

Historic Landmark Commission begins survey

Process should take a year to complete, at a cost of \$11,270

By **HEATHER NELLIS**
Recorder News Staff

NORTHVILLE — The Northville/Northampton Historic Landmark Commission has begun the process of completing a renaissance-level survey of the village and town, which was partly funded by a grant from the New York state Preservation League that was presented last Tuesday.

The commission hired Andrea Becker to do the survey. Becker is a full-time employee of the state Department of Transportation as an environmental contact specializing in historic preservation.

“The commission interviewed me three years ago to complete the survey, but the grant kept getting denied,” said Becker.

According to a request for proposal written by Becker to the commission, “although (she) has never carried out a survey like this, (she) believes this project suits (her).”

Becker began work on the survey last month, mostly researching “the background and history of the village and town, reading books about the area, and developing themes.”

The most prominent themes to arise have been the “logging era,” the “Sacandaga Park era,” and the “post-reservoir era,” said Becker.

Commission Chairman Warren “Skip” Taylor said that the commission has already taken recent (dated 2005 or later) photos of all possible historic sites to aid in the Annotated Property List. According to the commission’s RFP, “each property must be ranked as eligible, potentially eligible, or ineligible” for listing on the register.

The survey will be broken up into three parts.

“The first thing we have to do is figure out the town registry,” said Becker. “If someone decides that they would like to be on the registry, any improvements on the home will be acknowledged through the increased value.”

“The second thing that will happen is it will be decided who gets tax breaks or not” for those homeowners who are entered into the registry, she said.

“The tax benefit intent of the ordinance is to provide incentives primarily for ‘major’ restorations of historically significant property,” said Willem Monster, the originator of the landmark ordinance and the commission, and who held the position of chairman for the board’s first three years of existence. “Structures such as the old hotel on North Main Street and the former Star Theatre are the type of preservation projects it (is) meant for. Those buildings pose a real challenge in terms of cost and recycling them into a new adaptive use.”

“The third part is starting the process of nominating houses or districts to be put on the National Register of Historic Places,” Becker continued. “This is a very significant step.”

Becker said that her nominations will be presented to the State Advisory Board, and that this office will make the determinations.

“What a lot of people don’t know about this process is that



Carla Kolbe / For the Recorder

ABOVE: The New York State Preservation League presented a \$5,500 grant to the Northville/Northampton Historic Landmark Commission last Tuesday, Nov. 11. From left are (front row) Dina Bosch, Linda Kemper, Northampton supervisor; Gail Cramer, Northville-Northampton historian; Erin Tobin, the league’s eastern and northern NY regional director of technical and grant programs; Peter Betz, Fulton County historian; (back row) Andrea Becker, preservation consultant; Lou Giles, Willem Monster, and Skip Taylor, commission chairman. **BELOW:** The Harris/Griffin House, built in 1902, is located at 421 Bridge St. During the 1940s, a New York State Trooper barracks was operated within the home.

anyone can nominate a structure to be put into the registry,” she said. “It doesn’t have to be the homeowner, and they can of course deny the nomination.”

“The other thing people don’t understand is that once they are on the National Registry, they believe that they can’t modify their house, which is untrue,” Becker said. “Unless it’s part of a federally funded program, that’s when it becomes protected.”

According to town Historian Gail Cramer, three houses have been placed on the local registry so far, including the Spier House, the museum, and the F-G Railroad Station in the park. The structures have received plaques for display to designate their historical status.

“We will be sending out letters to other possible houses, too,” said Cramer.

The survey’s total cost, according to Becker’s RFP, is \$11,270, and should take one-year to complete.

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— Andrea Becker, preservation consultant

Once completed, all of the information will be compiled into both digital and printed form, which will be available at the Northville Public Library.

Contact Heather Nellis at heather.nellis@recordernews.com.



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