

Owego Historic Preservation Commission

November 6, 2017

Action Plan Introduction

In order to better serve the property owners of Owego's Historic District, OHPC has undertaken a rigorous and thorough period of self-review and examination. This process included input from fellow citizens and property owners, the Village Board, previous and current OHPC Commissioners, previous government officials, legal consultants, and representatives from SHPO. The outcome of this review is the Action Plan that follows.

Respectfully Submitted by:

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Laura Spencer Eberly, Commissioner

Emily Pellicano, Commissioner

Jeffery Smith, Commissioner

Kris Stevens, Commissioner

Mark Trabucco, Chairperson

Goal 1

Improve Communications

Response

- I. Design interactions with Commission, both inside and outside of formal meetings, that are positive , helpful, supportive, and informative
 - A. Create an atmosphere where all persons are professionally welcomed, listened to and respected
 - B. Commissioners will attend training on conflict resolution techniques and strategies
 - C. Maintain and cultivate positive relations with the Village Board and its assigned liaison
 - D. Maintain and cultivate positive relations with Village Staff whose work intersects with and supports Commission tasks

- II. Create OHPC Welcome Ambassadors
 - A. Ambassadors will be current and past Commissioners
 - B. Create a Welcome Packet
 - 1. Welcome Letters
 - 2. Copy of property history from our book
 - 3. Copy of newly revised of OHPC tri-fold brochure
 - 4. Copy of Blank Application

5. Copy of Tax information page from SHPO site
 6. Personal handwritten note from visiting Commissioner/trained Ambassador
- C. Formally contact New Owners to schedule an Ambassador visit
 - D. Coordinate with Code Officer to arrange for a Commissioner or Ambassador to accompany him on pre-construction inspections, if owner has not been previously visited. Make sure Code Officer has copies of our welcome letters to give to owners.
 - E. Maintain clear and open lines of communication with OHPC's liaison to the Village Board. Commission Chairperson will attend Village Board meetings.
 - F. Make contact with local Board of Realtors

III. Enhance and Update Web Site

- A. Review content and order of information presented
- B. Clearly state OHPC responsibilities (not responsible for interiors, anything not seen from a public way, etc.)
- C. Explain application process
- D. Update links to resources
- E. Post online application submittal process, with required fields checked
- F. Post printable application
- G. Post FAQ's
- H. Post "how-to" resources
- I. Post SHPO links
- J. Post Photo Gallery/ Virtual Tour of Village
- K. Post Cornell Database
- L. Post Village Historic Building Registry
- M. Consider making an interactive "chat" aspect of the Commission page.

N. Appoint a 'Web Liaison' to be the "point person" for OHPC Web Page Management

IV. Publish Annual Letter

- A. Mail to each property owner with relevant content of importance and interest
- B. Publish yearly in newspaper
- C. Create and include annual survey of OHPC from owners

V. Publish Annual Report

- A. Note the properties within the historic district and then the following designations to include number as well as percent
 - 1. Commercial/Residential/Mixed Use
 - 2. On Historic Register
 - 3. Awardees of special renovation commendations (local, state or federal)
 - 4. Currently unoccupied
 - 5. Sold within the calendar year
 - 6. Building NODs granted
 - 7. Dollar amount of property taxes collected
- B. Note the number of applications received and then the following designations to include number as well as percent of the applications:
 - 1. Report numbers of applications that were approved, denied, pending, or withdrawn
 - 2. Note number of grants applied for and dollar amount that used the CLG designation

3. Note number of properties in which owners were provided with historic renovation tax credits, loans, grants. Include overall dollar amount by categories.

C. Include SHPO audit if it had been requested that year.

VI. Sponsor Annual Awards

- A. Reinstitute annual awards to properties within the district which have completed significant projects that have successfully undergone the OHPC application process.
- B. Reinstitute annual awards for tradespeople who assisted in award winning renovations.
- C. Encourage award recipients to apply for other local, state or national commendations.
- D. Utilize Press Releases, TV interviews, radio interviews , internet and social media to inform public at large about Historic District events and accomplishments.
- E. Form partnerships with Corporate or Citizen Sponsors for educational events and/or awards

VII. Promote better access to tax credit information and historic property tax abatement

- A. Encourage owners to plan ahead to take better advantage of 444-a
- B. Sponsor workshops with guest presenters
- C. Design better guidelines for outreach/advertisement
- D. Post Links to other CLG Guidelines
- E. Teach owners how to use the Cultural Resource Information System associated with Cornell University (CRIS System)

VIII. Introduce “ This Old Owego House” regular column in newspaper

Goal 2

Improve Application Process

Response

- I. Applications need to be submitted two weeks prior to the next scheduled OHPC meeting. Review of the application by the village staff assigned to the OHPC and/or the OHPC chair is to be completed prior to application becoming an agenda item. When an application is missing vital information (e.g. dimensions of new porch, lot placement of proposed construction, pictures/drawings of proposed changes) this time frame allows that information to be collected, so that the application process is seamless and productive for all.
- II. Update new application hardcopy and online PDF form, with attachments
- III. Process all certificates as quickly as possible
- IV. Create a “loop” where the Commission is informed of any delays in paperwork etc. going out to owners after OHPC approval
- V. Follow up with owners if there is any kind of problem in process

Goal 3

Qualifications and Code

Response

- I. Recommend future Commissioner candidates for mayoral appointments.
Commission will try to find candidates who meet the qualifications as outlined in LL 126. However, concessions can be made to recommend candidates who make up for outlined qualifications in passion, historical knowledge, experience in community, etc.
- II. Provide a semi-annual workshop on a selected renovation topic (e.g. how to, tax credits, etc.)
- III. Require documentation of Enforcement of Stop Work Order and any follow-up contact with applicant (from Code)
- IV. Require documentation of enforcement of NODs, when the NOD time limit of one year expires
- V. Require documentation of notification that a building permit has expired
- VI. Help Village Support Staff understand nuances and particulars of the application process. Arrange for mentoring.
- VII . Invite Code Enforcement Officer to participate in continuing education/workshops on historic architecture that the Commission attends or sponsors. Supply CEO with materials from such educational opportunities.
Note new model law and Chapter K information.

Goal 4

Improve Commission Structure and Functioning

Response

- I. Hire a recording secretary. We have been operating for a year without one and these responsibilities have fallen to a Commissioner. There is a lot of official documentation created by the Commission and for things to proceed efficiently in the application process, a separate Secretary is required.
- II. Discuss and determine term recommendations. It is important to note the specific training, knowledge and expertise of Historic Preservation Commissioners and the “learning curve” needed to perform duties correctly. More experienced Commissioners are needed to mentor new Commissioners and this creates an ongoing system that minimizes errors. (One consideration is a first 5 year appointed term. After the first term is over, Mayoral appointments of 2 year terms may follow. This allows for experience and maturity to benefit the Commission and allows for new membership opportunities.)
- III. Discuss and recommend Commission leadership determination. Should Leadership be rotating on a yearly or bi-yearly basis? Should we have an official Co-Chair?
- IV. Create Committees or “point persons” within the Commission that are responsible for certain sections of the Action Plan : Welcome Committee,

Web Liaison, PR, guideline and application upkeep etc. We recommend a Finance Committee to create a budget for trainings, Welcome Packets, educational materials for property owners etc.

IV. Commission recommends that membership should remain at seven members.

This Commission does not have a history of having quorum problems. The seven member number allows for diversity of talents and skills and will help divide the complicated and diverse responsibilities of the Commission (as noted in this action plan) in a manageable way that does not overburden members.

V. Commission will keep an active file of Commission Candidates to recommend for Mayor's appointments. Vacancies should be filled within thirty days.

VI. Update Guidelines

VII. Determine education and training for new members

VIII. Redesign formal agenda

IX. Work to establish good working relationship with the Code Enforcement Officer and to give support to that person as much as possible.

X. Hold an announced "annual meeting" where we revisit this action plan and evaluate our performance.