

## West Newbury

### Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

**Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, October 12, 2021, Via Remote Participation--GoToMeeting**

**Members Present Remotely:** Chairman Bob Janes; Dot Cavanaugh; Jen Conway; Elisa Grammer, via GoToMeeting. Also present, Margaret Hawkins and Brad Buschur of Main Street; Jen Solis, *Newburyport Daily News*; Select Board member Wendy Reed.

#### **Historic Markers**

Margaret Hawkins, who had communicated with the Commission about this, recommended removing the Ordway historical marker at Indian Hill. She said that the event of Hananiah Ordway killing an Indian has no verification and appears only as a family story in the Joshua Coffin book, the event if true is a murderous act, nothing particularly important has been recorded about Hananiah Ordway, and the entire thing lacks historical context. She recommended removing the current sign and replacing it with something that provides historic context, better recognizing native Americans.

Ms. Grammer agreed that there is little of note about Hananiah Ordway except he was among the snowshoe militia and lived to an old age—and that there is nothing to verify the killed Indian story. She recounted the 2004 controversy over this sign when an Eagle Scout candidate was replacing historic markers in Town. At that time, the Historical Commission voted to keep the sign and the Selectmen, as the ultimate decisionmakers, determined to keep it on the basis that the sign itself was historic. Ms. Grammer noted that this viewpoint is no longer used to justify things like Confederate statues.

The Commission stated its appreciation of having this issue raised and agreed that its members can vote to support or not support a change in a marker, but the Select Board would need to make the final decision.

*After discussion, the Commission agreed that the sign at Indian Hill should be replaced with one that 1) is accurate as pertains to West Newbury, relating to the site, and 2) positively describes Native Americans who once lived here. Great Tom was raised as a potential topic, as were old Indian land deeds. Ms. Hawkins will work with local historian Kristine Malpica on revised language.*

#### **Historic Sites Survey**

Ms. Conway reported that she has received comments from other Commission members on a draft letter of intent for the Phase 3 survey. The letter is due to the Massachusetts Historical Commission on November 15. The Commission has already gotten authorization for Community Preservation Act funding and is well-situated for the final survey.

*The Commission agreed to locate and review our consultants' recommendations for additional sites to survey, and to share members' suggestions of sites with Ms. Conway.*

## **Monthly Histories**

*The Commission approved the monthly minute histories for November (Affordable Housing) and December (the Central School).*

For next year, Ms. Grammer suggested defining the theme as notable people. The intent is to focus on West Newbury veterans and Mr. Janes has a list and has been doing research. If not enough veterans with extensive histories are available, the Commission may 1) have a story with a roundup of short descriptions of a variety of veterans and/or 2) include some other people, such as E Moody Boynton.

Research is complete for Major Isaac Hill Boyd, and Ms. Conway will be writing his story for use in January.

## **Archives, historical materials—digitizing, etc**

Chair Janes described a tour of the records in the Town Offices basement with the new Town Clerk and the Librarian. In one storeroom there is a jumble of junk mixed in with historic records and the other room with the archives is not well organized. There is an interest in organizing and digitizing valuable records. Ms. Grammer said that she and Ms. Cavanaugh are willing to volunteer to go through and try to organize materials, but they lack specialized skills in cataloguing information and in handling delicate old materials. Ms. Grammer also mentioned that she has downloaded materials that prior Town Clerk Mike McCarron had Ricoh digitize, and has made that information available to the library and the clerk's office.

## **Gift of 1856 Essex County Map**

Ms. Grammer noted that the moldings in the first floor entryway in Town Offices make it difficult to mount a 64" x 60" map there. She and Ms. Cavanaugh recommended a place for the map at the top of the stairs. She checked with Department of Public Works director Wayne Amaral and was told that DPW could install the map, provided that the Select Board approves its installation.

*The Commission recommended moving the Farm Lane photo at the top of the stairs to a spot between the rest rooms and placing the map at the top of the stairs. Provided that a careful measurement shows that the map would fit in this location, the Commission will recommend this spot to the Select Board.*

## **Meeting with Select Board**

*It was agreed that Chair Janes will arrange to meet with the Select Board soon after Fall Town Meeting. Topics will include 1) permission to try to sell excess annual town reports; 2) permission to hang the 1856 map; 3) notification that the Commission has designated additional sites (cemeteries) of historic significance, 4) other updates—perhaps including views on the Middle Street Bridge, as discussed below.*

Ms. Reed reported that she has found a stone mason in Vermont who has restored stone bridges like the Middle Street Bridge and has submitted a proposal to make an assessment of the Middle

Street Bridge for restoration. Ms. Grammer noted that she researched the bridge and found that it was first built around 1850 by a local farmer-turned-stone-mason. Later, the bridge was rebuilt around 1900—keeping the stone arch form. Ms. Grammer, as a resident interested in history, submitted her research in comments on the state’s environmental analysis for the proposed bridge demolition and rebuild.

*As a general matter, the Historical Commission concluded that it favors preservation over tear down and will look into the idea of adding this and perhaps other bridges (such as the Curzon & Rocks Bridge) as historically significant—which would check off a box for getting Community Preservation Act funding for preservation or restoration. Ms. Grammer will look into any MACRIS sites surveys or historic designations for the Town’s bridges.*

### **Other Matters**

*None*

### **Minutes**

*By unanimous roll call vote the Commission approved the minutes of September 16, 2021.*

### **Adjournment**

The Commission adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

### **Meeting Documents**

Communication from Margaret Hawkins re: Ordway sign

Communication from Wendy Reed re: Middle St Bridge

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer