

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF
THE TOWN BOARD OF THE TOWN OF NEW LEBANON, ZONING RE-WRITE
COMMITTEE & SHAKER PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
HELD ON JUNE 27, 2023**

Present: Tistrya Houghtling, Supervisor
Marianna Anthonisen, Councilmember
Deborah Gordon, Councilmember
John Trainor, Councilmember
Norman Rasmussen, Councilmember

Recording Secretary: Marsha "Marcie" Robertson, Town Clerk

Others Present: Steve Powers, CAC & ZRC Member & CSC Chair
Josh Young, Planning Board, QOL, Shaker Preservation
Comm., NY Main St. Grant Comm. Member, & BEDC
Chair
Christine Dreyfus, MOW
Monte Wasch, BEDC & Planning Board & Ethics Board
Member
Ted Salem, ZBA Member & ZRC Chair
Adelia Moore, CSC Member
Jim Carroll, Planning Board & ZRC Member
Erminia Rasmussen, BEDC Member
Rochelle DiRe, Ethics Board Member
Sharon Powers, IT Support, BEDC & QOL Member
Robert Gilson, CAC & CSC & QOL Member
Becky Segal, BEDC Member
Tom Gerety, Ethics Board Chair
Elizabeth Brutsch, Planning Board Chair & NY Mains St.
Grant Comm. Member
Sharon Moon, Board of Assessment Review
Margaret Robertson, Historic Railroad Depot Comm.
Member
Carol Reichert, Shaker Preservation Comm. Member
Steve Oberon, LVHS President
Steve Pause, Shaker Preservation Comm. Member
Donald Lamonaca, CAC and ZRC Member
Andrew Vadnais, Diversity & Inclusion, and Shaker
Preservation Comm. Member

**Irene Hanna, Historic Railroad Depot Comm. Member
Members of the Public**

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Supervisor Houghtling. The meeting was held in person at the New Lebanon Town Hall, 14755 State Route 22 North, New Lebanon, NY 12125 with members of the public also being able to view the meeting at the following link: https://townhallstreams.com/towns/new_lebanon_ny.

A moment of silence was held, followed by the flag salute. The emergency exits were pointed out.

HISTORIC MOUNT LEBANON PUBLIC INPUT SESSION:

Supervisor Houghtling opened the meeting and thank everyone who attended as well as the Zoning Re-write and Shaker Preservation Committees for organizing the meeting.

Supervisor Houghtling gave a brief background on how the town got to this point. The town formed a Shaker Preservation Committee, to look at specifically the areas by Darrow School, the Abode, and the properties in that are rich in Shaker history for the town. There was a property up there that was on the market, and there was concern with the way the current zoning is written, that someone could buy a property and demolish the Shaker buildings and build something else there.

The Town Board put a twelve-month moratorium in place to disallow the demolition of Shaker buildings. The moratorium gives the board time to decide what, if anything does the board want to put in place up there to preserve the history and the Shaker heritage.

The Town Board created a Shaker Preservation Committee to focus specifically on historic districts, historic overlays, what that might look like, and reporting back to the Town Board with ideas and proposals. The Town Board tasked the ZRC to work on what the zoning might look like. The two committees presented a few different ideas to the Town board. One topic is the preservation of the history in that area, which is important to the town. How the board goes about that is a decision that the Town Board will make and go back to the public when the board decides how they are going to move forward. The other proposal was to potentially change the zoning in that area and allow uses that would bring revenues into some of the properties up there. Supervisor Houghtling stated, at that point she decided she would like public input on this because it is currently zoned residential. A letter was mailed to every property owner on Shaker Road, Chairfactory Road, and Darrow Road as an invitation to come to a meeting and share their thoughts. The board would also like to hear from the community at large about expanding that zoning usage. They will also discuss historic preservation, because the two topics are linked. Tonight, the board is looking for the public's input regarding the expansion of the zoning. Even if the Town Board and or the public is not in support of the zoning usage change, that does not mean that the board will not move forward with the historic preservation piece.

PRESENTATION:

Andy Vadnais, the head of Darrow School, spoke to the board and those in attendance about the needs of the school and the necessary split loyalties that they must have at the school. The school needs to be able to drive revenue. Today it is hard for an independent school to survive. To keep the school thriving they will need to improve the dormitories. All the kids at the school are living in Shaker buildings, the earliest one was built in 1827 and go up to around 1850. The buildings are not sprinklered and are in various stages of repair or disrepair. For Darrow to remain competitive, they are going to have to build at least one new dormitory. The second thing they are doing, starting next week, they are having architectural firm from Albany come and do an in-depth analysis of the “legacy dorms,” the Shaker buildings that they kids are living in. Andy stated, the idea is to find out how stable are the buildings that are there, can they invest \$1 million into each one of them and will it be worth it. If the results come back from the architectural firm that no, it will not be possible to bring those Shaker buildings up to code with all the requirements that would happen once they are no longer grandfathered in anymore, they would then have to build two new dormitories. That would leave the existing buildings and what to do with them. The zoning is important for how Darrow moves forward.

Andy stated, he has been studying the Mount Lebanon Shakers for thirty-five years, he was a tour guide at Hancock, Associate Director at Hancock, and helped start Mount Lebanon Shaker Village back in the 80’s. Andy went to school in MD and most of the Mount Lebanon journals are kept at the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library in Delaware, MD and they are beautifully preserved. He stated, the remains of the Mount Lebanon Shaker Village are the most well documented of all the Shaker Villages by the Shaker’s themselves. They wrote hundreds of journals, they have documents, photographs, account books, letters, and much more all there in MD. Andy stated, the capacity for interpreting the historic site, with that much documentation and that many existing buildings, does not exist anywhere else in the United States. Here in New Lebanon is the only Shaker Village that has that capacity of documentation. Andy stated, even if the school fails, he is still worried about what happens to the Shaker buildings, he does not want to see anything happen to them or see anything built around the family clusters. This village is the only one left in the country where you can see the remains of the communal families. Andy said he is here to figure out a way to maintain these buildings, keep the viewshed and still drive enough revenue so they can afford to keep up the buildings.

Ted Salem, ZRC Chair, discussed the elements of the zoning piece of this that must be put in place for them to meet the kind of objectives and goals that Andy laid out. This involves the identification of a specific geographic area. Ted explained that a historic overlay superimposes regulations and abilities over and above what would otherwise be created in the geographic area. For the most part the area being discussed is residential and agricultural two acre (RA2), and five acre (RA5) and there are specific zoning uses and regulations that apply to those areas. An overlay would be superimposed on top of that and have additional benefits and restrictions. A benefit would be adding additional uses within the overlay. An example of something that could be a restriction is ridgeline and steep slope overlays which would prevent development of certain types in those areas. That is not currently in place, it is an example of how an overlay can be restrictive.

The area that is being discussed is Darrow Road, from Route 20 to the Massachusetts line; approximately one thousand feet in either direction of Darrow Road, encompassing the primary Shaker Family site, and it excludes any private residences, specifically on Shaker and Chairfactory Roads, and Ann Lee Lane. Ted went over the current zoning maps, pointing out the RA2 and RA5 areas. Ted explained that there are certain uses that are allowed in those areas that are in the regular zoning code. Ted also went over the map of the proposed overlay, referred to as the preservation zone. This proposed area meets the same requirements that were previously discussed.

Ted stated, the uses that are currently allowed in the RA2 and the RA5 would not change under an overlay. Ted went over the proposed expanded uses that are not currently allowed in the RA2 or RA5 zones but would be allowed in the proposed preservation zone.

Elizabeth Brutsch, Planning Board Chair discussed why the expanded uses are important to the community on Mount Lebanon. The main goal is to protect, preserve and rehabilitate our Shaker heritage in New Lebanon. They hope that expanded uses will give people the opportunity to bring in revenue that hopefully can be used to help balance with the preservation of the buildings. They are aware that the costs to renovate or restore these buildings are high and there are very few uses in RA2 and RA5 that will allow the revenue opportunities. The expanded uses that Ted spoke about gives more business opportunities in that area. Currently, in town there are a couple of existing tools that can be used to implement these; site plan review, and special use permits. In the future there may be other things that they may want to implement or seek guidance on, the first being, design and standards. They are looking to implement design guidance and standards, with the hope that this would help with the ability to go out for grants. They will be looking to retain professional expertise who are well versed in the Shaker culture and Shaker building style and design of Mount Lebanon. There are other steps to considered such as any legal aspects, people that work with other towns to develop overlays and historic districts. Tonight, they want to hear from landowners, residents, and neighbors how they feel about the proposal and what they would like to see or not see happen.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR:

In addition to an in-person privilege of the floor, Supervisor Houghtling will read all comments, questions and concerns emailed to supervisor@townofnewlebanon.com during the meeting.

Becky Segal: Becky spoke, she thinks these buildings are an amazing part of New Lebanon and she is excited to see them preserved.

Sharon Powers: Sharon spoke as a resident, she purchased her home in New Lebanon in 2018, because they fell in love with the house and the land. She liked it because it was isolated and surrounded by trees, beauty, and views of the hillside. They were told by a real estate agent that the Shaker land was protected and they could be assured to have their natural surroundings forever. It came as a surprise to them to hear bull dozers one year after they purchased their home. Seven acres of trees were chopped down, in what

they call the “great Shaker massacre.” The reason they were given was that someone came up with an idea to restore the land to what it looked like after the Shakers had chopped down all the trees to farm. A few years later, the Shaker Museum abandoned Mount Lebanon, left the unused buildings empty, and the fields overgrown. The great Shaker massacre left wildlife without homes, and nothing that they could do to have prevented this tragedy. Sharon stated, the new map cuts through most of her property, but Ted just explained that their property would not be included. Sharon stated, it would come to their property line. According to the proposal, a few things that could move within feet of their home are manufacturing, light industry, a restaurant, dance hall, social club, commercial event venue, or a camp ground. She stated, they do not want any of those as their next-door neighbors. Aside from the fact that they would want to move away if this occurred, it would decrease their property value, and make it impossible to sell. They do not have a problem with Darrow School or the Ruins at Sassafras, they want them both to survive. If they need to add some commercial uses to their properties, she has no problem with that, within reason, except for manufacturing. She does not want anything to affect their water or air. They do not want to increase the traffic on Shaker Road. Sharon stated her request is to leave the massacred property next to theirs as it is, please do not develop it, nor allow any of the proposed expanded uses to occur on it. She stated, they chose where they live because of the restricted land use of their neighbor and never expected the town to change the rules after the fact. The fields need to be left alone.

Steve Powers: Steve spoke, he is an abutter to the property, the Climate Smart Task Force Chair, member of the CAC, and ZRC. A concern of the CAC, in 1965, NY State designated Mount Lebanon a national landmark. In 2014, the CLC worked with the DEC, New Lebanon town officials, and area landowners applied for a \$50 million grant from the Forrest Legacy Program to protect Mount Lebanon from development. The funding was to cover purchasing conservation easements on 1,310 acres to protect the land. The grant was never realized.

In 2014, the New Lebanon CAC created an open space inventory (OSI), approved by the Town Board on August of 2014. An OSI is the first step in identifying undeveloped land that should be protected by the town. In the OSI, the CAC identified Mount Lebanon as a unique natural area (UNA) and a site “deserving special attention for preservation and protection due to its outstanding environmental qualities.” Steve continued to state that OSI’s are little complicated, after the space is identified a list of them is created, listing specifics, which is called an Open Space List. Creating this list and creating the OSI have been tasked to the current CAC as part of the latest Comprehensive Plan update. The CSC also gets points for this action.

Steve’s suggestion is, before any recommendations are made for this undeveloped land, the CAC and the CSC should be allowed to complete their assigned task assigned by the Town Board. If the undeveloped land is going to be apart of an official open space list, the proposed development will be a moot point. NY State has set aside grant money for the purchase of designated lands to conserve natural areas and wildlife. Steve stated, that could be a goal of the Town Board, to protect undeveloped land for the whole town, recommended in the town’s Natural Resources Conservation Plan.

Meghan Knoll: Meghan stated, she thinks the history of the town is important to most in the room, as well as preserving it. If people are being asked to put their private funds into preserving these buildings, they need to be provided with the means to raise funds to preserve the buildings. She agrees with what has been said regarding undeveloped land and potentially placing intelligent limits on new development. Meghan stated she is in support of putting new uses in place in the existing Shaker buildings and limited development to give property owners the ability to preserve these buildings.

Monte Wasch: Monte, Planning Board and Shaker Preservation Committee member, acknowledged the resignation of Kyle Kuffel as Chair of the Shaker Preservation Committee. Monte spoke of preservation of the existing buildings and putting them to intelligent re-use. He feels that it is scandalous that the Shaker Museum has abandoned the buildings of the North family. For the future of the town, we need to preserve our heritage. New Lebanon is known as the founding community of the Shaker movement in the United States. The first commercial pharmaceutical company in the world developed in New Lebanon precisely because those merchants saw what the Shakers had done with plants and botanicals and decided to manufacture here, known as the Tilden Pharmaceutical Company. He stated, the entire history of this town is wrapped into those buildings that are on top of Darrow Road and he thinks it is important for the future of our history that we take these steps today. They are not talking about confusing the lives of any of the landowners and residents, or changing the nature of the community. They are talking about preserving the Shaker buildings by giving the owners the ability to intelligently re-use them. Monte gave a few examples of ways that the buildings could be used for.

Christopher Steadman: Christopher (aka Gabriel), spoke on behalf of the Abode. The buildings are expensive to maintain, finding funding is important. He thinks it is great to discuss how to do that and maintain the integrity of the buildings and the land. Christopher stated, his wife had a manufacturing business at the Abode, making jewelry, do not be afraid of the word manufacturing. He wanted to let everyone know that the Abode is still around, it is great they are here discussing what can be done to raise funds to help restore the buildings.

Irene Hannah: Irene wanted to remind everyone, historically the Shakers used these buildings commercially, they had businesses there. In some way, we are restoring their original use. They had workshops, a tannery, and a B&B.

Paul Cassidy: Paul, Board Chair of the Shaker Museum, stated these buildings are expensive, putting the museum within an inch of its life. The Shaker Museum owns the North family. Darrow School is their tenant, a long-term lease in three of the occupiable buildings with no income. They have done big preservation projects in the decade they were actively working. He supports the idea to expand uses in a way to continue to preserve Mount Lebanon and the Shaker's history.

Tom Gererty: Tom stated, he has no special expertise, but since he was a kid, he has been interested in the Shakers. He and his wife visited other Shaker communities and most of the Shaker properties around New England are in deterioration. He is in favor of anything that can be done to facilitate the people using entrepreneurialism to try to make these buildings survive, look good, and show off the handiwork and artisanship. He agrees with not having heavy manufacturing, like a steel plant.

Marianna Anthonisen: Marianna spoke as a prior resident of Darrow School. Her family was drawn to the area by the ability to appreciate the Shaker history and their openness to diversity. She stated, they had both the privilege and non-privilege of living there. The buildings are falling apart but they provide employment and housing for the staff of the school. She feels the expansion of what it gives to the town is critical and the diversity and historical aspect needs to be supported as well as provide housing for so many people who want to continue to call New Lebanon home.

Josh Young: Josh stated, he thinks it was a chance to put the potential expanded uses at the center of this meeting because he thinks they could go in the wrong direction. Manufacturing could include obnoxious chemicals, he thinks it is important to have some expanded uses for all the reasons that previous speakers have mentioned, it is also important to focus on how to contain and guide those uses to make sure there is not a burden put on neighbors. His idea of next steps from this meeting, would be to refine the uses, having that conversation, and maybe engaging legal help to figure out how to contain those uses and make sure they fit the character of the neighborhood and the mountain. Nobody wants ridiculous things that would spoil our history and environment. He stated, having talked to a historic preservation lawyer, he thinks there is a way to accomplish this.

Margaret Robertson: Margaret stated, in 1981 when she worked at Hancock Shaker Village with Andy, she also worked in the education department in the winter, a young documentary film maker showed up to do a documentary on the Shakers. The filmmaker showed them a documentary called the Brooklyn Bridge and it turned out this filmmaker got permission from the Hancock Shaker Board of Directors as well as the other Directors of the Shaker Museums to put together a documentary. Margaret suggests that everyone should watch the documentary by Ken Burns. She stated, if you want to understand the spiritual importance of the Shaker Community and how we are blessed to be in an area like this, watch that Shaker documentary. She stated in 1990, there was something called the harmonic convergence which involved a lining up of all the planets, that was supposed to be powerful in its energy, if you go up to Mount Lebanon you can feel it. Margaret stated in what used to be acres of sage, which is now the soccer field for the Darrow School, is an area where the lineup of longitude and latitude exists. Margaret feels that it is critical for us to preserve that whole side of the mountain. She feels if they work together as a community and helped support Darrow, Mount Lebanon, and Sassafra that they can be successful to become a shining star for decades to come, for the world to come back and travel through that area and experience what they felt that summer during the harmonic convergence when the planets lined up.

Carol Reichert: Carol spoke as the owner of the Second family museum, dba The Ruins at Sassafras. Carol referenced the picture of their chair factory building, where they had to replace the crumbling foundation with a new one. Carol stated, people have been supportive of the renovation work they have done on their property. Their roof is just the ice and water shield, black paper, that will protect the building for about two years without having shingles on it, they cannot afford shingles right now. Carol stated, you will notice a lot of the windows in the chair factory are missing. They have been able to restore twenty out of the forty windows in the building. The rest of the window opening will be boarded up until they can afford to do more. Carol stated, they are fortunate the Town and Planning Boards have allowed them to host events and to be a museum. Many people have come and toured, learning about the history of the Shakers. Being able to have events that generate income has allowed them to do some of things they are doing now. It is important to Carol and her husband, Jerome to continue to do the work, put a new roof on, restore the rest of the windows, and to share their property with the community. Carol and her husband hosted the New Lebanon High School Prom last month, it was an incredibly beautiful experience for them to get to know more of the towns people and to connect with the students. The school has already asked if they would host again next year. Carol stated, they do not charge the school to do that. They are having free Shakespeare plays this coming weekend and a concert with the money going to the musicians. Carol stated, they want people to come over and experience their property, it is too big for just her and her husband, it is rich and beautiful and she wants people to see it. Carol stated, she has nightmares of becoming homeless, they have spent almost all their retirement saving on this project and she does not regret it for a moment. Carol stated, she has a dream of having a boutique hotel, and a small cafe in the chair factory building.

Marcie Robertson: Marcie commented as a parent of a teenager who attend the NLSCD Prom event and thanked Carol and her husband for sharing their property and home to the community. The kids, faculty and parents loved it and were very interested in the history and heritage that they were exposed to. Events like that can hopefully continue to bring awareness to New Lebanon's special history.

Erminia Rasmussen: Erminia spoke in support of the Shaker Preservation piece and she does not have any objections to a change the usage, with some restrictions put in place. The list is too long, and she does not want it to turn into a commercial area. She hopes that the Planning Board will use good common sense to look at each item carefully and take into consideration the people in the area and the whole town. There needs to be a balance between preserving and generating some revenue. She asked about the availability of grants?

Deborah Gordon: Deborah responded there are grants, unfortunately the rate the money is handed out, it is only a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed in terms of financial resources.

Monte Wasch: Monte responded to Erminia, a pre-condition of getting money for Mount Lebanon is that the town is doing something. Part of doing something is expanding the uses. He stated, there is no reduction of the power of the Planning Board proposed in any

of this. The Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and other agencies will still be in place to make sure whatever is done on the mountain will be within the bounds of propriety.

Carol Reichert: Carol added, they have applied for grants two times to the Empire State Development Fund and have been rejected both times because they do not employ enough people.

Winfred Fuchshofen: Winfred spoke as a resident of Chairfactory Road, he has seen the MacDonald property transformed into something beautiful. He regards Carol and Jerome as friends. He remembers a Planning Board hearing regarding the extension that was not very friendly. When he saw the letter from the town, he was struck, not in a good way. Winfred stated, he is all for good uses to maintain the character of this wonderful area. He wants to make sure the uses are in line with the buildings, the history, and the infrastructure. He is in favor of a boutique hotel, a café, and things that fit into the existing buildings. He can not see manufacturing, light industrial, or a campground within a thousand yards of Darrow Road. Looking at the hoops that Carol and Jerome had to go through for almost two years, if this is the start of a process, he thinks it is wonderful. He would like to see a comprehensive plan for this area with expanded use, uses that support the buildings, but do not destroy and damage this history.

John Trainor: John commented, he grew up behind the Berkshire Farm in a Shaker house. He currently lives on Chairfactory Road, he is thrilled to hear what is going on, thrilled that Gabriel can assure them that the Abode is functioning, thrilled with what Carol and Jerome are doing and the ideas they have. Those people who want to have some of the uses, not all, but some of them, if they can help them apply for grants, make suggestions, set some standards. He stated he is happy about this meeting, he has gotten some great ideas and has seen some people who are willing to do great work, even if it is only supportive. We are not all rich, we cannot go handing out things, but they can discover how to look for grants, he has heard there are some out there. He stated, somebody made the point to keep trying.

Melba Kerman: Melba spoke, stating she lives across the road at the little gray shed you see and they have been there a couple of years. She thanked the Ruins at Sassafras for being good neighbors because every now and then she hears a little music, but it always shuts down at the right time and they have not seen a lot of cars or a huge increase in parking lots, idling diesel trucks and all the things they came here to get away from. She stated, she believes there is an intelligent way to make some sort of profitable use of these beautiful old buildings.

She stated, it is very difficult to get this stuff right because of unintended consequences. Having seen other different communities, things can happen that one does not originally foresee coming in terms of commercial development. She stated, it is important and difficult to somehow keep things in good taste to also ensure there is not night sky pollution, excess noise, a huge influx of delivery trucks, clean drinking water. She stated, there is nothing wrong in trying to run a hotel but you need a lot more infrastructure. They

have seen disastrous consequences in the city where rapidly gentrifying areas of NJ, Brooklyn, and Queens where they do not have clean drinking water because so many high rises have gone up and zoning was hand waived away.

She would like to hear more about a comprehensive plan that was mentioned and more concrete details. She pointed out, another reality is they have another treasure here that is the Pittsfield State Forest, that is their backyard and she is in love with that land, the trees, and the fact that at night they can see the stars and this is not to be taken for granted anymore as more and more of the US is paved, trees are cut, LEDs are put everywhere, and we are losing our forests and wilderness. She thinks this could work with a lot of caution, fact checking and attorneys so everyone will know exactly what is happening now and in the future. She would like to be of help on the nature preservation side.

Sharon Moon: Sharon spoke on behalf of the fire company. She has fourteen years of service on local volunteer fire companies. She stated, the dorms at Darrow are not easily accessible to emergency services and they are not safe. They do not have a firetruck that can reach five stories.

Bob Gilson: Bob stated he weed whacks at the Shaker Museum so you can see the dam. He has been to eight Shaker communities; his wife is on the board of the Shaker Museum and it is a place that is important to him and our community. One of his concerns is he thinks they need to find ways to make those buildings vital, ways to bring in income to help preserve our historical legacy. At the same time, he has seen historically here, the philosophy has been, it is their property and they can do with it what they want. He finds that problematic. He stated, he hopes as they discuss what can be done in this historically important part of our community that we respect the integrity of what is there. He stated, if there is going to be zoned manufacturing, it should be manufacturing that somehow represents something of the Shaker legacy. If there is going to be a hotel, it should be done in a way that preserves what is there. Bob stated, there are tremendous opportunities, but at the same time, he wants to see codes, covenants, and regulations that protect our buildings and our historical heritage.

Steve Pause: Steve, Shaker Preservation Committee member stated, he lived at the Abode for four years, is currently employed at the Abode, and a new faculty member at the Darrow School. He currently lives in one of the dorms that is owned by the museum. One of the reasons he wanted to be on the committee was he was working in the garden and someone drove up who had not been there in forty plus years stopped and asked him questions about Second family, Carol, and Jerome's property, he explained that it was purchased by a private couple who are in the process of turning it into a museum and holding special events. The visitor responded with a frown. Steve stated, his response was, at one point he agreed with their dissatisfaction but he has seen what the buildings looked like when the new owners moved in and what they look like now, with what they have done with the property. He thinks what they are doing with the land is commendable and whatever we can do to help promote that kind of growth is necessary because we were in danger of losing those buildings. He stated, the past year, the discussions were what would

happen with the Abode, not that he moved to Darrow, the question is what will happen to Darrow. The ever-present question is what will happen to the Shaker buildings. He stated, this past year has been eye-opening for himself and the town to see we only have one chance to save these properties. He is excited to see what they can do with it. He stated, a lot of what was brought up tonight is broad strokes. Saying things like manufacturing or hotel/motel, those are generalities that we as specialists and lay people have come up with and we are starting to reach the limits of what they can do. It is good to be having this discussion now because one of the things that the committee is talking about is bringing on a historic preservation lawyer to help craft all these things to bring them from the chainsaw down to the scalpel. Steve stated, the lawyer they are talking with is great, they have had several conversations with her but it costs money. The lawyer has been donating her time to the committee because she is also passionate about this kind of thing. At some point they will need to discuss what the town can do to help support this.

Jeff Weeks: Jeff asked if there is a survey of the area that shows specifically the buildings, their condition, if they are occupied, unoccupied, ownership, and then open land to get an idea of exactly what they are talking about?

Ted Salem and Supervisor Houghtling: Both responded that they are not aware of anything like that. Ted commented, the building department might have something. Supervisor Houghtling responded, the building department has parcel files for every parcel up there, but it would only go back as far as permits were put in place.

Bob Gilson: Bob commented, there is a Shaker community in Kentucky called Pleasant Hill, they have a hotel, and restaurant. He stated eight years ago, he was interim Director of the Shaker of the Museum for three months and one of the things he looked at was an economic study that was produced in the Massachusetts side. At that time, Hancock Shaker Village estimated they had 54,000 visitors a year, and the average visitor spent on average \$150.00. He stated, if we think about doing something that would attract visitors, it could have a profound economic impact on our town. He thinks if we add industrial in there, it will detract from that.

Evan Stoller: Evan commented, he thinks the best route to take is some sort of organization into this future endeavor. There might be a restaurant, a hotel in the wrong spot. He feels, if it can be organized somehow, an overlay of organization that says here are places to stay, here are restaurants. He stated, he is concerned with the industrial aspect. When you start a business that requires trucking, a loading dock, and employees you will not start thinking about what is best for the history, you will think about your bottom line. He stated, we need to be careful, to get more organized, and to stipulate exactly how these businesses will work. We need money and income, but if you do not stipulate stuff, it takes off in a direction that some of these guys were saying.

Winfred Fuchshofen: Winfred stated, there is a development on West family that is about 300 acres and 270 acres go into a conservation easement. He would like to see, if they come up with a comprehensive plan for these buildings, to see additional conservation easements. It is a beautiful area and there is a danger of over development.

Christopher Steadman: Christopher (Gabriel) spoke and gave a cautionary tale about what can happen. A little over a year ago, when prior Abode management decided they were done with Mount Lebanon, he met with appraiser who were doing an inventory of the Abode buildings and land. One of the things that encouraged him to save the Abode was listening to these guys. The appraisers saw many ideas of how to maximize a profit out of the Abode area. This is what you would be looking at if you cannot maintain the buildings or generate income. Christopher stated, you are not going to do this with grants, they will help a little but you still must continuously maintain the property and heat the buildings.

Supervisor Houghtling read the following emails:

(1)

June 26, 2023

Dear Tistrya,

Thank you for your letter of June 5, 2023 regarding plans for the historic Shaker site on Mount Lebanon. The work of the Shaker Preservation Committee and the Zoning Rewrite Committee is clearly of great importance. As long time residents of Mount Lebanon, we are keenly interested in the plans. Unfortunately, George and I are unable to attend the meeting on Tuesday night, so I am emailing you this letter with some questions. Obviously the planning is still in its early stages so my thoughts may well be premature. To that point, I note that George and I are strongly in favor of the Town undertaking the effort to draft a proposed plan for preserving Mount Lebanon, not just as a matter of important historic preservation, but also as a significant element of the Town's identity and future development.

Regarding some questions:

- The list of proposed expanded uses seems extremely broad for Mount Lebanon, regardless of necessary further approvals and design standards. Is there a reason for this?

- Without actual design standards, it is difficult to envision how some of these uses would fit within the Shaker context on Mount Lebanon.

- Some of the uses seem more appropriate to and in fact already exist in the central business district of downtown New Lebanon. Are these uses more appropriate to that area and necessary to increase its vibrancy as well?

- Some of the uses need more detailed descriptions to fully understand and it would help to clarify further which uses (some of which seem to overlap) would only be permitted in existing buildings.

Thank you for your consideration of these preliminary thoughts and of all the important work by you and the Town Board.

Sincerely,

Adele Waitland

(2)

We, Kyther Walcroft and Rowen Henning, respectfully submit the following to this evening's meeting:

We are strongly opposed to the proposed changes to the current zoning of the properties in question. While we are not opposed to historic preservation we believe there are other non-commercial ways this might be accomplished, and that such preservation should be at the expense of the owners of the included private properties.

We have chosen to live here specifically because of the seclusion that doing so offers. This is a quiet tucked-in residential area. Not the main drag of the town. Additionally, the residents that would be impacted have only one way to and from their homes. There is no alternative route that would make it possible for us to avoid the activity and congestion such commercial enterprises would likely cause. It is our opinion that the infrastructure here cannot accommodate such an expansion.

We believe that the changes in zoning being proposed would be at the expense of the natural beauty, the sacred history, and the environmental integrity of the mountain...including the quality of life of the people living back here.

Sincerely:

Rowen Henning and Kyther Walcroft

CLOSING:

Supervisor Houghtling thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She stated there will be at least one more, if not more public input sessions with more fine tuned details. This was a great conversation to get the pulse of the community in general. She thinks there is a balance to be found. Supervisor Houghtling stated she thinks both are important, allowing some income revenue generation for the property owners and making sure that the quiet residential neighborhood where people chose to buy their homes does not get negatively impacted by noise, traffic, or pollution.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Supervisor Houghtling, to adjourn the meeting at 7:42pm. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Gordon.

Roll Call Vote:

Councilmember Rasmussen -	Aye
Councilmember Gordon -	Aye
Supervisor Houghtling -	Aye
Councilmember Trainor -	Aye
Councilmember Anthonisen-	Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Marcie Robertson
New Lebanon Town Clerk