

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, October 17, 2018, 1910 Building

Members Present: Chairman Bob Janes; Dot Cavanaugh; Paul Knezek; Elisa Grammer.

Historic Building Inventory

Mr. Janes reported that some owners of homes surveyed have shared concerns that the draft Inventory contains incorrect or incomplete information. Ms. Cavanaugh said that as an example, her house at the Training Field is incorrectly reported to have on its property an outbuilding that actually, as shown on the Assessor's data, belongs to her neighbor. The Inventory omits Ms. Cavanaugh's garage altogether. Ms. Cavanaugh also wondered about the criteria used to determine if a building is in good, fair, or whatever condition—is it historic completeness, structural soundness, or some other factor?

Chairman Janes said that the survey was required to be external only, partly in response to the sense that townspeople might have concerns about undesired entry into homes. The Commission also discussed the timeframe of the survey (stopping around 1960) and Mr. Knezek raised the question of the accuracy of some homeowner stories. It was agreed that the goal is the best accuracy possible.

Mr. Janes shared two versions of a draft report to Town Meeting about the Historic Building Inventory. The Commission agreed that it is important to thank former members Jeff Clewley and Amy Friend for their work and that Mr. Janes obtain information from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) about means of correcting or supplementing the Inventory. Mr. Janes said that he will indicate the importance of completeness and accuracy in the Inventory and will try to learn about means for corrections/additions prior to the meeting.

As to next steps for Inventory finalization and publication, Mr. Janes explained that this—along with how corrections might be made—is up to the MHC. The Inventory will be scanned and will go on the MHC website. The West Newbury Historical Commission website will add a link to the report, and it will be in the library and Town offices. The grant completion report to the state that Mr. Clewley and Ms. Conway had worked on is finished. We will also determine the copyright status of photos in the Inventory.

Ms. Grammer noted that at the Commission's August meeting, it had been agreed that with the Inventory roll out, the Commission planned to work on

- 1) Publicizing the Inventory in the newspaper and on social media, including posting it on the Commission webpage;

- 2) Preparing a letter to property owners with such information as
 - a. The property's Inventory results;
 - b. Steps for Historic Preservation National Registry status;
 - c. Facts pertaining to façade preservation easements;
- 3) Considering another grant for further work on an inventory beyond Main Street.

With regard to façade preservation easements, Ms. Grammer shared a document taken from Historic New England's [website](#) explaining that organization's program for easements to preserve privately owned historic buildings. She recommended providing only the first 2 ½ pages (which give an overview) of this document to Inventory homeowners. She said that historic preservation easements have an advantage over demolition delay laws in that easements offer a consensual win-win that does not rely on delay and regulation but rather directly obtains the desired outcome of preservation.

The Commission unanimously agreed that it will pursue a second inventory covering structures outside of Main Street.

Mr. Janes will consult with Community Preservation Committee Administrator Jean Nelson about paperwork to begin the second phase of the Inventory. To determine the buildings to be surveyed, the Commission will consult its list. Also in this process, the Commission will inquire about additional costs or other issues involved with consultation and indoor inspections with willing homeowners.

Review of Minutes

The Commission voted 4-0-0 to approve the minutes of September 19, 2018.

Carr Post

Chairman Janes noted that he toured the Carr Post with Carr Post Committee Member Marlene Switzer and the fellow who restored Newburyport's powder house. This expert thought that the Carr Post was not in that bad shape, but the recent work to stabilize the building did damage to inside woodwork, etc. The leaky roof has been fixed.

Nonetheless, mold is an urgent issue in the basement. A dehumidifier should be installed in the basement, which has a dirt floor.

The Carr Post Committee will become active and will not be merged with the Historical Commission. It was reported that Town Counsel/Clerk McCarron suggested that Carr Post be used as a memorial containing cremated remains. Questions arose about how access would be given to those wishing to visit a loved one's remains.

Ms. Grammer shared with Commission members a document resulting from an internet search for sources of funding for Carr Post.

West Newbury Cemeteries

Ms. Grammer shared a document containing excerpts from Chapter 114 of the Massachusetts General Laws, which addresses cemeteries. This contains a clear mandate that a Town must provide a place to bury anybody who dies within Town limits. While these laws contain provisions under which a Town may take over and pay for cemeteries, if and how much a Town pays to do so appears discretionary. And if a Town takes over cemeteries, the law provides for a board of cemetery commissioners. Mr. Janes noted that the current trustees of the Town's private cemeteries could become Cemetery Commissioners.

Mr. Janes also explained that Groveland and Merrimac include a cemetery operating fund in their budgets and if costs go over, the additional money comes out of the cemeteries' funds. He noted that at some of our cemeteries, there is a question of who exactly are the trustees—neither the Assessor's Office nor any other Town department seems to have this information. The active cemeteries do, however, have caretakers at this time. The problem is that even for those who have trustees and caretakers, no successors appear in the offing.

Mr. Janes said that the next step in this regard is a November meeting of the current cemetery trustees. The question is whether they want to give up control to the Town.

The Commission discussed Susan Follansbee's book, [*Cemetery Records of West Newbury*](#) (Picton Press 1997), as a highly valuable resource that can be used in connection with managing Town cemeteries and needs to be preserved—ideally digitized. Ms. Grammer will pursue this question.

As to whether space remains in the Town cemeteries, Mr. Janes said that the old WPA (Works Progress Administration) maps indicate that the cemeteries should be full, but caretakers have been creatively finding room. The Chase Street cemetery has some extra space donated by the Knowles family. Those looking for burial space would probably go to the cemetery caretakers.

Mission Statement For Website

Ms. Grammer had circulated a document containing 1) the section of Massachusetts General Laws governing municipal historical commissions and 2) a draft webpage Historical Commission mission statement drawn from that statute. After discussion, including Ms. Conway's thoughts about using a very short statement with a more detailed explanation elsewhere, *the Commission agreed that*

- *The Historical Commission web homepage would contain a one-sentence mission statement, as edited to replace the term "responsible";*

- *A click-on document would be added with additional summary details of statutory authority;*
- *The proposed Demolition Delay Bylaw rejected at the April 2017 Town Meeting would be removed from the website.*

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Next Meeting

November 21, 2018 at 7 p.m.

Meeting Documents

- Draft statements for Town Meeting
- Extract from Historic New England website about historic preservation easements
- Summary of internet research re: possible Carr Post funding
- Excerpts from MGL Ch 114 re: cemeteries
- MGL provision concerning historical commissions & draft mission statement

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer