

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, January 2, 1910 Building

Members Present: Chairman Bob Janes; Jennifer Conway; Dot Cavanaugh; Elisa Grammer.

Historic Inventory

Ms. Conway explained that Town Manager Angus Jennings had prepared a proposal to have the Merrimack Valley Planning Council (MVPC) prepare mapping for the Phase 2 Historic Sites Survey (along with corrections for Phase 1 districts) using 28 hours of already-available funds for Local Technical Assistance (LTA). Using this approach means that we do not need to seek Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for this task. *The Commission voted unanimously to approve this approach, as outlined in Mr. Jennings' proposal.*

Ms. Conway also reported that our consultants provided the deliverables (sample forms) required by the end of December and are on track and on time. She will participate in a conference call with the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) and the consultants in the coming week or so (call was conducted Jan. 14).

Historic District

Ms. Conway noted that in their Phase 2 study, the consultants may propose additional historic districts for potential National Register listing. This might include areas on Maple and Mechanic Streets. She had no additional updates on this subject because her MHS contacts were not in the office over the year-end holidays.

Historic Marker

Ms. Grammer reported that the new Julian Steele historic marker has been made and is now with Department of Public Works Director Wayne Amaral. *The Commission signed the payment voucher for use of CPA funds and Ms. Grammer committed to providing this to the Town Accountant.*

Ms. Grammer noted that in consultation with the Steele family, April 11, 2020, had been selected as the date for the event unveiling the marker. She has not heard back from the Selectmen or the Town Manager about their ideas for this event. She said that she envisioned a simple event with cookies, water, coffee, and perhaps lemonade. This will cost something and a police detail in front of Town Hall will cost at least \$200—which it is not clear that the Historical Commission has left in its budget.

Ms. Grammer also noted that the Commission may want to consider whether a new historical marker should be erected for [Frances Keegan Marquis](#), whose Wikipedia article is now published. Captain Marquis was born and raised in West Newbury at 325 Main Street, a private home. *Ms. Grammer will ask the Town Counsel about how best to approach the owners and will report back to the Commission.*

Carr Post

Chairman Janes reviewed the three proposals the Town has received for the work to develop design plans for the Carr Post. The Carr Post Committee, along with the Town Manager and Town Counsel, will make the selection.

Funds, Budgeting

The Commission discussed the amount left in its budget for FY 2020, recognizing that of its \$500 budget, it spent \$175 on a new marker for the Quaker meetinghouse and another amount for postage regarding the potential historic districts. And still within FY 2020, we are looking at expenses for the Julian Steele event in April (prior to spring Town Meeting) and another historic district-related mailout. The Commission discussed options of 1) Selectmen's accounts covering the Steele event, 2) a special article at Town Meeting for the postage costs, or 3) a reserve fund transfer from the Selectmen/Finance Committee. *Ms. Conway agreed to ask the Town Manager about this when replying to his proposal about using the LTA allotment for mapping.*

Given the increased activity and budget needs, the Commission voted unanimously to request \$1,000 for FY 2021.

Annual Report

The Commission discussed the need to prepare an annual report for the Historical Commission, which would go into the Town Repot. *Ms. Grammer agreed to find out when the report would be due, and to prepare a draft.*

Potential Historical Commission projects for 2020

Cemeteries

Ms. Grammer summarized the following findings concerning cemeteries and the Town's role:

1. The Amesbury Society of Friends agrees and Assessor's records show that the Town of West Newbury owns the Quaker Cemetery established in 1855 and located at 134-36 Turkey Hill Road, and the Town also owns the adjacent lot to the northwest.
2. Under state law, the Town of West Newbury may take over any neglected cemetery (pop. 10 or more), must passively preserve ancient burial places (over 100 years old) generally for no other use, and has the authority to receive resources from third parties and/or to appropriate funds to maintain a public or private cemetery actively.
3. Under state law, the Town of West Newbury has the authority to enact bylaws establishing a 3-member, selectmen-appointed, board of cemetery commissioners responsible for managing the Town's public cemeteries and, under MGL ch 114 § 16, neglected cemeteries with a population of at least 10.

Chairman Janes reported that with the death of Rick Marchand in December, the Bridge Street cemetery has no caretaker. The Rural Cemetery and Walnut Hill Cemetery are in pretty good shape. He noted that other towns have taken over cemetery maintenance.

Stone walls

Ms. Conway and Ms. Cavanaugh discussed the idea of mapping the Town's stone walls. Ms. Grammer said that the Open Space Committee may be interested in this idea and at one point she researched protections for stone walls. Under Massachusetts statutes, 1) it is illegal to unilaterally disrupt boundary markers (and stone walls usually mark property lines) and 2) the Scenic Roadways law (which West Newbury has adopted in its bylaws) is supposed to protect trees and stone walls on every street in Town except Route 113. Ms. Grammer said that at one point she asked the Planning Board about strengthening these protections but has no confidence this will be done anytime soon. She also said that stone walls can be visible on the MVPC's MIMAP of West Newbury, so perhaps commissioning a map of our stone walls would be feasible. *Ms. Grammer will look into other towns' provisions protecting stone walls.*

Monthly stories

The Commission voted unanimously to continue the monthly Minute Histories with historical figures, starting with Julian Steele and followed by Frances Keegan Marquis in February—and to revise the website to move the 2019 stories about historical markers to a new webpage. The Commission discussed other potential historical figures in Town.

Minutes

The Commission unanimously voted to approve the minutes of December 3, 2019.

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Next meeting

February 19, 2020

Meeting documents

- Phase 2 Survey materials, including deliverables from the consultants and Mr. Jennings' mapping proposal
- Legal information about town ownership of Quaker Cemetery and statutory authorities for the town to take over maintenance of abandoned or neglected cemeteries, provided by Ms Grammer
- Draft Wikipedia article about Frances Keegan Marquis & draft Minute History story about Julian Steele

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer