

## West Newbury

### Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

**Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, January 14, 2021 Via Remote Participation--GoToMeeting**

**Members Present Remotely:** Chairman Bob Janes; Jennifer Conway; Dot Cavanaugh; Elisa Grammer via GoToMeeting. Also present, Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Wayne Amaral.

At the outset, Chairman Janes read the following statement: “Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the West Newbury Historical Commission will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible.”

#### **Painting Town Hall**

Mr. Amaral said that he is preparing the application for Community Preservation funds to clean, scrape, prime, and paint Town Hall. With additional costs for such items as replacing rotted wood, the projected cost for this has grown from \$63 K to about \$102 K. Other items requiring attention include fixing trim, shutters, and gutters. Additionally, no-longer-needed wires to the building will be removed and the unattractive fire alarm call box at the front door will, with Fire Chief permission, be moved to the corner. The existing wheelchair access ramp is not Americans With Disabilities Act compliant, and will be upgraded. This does not include window replacement (at perhaps \$5-6 K per window), for which the Town might seek a Green Communities grant.

Mr. Amaral said that the clapboards had been replaced somewhat recently and that lead paint is present on window trim only. In response to Mr. Janes’ comment about issues with water-based paint, Mr. Amaral said that DPW will be working with the contractor to apply the paint properly to maximize its useful life.

Ms. Cavanaugh, who is a Training Field resident and member of the Historic District Commission, said that the Historic District Commission lacks jurisdiction over paint color. She has spoken with the chair of that commission about the Town Hall painting and said that they would like to be kept informed and are expecting no radical changes.

Mr. Amaral noted that this is an important and lovely building whose architectural features should be allowed to pop with a good contrasting trim—all white paint hides the architectural detail. *The Commission generally agreed that the paint job should highlight the building. It was also agreed that this Commission, along with the Historic District Commission, would hold a publicly-noticed meeting at Town Hall with Mr. Amaral to discuss the Town Hall painting project.*

### State Register of Historic Places

Ms. Grammer said that the Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC's) MACRIS database shows that Town Hall is on the State Register of Historic Places, which would mean that certain approvals are required before various kinds of work or changes are undertaken on the building. Ms. Cavanaugh looked at the MHC's written list of State Registry places and found it unclear whether the Town Hall is on the State Register. Ms. Conway said that she believes that Town Hall is on the list. *She will check this and will also look into the kind of work that might trigger an MHC review.* She said that paint color is exempt from review.

Ms. Grammer said that her review indicates that the Carr Post is on the State Register, but Page School is not.

### Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund (MPPF) Grant

The Commission voted at its December 17 meeting to support use of Community Preservation funds for Town Hall painting and noted its preference to use grants where possible to help preserve CPC funds. Immediately thereafter, it asked DPW and the Town Manager for their guidance about using a MPPF grant.

With regard to a possible MPPF grant to defray Town Hall painting costs, Mr. Amaral said that his experience with grants is that their requirements and administrative burdens can outweigh their benefits. Earlier in the week, he outlined a three-pronged threshold screen or test (shared with the Commission by Ms. Grammer) to help determine if a grant is worth pursuing:

- 1) **The money.** Questions for consideration include such issues as a) whether the dollar amount outweighs the costs of seeking and complying with a grant, b) when and how the funding would occur, c) whether and what amount of the funding is assured, d) requirements for matching, etc.
- 2) **The strings attached.** Questions for consideration include such issues as a) changes that must be made to obtain grant funds, b) restrictions or requirements applicable during the project or work funded with grant monies, c) obligations associated with the grant that occur after the grant funds are disbursed, or that continue for any ongoing period, etc.
- 3) **The grant administration work.** Questions for consideration include such issues as a) what precisely are the requirements for reporting, submissions, etc for obtaining the grant (plus who will do this and who will ensure that all tasks/conditions are timely performed), b) requirements during the grant period (plus who will do this and who will ensure that all tasks/conditions are timely performed), c) requirements for grant close out (plus who will do this and who will ensure that all tasks/conditions are timely performed), d) ongoing obligations after the project and the grant are completed (plus who will do this and who will ensure that all tasks/conditions are timely performed), etc.

