

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, December 19, 2018, 1910 Building

Members Present: Chairman Bob Janes; Dot Cavanaugh; Paul Knezek; Elisa Grammer.

Also Present: Bicentennial Committee Members Greg Garnache; KC Swallow; & Steve Swallow

Open Space Committee Report

The Commission reviewed portions of the Open Space and Recreation Plan and suggested several edits, as well as additional discussion of the 2018 Historic Sites Survey and the three historical districts identified on Main Street.

The Commission also considered the draft report's recommended action items. It recommended deleting the proposal to expand the Training Field Historic District, inasmuch as 1) this is the purview of the Historic District Commission, 2) it was unclear what expansion was suggested, 3) Massachusetts Historic District status requires Historic District Commission approval for property owners to do certain remodeling, and 4) a number of steps including a study, a report, a public hearing, and a bylaw amendment would be required. The Commission also added such action items as reviewing use of historic preservation easements (in lieu of a Demolition Delay Bylaw) and exploring means of preserving and maintaining town cemeteries.

In the course of this discussion, the Commission considered the questions whether to take any action on the survey's recommendations regarding National Register listings for 3 Historic Areas and Town-owned property. This might involve 1) pursuing a National Register listing for the Training Field Historic District and the Manufacturers' Row and Way to the River Historic Areas, as recommended in the Historic Sites Survey; 2) making any recommendations to the Selectmen regarding the survey's recommendations regarding listings Town-owned properties.

The Commission determined that it could not evaluate whether to make such recommendations without knowing exactly how a Historic Area listing on the National Register would be accomplished:

- *Would the owners of each affected structure in the Historic Area need to submit an application?*
- *Could the Town or some other entity (who?) submit an application for an Historic Area listing, without requiring an application for each affected property in that area?*
- *Are there other steps/requirements we should know about if pursuing a Historic Area listing on the National Register of Historic Places?*

Chairman Janes agreed to look into these questions.

Carr Post

Greg Garnache described the Bicentennial Committee's interest in using the Town's 200th birthday as an occasion to generate enthusiasm for a use, initial survey, and restoration of the Carr Post. He

reported that along with Chairman Janes and Peter Erickson, a Newburyport architect with experience and interest in preserving historic structures, he toured the Carr Post.

Mr. Erickson stressed that the critical starting point is a well-written and compelling story of the vision for the project—what is the goal for the space? In addition to a Mission Statement, Mr. Erickson suggested cleaning up the space somewhat to make it more attractive. For instance, the bar could be removed and volunteers could clear out debris and scrape and paint the walls. *It was agreed that no volunteers would be brought in to work without first conducting a test to determine whether they might be endangered by lead paint.*

The next step would be to have a professional perform a condition survey of the building. Mr. Garnache stated that he has a recommendation for such person from Mr. Erickson. He also stated that obtaining funding for the survey would be important—this could come from Community Preservation Act funds and/or possible grants and fundraising in Town.

The Bicentennial Committee stressed that a mission statement is a key first step, outlining possible uses such as (not exclusively), a military museum/memorial, a place for storage and display of West Newbury historical items and documents, etc. Bicentennial Committee members would be amenable to drafting a mission statement and getting it out there. They also offered to make available their public platform, help find advocates to volunteer, help raise funds, and make events available for the cause.

Ms. Swallow noted that if this matter was to be in a warrant on the Spring Town Meeting, work will need to be accomplished very quickly to meet applicable deadlines

Mr. Knezek noted that the Commission discussed many of these points at its last meeting and is largely in agreement. Ms. Grammer noted that Ms. Conway and Jean Nelson are looking into a grant for Carr Post. Ms. Cavanaugh added that another consideration will be how to staff the building if it is to be a museum or otherwise open to the public.

The Commission agreed that these ideas and any action proposed need to be shared with the Carr Post Committee and decided to try to hold joint meeting(s) with that Committee

Mr. Granache stated that he would be pleased to join in these meetings.

Bicentennial: If this house could talk

Ms. Swallow suggested another historical idea for the bicentennial celebration. For Yankee Homecoming, Newburyport has an “If this house could talk” program where property owners get a poster, write a story about their building on it, and post it in front of the structure. <https://walknewburyport.wordpress.com/2018/04/01/2018-houses-keep-talking/> This could be done to coincide with West Newbury celebrations around July 7, 2019. Ms. Grammer noted that if

the Commission so wishes, this concept could be included in a letter to those whose properties were part of the 2018 Historic Sites Survey.

Historic Building Inventory

Ms. Grammer provided the Commission a draft blurb describing the phase 1 Historic Sites Survey for the first page of the Town website and the first page of the Historical Commission webpage. *The draft was approved with a revision specifying the amounts spent and reimbursed through the state grant.*

Ms. Grammer also submitted, for consideration at the next meeting, a draft letter to be sent to the owners of surveyed buildings, with information about such things as historic plaques, National Register listing, and historic preservation easements—and perhaps the “If this house could talk” project.

Potential webpage information about WN historical markers

Ms. Grammer noted that some other historical commissions include on their websites a list (with photos) of their jurisdiction’s historical markers. She expressed interest in preparing a draft of such information with a map for Commission consideration and asked if there was a listing of the Town’s markers. Ms. Cavanaugh said she would look.

Minutes

The Commission voted 4-0-0 to approve the minutes of November 28, 2018.

Next meeting

To be determined, ideally joint meeting with Carr Post Committee.

Adjourn

8:47 p.m.

Meeting Documents

- Excerpts of Open Space Report with proposed edits
- Bicentennial Committee outline re: Carr Post
- Draft blurb for website advertising Historic Sites Survey
- Draft letter for homeowners of properties in Historic Sites Survey

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer