

Lincoln Historical Commission Review, Feb 29, 2024

At its February 6, 2024 meeting, the Historical Commission (LHC) reviewed the application of the Community Center Building Committee (CCBC) to demolish the Hartwell Pods. The LHC is the town body that reviews requests to demolish buildings and structures in town under the Demolition Delay By-Law. The By-Law charges the LHC with determining whether a subject building has historical, cultural, and architectural significance to the town. In considering whether the Pods have historical, cultural, or architectural significance to the town, the LHC reviewed the history of the Ballfield Campus and the design of the Pods and the site by Lincoln Modern architect Henry B. Hoover.

The LHC found that the Pods are part of one of the first Modern school campuses in the country, designed with a philosophy which recognized that the built and natural environments play an important role in enriching students' educational experiences. The LHC also found that Hoover was an important, nationally-recognized architect who made many contributions to the built and landscape environments of the school campus and of Lincoln and surrounding communities. Additionally, the LHC found that Hoover's architectural detailing of the Pods was carefully conceived, particularly in terms of the fenestration and entry canopies. Finally, the LHC found that Hoover was an important landscape designer, who carefully considered the site design for each of his projects. The LHC found that Hoover's site design for the Pods frames a welcoming green space that is important to the Hartwell portion of the school campus.

If the Hartwell Pods are historically significant, what does this mean for the plans for the new Community Center building.

If the LHC determines that a building has a historical, cultural and architectural significance to the town, the LHC holds a second hearing to evaluate the proposed replacement design and to determine whether it is preferable to preserve the original building (in which case a 12-month demolition delay would follow, which can be shortened by agreement of the LHC and the applicant) or allow the replacement design to go forward.

Accordingly, since the LHC has now voted that the Hartwell Pods do have historical, cultural, and architectural significance to the town, the LHC will proceed to conduct the design review hearing at the CCBC's convenience. If, at the design review hearing, the LHC were to determine that it is preferable to preserve the Pods, a 12-month demolition delay would follow, during which time the LHC and CCBC would continue to discuss reaching agreement on a path forward. The 12-month delay could be shortened by mutual agreement of the LHC and the CCBC. If the parties fail to reach an agreement, the CCBC would be able to obtain a demolition permit after the expiration of the 12-month delay period.