record for a moment before we go off. So again, procedurally looking through some of this, are we going to prepare a letter? We talked about sending the minutes, we had a few points that I believe we wanted to make, or it suggests that I attend. I could do that as well. Can we figure that out offline or do we need to discuss? Ms. Ports said yes, I can draft a letter with some of what I heard as the key concerns tonight and then you can review it and sign it. Chair Tope said OK. And as I noted, we had Tabled the other agenda items due to the weather.

V. Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn was made by Ms. Tefft at 7:57 pm. Ms. Muskat duly seconded the motion. ALL IN FAVOR – unanimous. Motion Carries.

The next meeting of the Bedford Historic District Commission is scheduled for February 6, 2024.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Forcier