*Ms. Conway, who has extensive experience with and contacts concerning MHS grants, will be in touch with MHS and will examine the grant requirements. She will then share her findings.* She noted that the due date for an MPPF grant application is March 19, 2021.

*In light of these developments, the Commission determined to proceed with the January 19, 2021 presentation about the Almshouse Cemetery and raise the grant question if needed as soon as a determination to recommend the grant (if so decided) is made.*

### **Almshouse Cemetery**

The Commission's objectives for the Almshouse Cemetery of 1) installing a sign (like the white historic markers now in use) in front and 2) doing a cleanup of downed trees and brush involve DPW. Mr. Amaral said that the Selectmen can be expected to ask how much work and cost DPW would incur in this activity. Mr. Janes and Ms. Cavanaugh indicated that the initial cleanup will involve chainsaw work and removal of debris. After that, minor cleanup once or twice a year as needed would be envisioned. Commission members expressed interest in assisting and noted that other citizens may be willing to help.

*Mr. Amaral stated that the Commission is authorized to say this has been discussed with DPW and the Commission agreed to conduct a site walk at the Cemetery with Mr. Amaral to discuss the cleanup.*

(Mr. Amaral departed the meeting at this point.)

The Commission discussed the draft powerpoint for Mr. Janes' January 19, 2021 presentation to the Selectmen and agreed to the requests/recommendations for 1) a sign, 2) cleanup, 3) inclusion of the Cemetery in the Mill Pond conservation restriction on file with the Essex Registry of Deeds, and 4) inclusion of the Cemetery on maps of the Town.

*By unanimous roll call vote, the Commission approved use of the powerpoint in the January 19 presentation and, assuming no surprising outcome from that meeting with the Selectmen, authorized Ms. Grammer to share the powerpoint with the Town committees involved with this property, including the Mill Pond Committee (whose permission for the sign is required under the Mill Pond Management Plan), the Conservation Commission, and the Open Space Committee.*

### **Historic Sites Survey**

#### Phase 2

Ms. Conway said that she did hear from MHS that the check for Phase 2 had been sent. *Ms. Conway will be checking with the Town Accountant that this has been received.* Ms. Conway added that the final letter from MHS may be tied up somewhat with the COVID delays.

Ms. Grammer said that she has developed and uploaded a table of contents for each website posting for all Historic Sites Survey documents, with a place for Historical Commission comments (corrections) and with added photos for properties whose photos were omitted in the recent

surveys proper. She also uploaded older surveys from the MACRIS website, which included the churches, the Page School, and other buildings.

### Phase 3

Ms. Conway said that the applications for Community Preservation funds for Phase 3 have been submitted and *that she will participate in the CPC meeting scheduled about this scheduled for January 21.*

Ms. Grammer said that Bethany Groff Dorau, a professional historian who works for Historic New England, has written several history books about this area, and owns and lives in the historic Poore homestead on Poore's Lane, would like to help with the Phase 3 process. *The Commission determined to accept her offer and to invite her to meetings where the Phase 3 Survey development is discussed.*

### **Annual report**

*By unanimous roll call vote, the Commission approved the draft Historical Commission submission for the Town Annual Report, subject to Mr. Janes' edits.*

### **Monthly stories**

*By unanimous roll call vote, the Commission approved 1) the story for February about the post office, subject to Mr. Janes' consultation with the post office to ensure accuracy, and 2) the story for March about Mill Pond, subject to Ms. Grammer's consultation with the Mill Pond Committee to ensure accuracy.*

### **Minutes**

*Deferred*

### **Other business**

None

### **Adjournment**

The Commission adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

### **Meeting Documents**

- Draft Historical Commission Annual Report
- Draft powerpoint about the Almshouse Cemetery
- Draft Mill Pond story
- Draft Post Office story

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer