

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, November 17, 2021, First Floor Hearing Room, Town Offices

Members Present: Chairman Bob Janes; Dot Cavanaugh; Elisa Grammer. Also present, West Newbury residents raising concerns about two Indian historic markers: Margaret Hawkins, Francesca Pomerantz, Geordie Vining; Kristine Malpica, Indian historian; Wendy Reed, Select Board member; Kelly Scott, resident and donor of the 1856 Map.

Historic Markers

Ms. Grammer asked about use of Pawtucket as opposed to Pennacook to describe West Newbury's indigenous peoples, noting that an unknowing person who looked up Pawtucket would find the place in Rhode Island while a search for Pawtucket Indians brings up a farm team for the Cleveland Indians. Ms. Malpica explained that the Pawtuckets were here, but then joined up with a larger alliance under the Pennacooks.

Ms. Pomerantz raised her group's suggestion that rather than focus first on text for replacement signs, the Commission should address a process in which the Ordway sign and the Brown family raid sign are taken down first, and second, her group would come up with replacements. This would involve consulting with native Americans and perhaps involve larger signs that might be relocated. She made clear that her group—not the Historical Commission—would undertake the work of developing recommendations for replacement signs.

Chair Janes noted that the Commission had not been presented with issues about the Brown sign before. That sign has ample historical documentation, unlike the Ordway sign. Ms. Pomerantz said that the goal was to still tell the Brown story, but with greater context. Mr. Janes said that his research indicates that there were blame and raids on both sides. Ms. Malpica stated that there is a need for a more balanced perspective with respect to the many decades of ongoing warfare. In response to queries about timing for replacement signs, the group said that they would propose replacement language as soon as possible.

Ms. Malpica also discussed land acquisition statements that acknowledge prior Indian ownership. This has been done in Lowell. She read one aloud and committed to email this to Ms. Grammer for Commission records. She said that there was a known Pawtucket agricultural village in the Indian Hill area. The replacement sign may describe why these important landscape features were named for Indians.

The group also discussed other educational opportunities, including at the Riverbend area near Page School.

By unanimous vote, upon a commitment from the group to provide recommended replacement signs no later than March 21, 2022, the Historical Commission decided to recommend to the Select Board that 1) the two signs be removed immediately, and 2) replacement signs will be recommended in 2022.

Gift of Map

By unanimous vote, the Commission determined to recommend to the Select Board that the donated 1856 map should be installed on the wall to the left as you walk into the 1st floor hearing room in Town Offices. Ms. Scott, the map donor, showed the group a plaque honoring Bob Lovejoy, the map's prior owner.

Items of Historical Significance—

Having looked at other towns' documentation of bridges as historic resources, the Commission considered identifying old bridges as historically significant. Rocks Bridge is on the State Register, Curzon Bridge was the subject of an historic sites survey, and the Commission has examined the history of Middle Street bridge, which was first built in 1853 by Jonathan Corliss and was rebuilt in 1891 by Joseph Ross. Mr. Janes pointed out that the Rogers Street bridge is also an old stone arch bridge. Looking on the [Mass DOT database](#), Ms. Reed said that the Rogers Street bridge was first built in 1850 and rebuilt in 1900.

Mr. Janes noted that he had spoken with the Town Manager, who indicated that things were going on behind the scenes with the Middle Street bridge. Ms. Reed pointed out that no negotiations are underway now and the notion that the Middle Street bridge has failed and is thus unrepairable is not correct according to DOT data. The Commission noted that designating a historically significant resource merely recognizes the resource and checks off a box for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding if deemed appropriate.

By unanimous vote, the Commission decided to list the Curzon Bridge, Rocks Bridge, Middle Street Bridge, and Rogers Street Bridge as historically significant. Mr. Janes will inform the Community Preservation Committee of this designation, as well as the designation of cemeteries made earlier this year.

Historic Sites Survey

Ms. Grammer said that Ms. Conway, who was unable to join the meeting, said that the Massachusetts Historical Commission is reviewing our proposal for a Phase 3 and is due to respond by December 8.

Monthly Histories

It was agreed that the story for December (already written and circulated to the Commission) will be the Central School. Ms. Conway is working on a story about Major Isaac Hills Boyd for January and Ms. Grammer is working on a story about George Young Bradley for February. Ms. Grammer noted that we need more veterans and that Haydn Brown is a possible candidate for a story.

Archives & historical documents

Now that the Historical Commission has put together 3 sets of Annual Town Reports, and the Library and Town Clerk's Office has digitized FY ending 1881 forward (with a couple of items missing), the question of digitizing the remainder of the collection arises. Both the Town Clerk and the Library support the Historical Commission seeking CPA funding to complete the digitization. The Library would put the Annual Reports on its *Advantage* searchable digital platform available to the public.

By unanimous vote the Commission approved seeking CPC funding to digitize the remaining Annual Town Reports. Ms. Grammer will consult with Librarian Corinn Flaherty about the vendor she used and the cost.

Meeting w/ Select Board

The Commission agreed that Chair Janes will seek a meeting with the Select Board to address the following topics

- Indian historic markers
- recommended location for 1856 map
- inform them of new historically significant sites (cemeteries, bridges)
- permission to sell or dispose of excess Annual Town Reports & update on digitizing

Other Matters

Library updates: The Library will be using some of its Trustees funds to hire an archivist to help with the historic materials in the Library and may do more digitizing of that collection. Also, the Library is beginning to look into the idea of using Town Hall as an annex for meeting room space and possibly for storage/ display of historic materials. *The Commission was generally supportive of these initiatives.*

CPA Funds for engraving additional veterans' names at the Training Field: Mr. Janes said that he was planning to seek information about funding eligibility to add additional veterans' names (largely in connection with more recent wars) to the plaques on the Training Field. *The Commission was supportive and Ms. Grammer noted that the Julian Steele historic marker received CPA funding*

Minutes

By unanimous vote the Commission approved the minutes of October 12, 2021.

Adjournment

The Commission adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Meeting Documents

Communication from Margaret Hawkins re: Ordway sign

Communication from Francesca Pomerantz & Geordie Vining re: Indian signs

To be provided: documents from Kristine Malpica

Research on Middle Street Bridge history

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer