

SHAKER PRESERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING

Town Hall, New Lebanon

September 24, 2025

Present: Winfried Fuchshofen (Chair), Carol Reichert, Deb Gordon, Mark Walcroft, Merrill Hesch, Andy Vadnais, Sharon Powers – a quorum was present

Meeting called to Order at 6:35pm by Winfried Fuchshofen

Discussion on who to take the minutes. Decided that they would be taken on alternate meetings by either Carol Reichert or Sharon Powers.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Winfried Fuchshofen reported that the former Working Group (WG) had met (Winfried Fuchshofen, John Dax, Merrill Hesch, and Elizabeth Brutsch) to discuss how to move forward. It was decided that from now on, it would be up to the entire Shaker Preservation Committee (SPC) to amend the proposal to respond to the concerns from the public hearings and then the WG would meet to fine tune it for the Town Board.

Winfried also spoke with Jim Dawson, who will be the representative from the Chair Factory group that is forming to be an informal advisory group to the SPC. No dates have been set yet to meet as Jim is now out of town, but Winfried will get back to us when this has been decided. (Targeting for the latter half of October.) Winfried has also compiled a list of emails from everyone who wrote in for any of the public hearings and these people will be informed of the advisory meeting.

DISCUSSION ON COMMENTS COMPILED BY CAROLE REICHERT & SHARON POWERS FROM THE TWO PUBLIC HEARINGS

General Fears

It was felt that the WG had no conflicts of interest on it – since John, Merrill & Winfried are not one of the four main property owners in the proposed district. (Those being the Shaker Museum, Darrow, Sassafra, and the Abode.) It was noted that the four entities are all 501 (C) 3s.

It was also noted that 501(C)3s cannot sell to developers (or anyone) unless they are also a 501(c)3 – sales of this type must be approved by the Attorney General (AG).

The SPC must get clarification on this from lawyers and it was decided that this would be investigated by the following:

Andy Vadnais will ask the Darrow lawyers, Whiteman, Osterman, Case

Mark Walcroft will consult with Christopher Steadman

Winfried will discuss with John Dax and call the NYS Attorney General's office

The goal is to find out if there was a process or possibility where one of the 501(c)3s in that area could sell or lease a piece of their land (alone) or a building (without the land), or land with building included, to another 501(C)3 or another entity that was not a non-profit?

Discussion about stopping area property values from increasing – this is already happening. Improvements have already been made to several properties, including the Abode and at the West Family dwellings. This has already increased property values.

Winfried will write something about gentrification. Both the legal clarification and the gentrification paper should be done within two weeks – hopefully by the next meeting of October 7.

Concerning whether this proposal is in line with the Comp Plan, it was noted that protecting the Shaker properties is very much in line with maintaining the character and history of the community. It was also noted that the 2005 Comp Plan had focused on developing Mt. Lebanon into a destination for all things Shaker, anticipating up to 85,000 visitors a year.

As for making the area a destination area – it would be focusing on the four main properties there – not a mass of new ventures.

We need to emphasize that the purpose of the SPC proposal is not just to focus on what is happening now, but what could happen in the future. We need to protect the lands there and limit development in case one of these entities does not survive.

Hotbed Items

The new uses are what were most problematic and triggering. Merrill said that there was a more specific definition of camping here which would not be the sprawl of chaotic campers. The SPC needs to see what the WG had suggested to be deleted, changed, held back, or added so we could address those. Merrill will send the SPC those. She will also circulate the current proposal again. Also need to address the events part of the new uses.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Next meeting is Tuesday, October 7, at 7:00-8:30.