

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:08 pm, June 15, 2021

Town Offices, first floor meeting room

Members Present Chairman Bob Janes; Dot Cavanaugh; Elisa Grammer, Jen Conway.

Almshouse Cemetery

Ms. Grammer stated for the record that she had repeatedly told Jonathan Dennis, Eagle Scout candidate Kade Dennis' father, that the Almshouse Cemetery in part of sensitive conservation land subject to many restrictions and that no work was to occur without a Historical Commission member present. Nonetheless, without telling anyone from the Historical Commission and with no Town representative present, Jonathan Dennis arranged to have an earth moving machine denude all the vegetation surrounding the Almshouse Cemetery. The Historical Commission did not authorize or support this earth mover activity. She stated that at her request, some leaf mulch was spread after the fact, but that bare ground remains.

Ms. Conway will draft a thank you note from the Historical Commission to Kade Dennis. Mr. Janes reported that Jonathan Dennis suggested that the Historical Commission could try to see if University of New Hampshire has systems that would allow scanning of the cemetery to determine gravesites. Ms. Conway reported that she checked with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) about grants to fund such an activity, and met with no success. Among other things, a cemetery would have to be on the National Register of Historic Places even to be eligible. *It was generally agreed that since we do not have a good list of who is buried at the cemetery, this effort may not provide very meaningful results.*

Ms. Grammer said that an upcoming monthly story will be about the Almshouse Cemetery and the Commission viewed a draft movie about preserving the Almshouse.

Historic Sites Survey

Ms. Conway reported that she talked with MHC about the status of a planned West Newbury grant request for a third and final Historic Sites Survey. She reported that MHC is awarding current grants now and likely will entertain new application late in the fall. It will be important to capture all remaining sites in need of surveying and that built into the RFP should be the intent to include (with the owner's permission) homes far from the road. Mr. Janes said that a number of houses on Middle Street are far from the road. We will also make clear that we need individual survey sheets for each property—as opposed to the group approach used in the most recent survey.

Mr. Janes said that he had completed Historic Sites sheets for the cemeteries in Town. *It was agreed that he will share that information with Ms. Grammer, who will put it on the Historical Commission webpage.*

Designating additional places of historic significance

By unanimous vote, the Commission added the following cemeteries to the list of historically significant sites in West Newbury:

- Bridge Street Cemetery
- Merrimack Cemetery
- Rural Cemetery
- Crane Neck Cemetery
- Quaker Cemetery
- Walnut Hill Cemetery
- Sawyer Hill Burial Ground (Indian Hill Street)
- Almshouse Cemetery (Poorhouse Lane)
- Ordway Cemetery (Turkey Hill Road)

The Commission also agreed that Mr. Janes will reach out to the owners of these properties to let them know of this status—which allows the expenditure of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, but imposes no obligations or limitations on the property owners.

Town Hall Painting

No new developments

Using CPA funds to restore broken and tipped stones at cemeteries

Mr. Janes said that perhaps 100 grave stones need to be righted or fixed in the Town's major cemeteries. He proposed seeking CPA funds to do this. *The Commission generally agreed to support this, and Mr. Janes will notify the cemetery trustees of this opportunity.*

Archival information in Town Hall basement, Carr Post, Major Boyd Post records, monorail items, etc--organizing, scanning, etc

Ms. Cavanaugh and Ms. Grammer said that they have been working through documents in the Town Offices basement and identified many archival materials that need preservation. Historical Commission members are perhaps best suited as volunteers to identify worthwhile items, but the Library offers expertise in cataloguing and organizing and scanning information. This could include not only items found in the basement, but also military and other records Mr. Janes has identified.

It was generally agreed that all Historical Commission members would like to meet with Library staff to discuss how to go about this. Also, Ms. Grammer will share with Ms. Conway and & Mr. Janes the list of items found in the basement.

Mr. Janes noted that some WWI-related materials are in French and should be translated. Ms. Conway said that her college student niece may be able to do the translation.

Ms. Cavanaugh and Ms. Grammer said that they also found a very large amount of duplicative old annual town reports in the basement. Ms. Cavanaugh checked with the Town clerk, who approved the sale of the excess annual reports. *It was agreed that the Commission will ask the Select Board to declare the annual reports surplus so that they may be sold.*

Minutes

By unanimous vote the Commission approved the minutes of April 25, 2021.

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Meeting Documents

List of sites currently designated as historically significant and cemeteries for consideration as historically significant

Draft monthly story about factories in WN

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer

DRAFT