

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, September 6, 2022, Town Offices

Members Present: Chairman Bob Janes; Jennifer Conway; Elisa Grammer. Also present, Select Board member Wendy Reed, Town Manager Angus Jennings, and a member of the public.

Carr Post

Consultant's draft historic preservation guidelines

Ms. Grammer shared a red-lined version of the draft historic preservation guidelines, which also contained her comments. She noted that she did not send these comments out in advance to the Commission members because she wanted to be sure to stay within public meeting requirements allowing deliberation only during public meetings. Mr. Janes and Ms. Conway stated that they would need to time to read this thoroughly before they could react.

Mr. Jennings explained that the Town had voted to sell or lease Carr Post to a buyer/lessee who would be responsible for restoring and maintaining the building—with preservation restrictions to protect the building. The Request for Proposals would not contain the detailed preservation restrictions but would have guidelines about what is expected and would serve as the raw material for the historic preservation easement. The Select Board had asked for the Historical Commission's comments on the draft received from consultant Lynne Spencer.

Ms. Grammer summarized her concerns:

--Do the guidelines apply only to the exterior? If yes, various items addressing interior issues are confusing and apparently misplaced. The scope of applicability should be very clear from the outset.

--Does the Town want to couch its standards in terms of negotiable "should" or make it non-negotiable "shall"? Do we really mean that expanding the building "is not recommended" as opposed to infeasible or not allowed? And who is going to be doing the negotiation on behalf of the Town?

--There's a reference to requirements for the buyer's recordkeeping. Is that required? Will records be submitted to the Town (or its consultant?). Who reviews & stores any such records?

--Transparency and honesty on the part of the Town matters. Statements that the walls aside from the tower "are stable and will require repointing" and that for the turret "some amount of reconstruction is warranted... [f]or example, crenelations ..." contrast vividly with the more dire reports the Town has received.

--A basic question is whether the Town wants to reframe this somewhat, 1) providing the 7/12/2019 report as updated if applicable and 2) saying that document describes the exterior work

that the Town has been told is necessary and appropriate--and the same (along with all code, sanitary, etc. requirements) would be expected of a buyer in terms of preserving the exterior?

--If this is supposed to be a clear heads up/roadmap of preservation expectations for a buyer to be included with an RFP and intended to delimit negotiable terms, it needs a great deal of work.

950 CMR Sec 71 notification to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)

Mr. Jennings confirmed that the Town will fill out and submit the 2-page notification form to the MHC, which in any event will be reviewing the preservation restriction before it can become final. It was suggested that the Town could simply say that it is working toward selling the property with preservation restrictions requiring renovation and ongoing maintenance.

Historical Commission as holder of the preservation restriction

Ms. Grammer noted that the Select Board had been alerted that it would take resources to supervise construction, conduct inspections, and actively enforce the legal restrictions. While no final decisions have been made, one thought was to incorporate the cost of this into fees paid by the buyer of the property.

Carr Post subcommittee to the Historical Commission

In response to Ms. Grammer, Mr. Janes explained that a group of West Newbury residents who seek to have the Town retain and restore Carr Post met a few weeks ago (with Ms. Reed and Mr. Jennings in attendance) and plans to meet again. At the first meeting, the group discussed the idea of becoming a subcommittee of the Historical Commission.

Ms. Conway asked for additional detail about what the group would be doing. Mr. Janes said that the group, which would do things like look for grant funding, is interested in the legitimacy of being a Town committee as opposed to an ad hoc group and the idea was formed that the Historical Commission could have a parent-type role for the group.

Mr. Grammer asked how this would work. For instance, would the subcommittee keep minutes, would it be appointed by the Select Board, is it allowed under the bylaws? Mr. Janes indicated that these details had not been established, and Ms. Grammer said that she needed to better understand the proposal before she could react to it. She wondered whether the model of the Friends of the Library might work.

Ms. Grammer said that it would be a shame if the building were not preserved, but, as a member of the Capital Improvements Committee, was skeptical that the Town could afford this. She said she would like to be convinced by the energetic and committed Carr Post supporters developing a thorough business plan with the restored Carr Post in use as the product and the Town residents as the customers. This plan would include all the financial information, the market information showing projected demand for use of the building, etc.

Historic Markers

Ms. Grammer noted that the new signs concerning American Indians have been installed. She said she would modify the Commission webpage to include photos of the new markers. She said that she did not plan to change the related stories because the group that revised the signs has said they would be doing further research and hoped to write new stories that could be accessed via a QR code on the sign posts, as has been done with other historic markers.

Historic Sites Survey Update

Ms. Conway reported that the Town's contract for the Phase 3 consultant is now under review at the MHC. Once that is done, it will go to the consultant Stacy Spies for signing. Ms. Spies has developed a timeline assuming that the contract will be signed by September 16. The first step will involve identification of resources to be surveyed. An initial meeting will be completed by October 28. MHC still hasn't received a mailing of paperwork from the Town—Ms. Conway is pursuing that and has the completed documents in digital form so that if needed this can be recreated and resent.

Rocks Bridge

It was noted that the Massachusetts' failure to comply with 950 CMF Sec 71 resulted in a halt of construction pending MHC review. Mr. Janes shared an August 30, 2022 letter from MHC saying that the proposed work on Rocks Bridge would not adversely affect its historic nature.

Cemeteries

Ground penetrating radar at the Almshouse Cemetery

Mr. Janes reported that because the funding is a relatively small dollar amount, instead of using Community Preservation funds (which require considerable paperwork), the Town will fund this from Free Cash—to be proposed at Fall Town meeting. Once the funding is in place, Mr. Janes will contact the provider to have the work done.

Town Cemetery maintenance plan

Ms. Grammer reported that the Department of Public Works (DPW) Director expressed general support for the idea of maintaining Town-owned cemeteries but needed to know the extent and cost of the work for planning purposes.

*The Commission decided that the next step is the Commission site visit to the Quaker Cemetery at **10 a.m. on September 18.** Ms. Grammer will bring brightly colored plastic tape to demark the area of work and will take photos. Mr. Janes will use the coordinates information to draw lines showing the limit of work, which can be used in an application to the Conservation Commission.*

Once the Commission has a description of the work to be done, it will contact the DPW Director for site visits and projections concerning work needed.

The Commission will need to check in with the Select Board about the concept for an annual maintenance plan.

Then the Commission can submit an application to the Conservation Commission.

Town Records & Annual Town Report Digitization Update

No update.

Firefighter & Schools History

No update.

Monthly Minute Histories

Ms. Grammer reported that the proposed October Minute History is about Pamela Constance Pearson Phillips-Eckle. A draft had been submitted to the Commission members. *By unanimous vote the Commission accepted the October story, with an edit by Ms. Conway.* Ms. Grammer noted that upcoming stories for November and December would focus on Civil War veterans Charles Bradley and Eben Stanwood. It was noted that the Commission needs to think about a theme for stories for next year.

Other Business

None.

Minutes

By a unanimous vote the Commission approved the minutes of August 16, 2022.

Adjournment

8 pm

Next Meeting

Because Ms. Conway is not available on October 4, we will consider other dates.

Meeting Documents

Draft Carr Post preservation documents

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer