

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, March 5, 2021 Via Remote Participation--GoToMeeting

Members Present Remotely: Chairman Bob Janes; Jennifer Conway; Dot Cavanaugh; Elisa Grammer via GoToMeeting. Also present, Eagle Scout candidate Kade Dennis, Department of Public Works Director Wayne Amaral, and other members of the public.

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."

Cemeteries

Almshouse Cemetery

As to cleanup of the Almshouse Cemetery, Mr. Amaral said that DPW will first need to tackle the large and dangerous-for-amateurs job of removing the very large downed trees. DPW will do this when staff are not otherwise occupied and it is not snowy or muddy. Conditions will be need to be dry, ideally with frozen ground. Ms. Grammer will try to work with Mr. Amaral to take some photos/ video of this work to record the event and in case we want to make a movie about this. Mr. Amaral also suggested taking some "before" photos.

Eagle Scout Project

The Commission welcomed Eagle Scout candidate Kade Dennis, who has volunteered to undertake work on the Almshouse Cemetery. Mr. Janes, Ms. Cavanaugh, Ms. Conway, and Ms. Grammer all welcomed him on board and commended the work he has done so far on the Almshouse Cemetery. Mr. Dennis described the work he would be interested in doing and outlined the resources he may be able to draw on.

Ms. Grammer stressed that the Almshouse Cemetery is on Town-owned land that is subject to a [Conservation Restriction](#) and the [Mill Pond Management Plan](#). The Historical Commission prepared a [powerpoint presentation](#) with background and requests for specific approvals and at [that meeting](#) secured permission from the Selectmen and the Mill Pond Committee to

- Erect a sign (like the \$200 white historic markers) on Poorhouse Lane in front of the cemetery.
- Clear brush, fallen trees, clean up the cemetery.
- Include reference to and a map of Almshouse Cemetery in the Mill Pond Conservation Restriction filed with Essex Deeds and in the Mill Pond management plan.
- Include the Almshouse Cemetery on trail maps and maps of the Town.

She suggested that additional activities would require additional permissions and that it would be good to coordinate with groups having responsibility for the Mill Pond Conservation Area.

The Commission discussed potential tasks to be undertaken by one and/ or all, including

- Keeping in contact and coordinating with DPW, the Town, and the affected groups including the Conservation Commission, the Open Space Committee, the Mill Pond Committee, Essex County Greenbelt.
- Cleaning up the cemetery once DPW is done, including removing brush and restacking some of the stones in the surrounding stone wall, which initially was 5' high.
- Carefully looking for any grave markers, whether stone or other material.
- Obtaining and installing the Almshouse Cemetery sign.
- Potentially working with the Mill Pond Committee on new trail signs (which are in the works in any event) that would include reference to the Almshouse Cemetery.
- Possibly preparing for the Historical Commission website a map of cemeteries in Town, with additional photos and information Mr. Janes has collected—like the [map and information about historic markers](#).
- Coordinating the research on Almshouse burials done by Elisa Grammer ([in spreadsheet format](#), done before the [Almshouse records](#) were found), and Kade Dennis and his uncle Scott Dennis ([in .pdf format](#) based largely on Almshouse records), Dot Cavanaugh (handwritten, working to reconcile all of the above).
- Preparing a short history about the Almshouse Cemetery like that done for the [Quaker Cemetery](#).
- Preparing a [QR](#) to be placed on the Almshouse Cemetery sign, as has been done for other historic markers (like the one for Julian Steele in front of Town Hall).
- Preparing a movie about the Almshouse Cemetery, like that done by the Town in connection with [Julian Steele for the Historical Commission](#) or that done by [Pentucket High School students about Adventure Land](#).

The Commission generally agreed that all were highly impressed with Mr. Dennis and by unanimous roll call vote, accepted his proposal to make the Almshouse Cemetery his Eagle Scout project. The Commission also agreed with Mr. Janes that the Commission—and not Mr. Dennis—should take on the responsibility to coordinate with the other organizations affected.

Ms. Grammer agreed to notify other affected groups about Mr. Dennis' participation as an Eagle Scout candidate. Mr. Dennis also agreed to get in touch with Dot Cavanaugh about reconciling the research about the cemetery.

Historic Marker Cemetery Sign

Ms. Grammer noted that the Historical Commission has funds remaining in its FY21 budget to purchase a sign like the other historic markers in Town. She expressed a preference to use those funds because it would be useful for the Commission to set a track record of using its budget—

particularly if it seeks to establish its own separate fund, as allowed by [Massachusetts law](#), in the event that it publishes its monthly stories in book format and receives donations for the books. Mr. Janes agreed that it would be appropriate for the Commission to retain its donations in an account separate from the General Fund in such a case. *The Commission agreed to use FY21 funds in its budget for the sign.*

The Commission discussed potential wording for the sign, and potential additional signage. *It was agreed to do additional research concerning this matter and Ms. Grammer agreed to provide the information she has about the name(s) used for the cemetery.*

Amending Conservation Restriction, working with Essex Greenbelt

Ms. Grammer reported that she has not had much success in attempting to garner the attention of Essex County Greenbelt Association, and has tried again recently.

Other Cemeteries

Ms. Conway described a recent situation in which 43 Turkey Hill Road, which contains a small Ordway family cemetery, was recently put up for sale. The next door neighbors, Ms. Conway's friends, are Ordway relations, and have been taking care of this cemetery, which may originally have been on their property—the title has some questions. Mr. Janes noted that he has collected information about all the Town cemeteries but lacks details and photos for this one on Turkey Hill. *Ms. Conway will put him in touch with her friends.* Ms. Grammer wondered if information about and a map of cemeteries in Town should go on the Historical Commission website.

Town Hall Painting

Mr. Amaral gave an update, noting that the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has approved as eligible for CPC funding the Town Hall painting project. He noted that photos of past Town Hall paint jobs show a variety of color schemes and that the shutters are a relatively new addition. It costs less to use only one color, so a determination about color scheme should occur prior to contracting. Mr. Janes expressed an interest in outlining and highlighting some of the trim, and Mr. Amaral concurred.

By unanimous roll call vote the Commission expressed its support of the painting project and use of CPC funds. It was agreed that the Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission, and Mr. Amaral will meet when the weather is better to select a recommended color scheme

Training Field Sign

The Training Field sign, which was recently replaced, blew down in the recent winds. Mr. Amaral said that his staff had collected the sign and that he does not believe it was damaged. DPW is investigating whether the post and its cross beam may have rotted and as needed will make needed repairs.

Historic Sites Survey

Ms. Conway said that the CPC did approve eligibility for the 3d Historic Sites Survey. Ms. Conway will confirm with the CPC Administrator that the CPC will prepare a warrant for this matter for Spring Town Meeting. Mr. Janes agreed to help advise on finalizing this with the CPC and Ms. Grammer offered to help as needed with any presentation to the Finance Committee.

Historic Districts

No update.

Monthly Stories

The Commission approved for publication the draft stories about Town Hall and Adventure Land. Ms. Grammer listed some of the topics under consideration for the rest of the year.

Minutes

By unanimous roll call vote the Commission approved the minutes of December 17, 2020 and January 14, 2021.

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Meeting Documents

--Mill Pond [Conservation Restriction](#)

--[Mill Pond Management Plan](#)

--Historical Commission [powerpoint presentation](#) for 1/19/2021 BOS meeting

--Draft Town Hall story

--Draft Adventure Land story

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer