

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, April 29, 2021 Via Remote Participation--GoToMeeting

Members Present Remotely: Chairman Bob Janes; Dot Cavanaugh; Elisa Grammer via GoToMeeting.

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.”

Almshouse Cemetery

Ms. Grammer noted that the [Conservation Restriction](#) concerning the Mill Pond area (which contains the Almshouse Cemetery) is aimed at keeping natural space undisturbed and is quite restrictive about what can be done on the land. She said she is continually updating other groups with jurisdiction—the Conservation Commission, the Mill Pond Committee, the Open Space Committee, the Department of Public Works, and the Town Manager—about the Almshouse Cemetery. She added that Mill Pond has many devoted, and sometimes conflicting, users. This past Monday, the Conservation Commission determined to have the Conservation Agent remove unauthorized bog bridges some unknown persons installed in the Mill Pond area.

By unanimous roll call vote, the Commission agreed that

- *A Commission member should be present when work is being done at the Almshouse Cemetery*
- *It can accommodate Eagle Scout candidate Kade Dennis’ proposed dates of June 5 & 6 from 9 am to 1 pm*
- *Ms. Grammer will continue to keep affected Town organizations up to date, and Commission members will update those townspeople who have reached out with an interest to help cleaning up the cemetery so they can participate if they wish*

The Commission also discussed getting a more clear idea from Mr. Dennis of exactly what he and his group plan to do and how this will unfold. Ms. Grammer noted that Mr. Dennis has been helpful in providing video and narration for the partial draft movie about the Almshouse Cemetery and said that she had asked him recently by email to provide the following:

Also, for the movie, it would be great to have Kade provide narration (no video needed, so he could use a smartphone voice memos type app) along the lines of

My plan is to start work at the Almshouse Cemetery by taking on _____. I expect to have a volunteer team consisting of [how many roughly] _____ from [where—scouts, friends, etc] _____, in addition to possible volunteers from West Newbury. My idea is to divide the work up by _____. Once [first thing] _____ is

completed, we will turn to work on _____. Final tasks include _____. In addition to this planned work at the cemetery, I have done _____ to help make this project a success.

The Eagle Scout approval process involves _____. I should learn if I become an Eagle Scout about _____ months after the project is complete.

The Commission agreed that these points should be clarified before Mr. Dennis' work begins.

Ms. Grammer noted that Kevin Bowe of the WN Cable Advisory Committee has offered to help with the movie (he has seen the current partial draft) and that something for future consideration is a possible screening of the movie at Town Hall with panel discussion to follow.

Historical materials in Town Offices basement

The Commission discussed having found valuable historic documents (such as veteran's records, Almshouse records, and more) in the several visits to the basement store room so far. Documents that appear important have been placed in the safe nearest the door to the basement room.

By unanimous roll call vote the Commission decided to investigate the sale of surplus old annual town reports to townspeople, possibly for \$5 per copy, 3 for \$10, via a sale in Town Hall (possibly at the same time as the Friends of the Library Book Sale) and via the Town website Historical Commission pager. It was agreed that Ms. Cavanaugh will first ask Town Clerk McCarron about this idea, and if yes, the Commission could seek permission from the Town Manager and Select Board.

The Commission also agreed that Ms. Grammer will update the list of important documents found so far and that in future meetings the group will consider

- *How to continue the process of going through documents in the jumble in the basement in an orderly fashion*
- *What documents should be digitized and how this should be done*
- *Putting together a master list of archive documents and consolidating documents recently found with those in the archive room in the basement*

Other business

Minute history stories

Ms. Grammer said that the next story will probably be about the origins of the Crane Pond Wildlife Management Area. She noted that if Mr. Janes could come up with 12 suggested veterans with interesting stories, veterans might be a theme for next year. She also noted that someone is writing a PhD dissertation and likely a book about Hazel Albertson.

Historic Sites Survey

Ms. Cavanaugh said that while she was working in the Assessor's office, someone called to inquire about the history of a home on Main Street. She was able to show the Assessor's staff where the Historic Sites Survey can be found on the Historical Commission website.

The Commission discussed an inquiry from someone located in Newburyport whose house may have been moved from West Newbury. The letter asked that this home be included in the West Newbury Historic Sites Survey. Mr. Janes said that he had responded with information about the house and has not heard back, indicating that the letter writer has lost interest. It was noted that it is not clear whether the West Newbury Historic Sites Survey should include properties not in West Newbury.

Sites of Historic Importance

The Commission generally agreed to try to consider before the end of this year other potential important sites—such as cemeteries possibly—to add to the list.

Minutes

By unanimous roll call vote the Commission approved the minutes of March 24, 2021.

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Meeting Documents

none

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer

DRA