

## West Newbury

### Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

**Meeting date & place:** 7:00 pm, October 11, 2022, Town Offices

**Members Present:** Robert Janes, Jennifer Conway, Jennifer Munson, Elisa Grammer, Robert Belmont.

#### **Carr Post**

Ms. Grammer noted that the Select Board would like to have comments from the Historical Commission concerning the consultant's draft Preservation Guidelines that would generally outline, for purposes of a request for proposals, the Town's expectations regarding a new owner's obligation to preserve the building. The Commission discussed what it means for a building to be on the National and State Historic Registers. It also recapped how the Town accepted the Carr Post and the events that culminated in the Annual Town Meeting vote to have the Town transfer the building to a buyer or long-term renter, subject to deeded preservation restrictions. It also discussed the zoning process and other steps to accomplish a transfer and the recognition that the Historical Commission cannot manage a preservation restriction without considerable additional resources.

Messrs. Janes and Belmont expressed a preference to have the Town retain ownership and restore the building. Ms. Grammer noted her concern about the costs and competing demands on Town finances, indicating that she would like to see the Town own and preserve the building but could not support that unless those seeking Town ownership produced a convincing, fully developed business plan with the Carr Post used by the citizens as the product, a description of all tasks associated with accomplishing this, and with all sources of funding and all expenses detailed. Ms. Munson suggested that we need to be open to the unexpected—perhaps an architectural firm with historic preservation qualifications and a strong financial situation might buy the property as office space. She also said that the Town should consider ways to support and attract small businesses in keeping with the village we have now.

*By unanimous vote, the Commission recommended that the Preservation Guidelines 1) establish that a buyer has the financial means to undertake preservation work and complete the project; 2) ensure that the building's exterior is preserved; 3) retain as many of the original materials as possible, and where not possible (e.g., new mortar to repoint the brick exterior), use materials that replicate the original as closely as possible.*

#### **State grant for veterans' items**

Ms. Grammer noted that a state grant for historical items relating to veterans is now open for applications and that the Town Librarian is interested in applying for funds to digitize records about veterans. *The Commission voted unanimously in support of this effort. Ms. Conway, who has considerable experience with Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) grants offered to provide advice and consultation and Mr. Janes will look for candidate documents to digitize. Mr. Janes will also consider whether and how this grant could be used for other projects next year.*

## **Historic Sites Survey**

Ms. Grammer noted that Town Procurement Officer Wayne Amaral had commended Ms. Conway's management of Historic Sites Survey grants, noting that her work can be a model for other committees.

Ms. Conway gave an update on the third Historic Sites Survey grant process. The initial kickoff meeting was held during the last week of September with the consultants Stacy Spies and Wendy Frontiero as well as MHC staff and Ms. Conway and Ms. Grammer. The deadline for completing phase 1 of this project is October 28 and phases 1 and 2 may be combined. Phase 1 involves completing the kickoff meeting, going through preexisting survey forms, identifying resources and documents to use, and firming up the inventory list.

Ms. Conway said that for properties not visible from the road, we need to get permission from property owners. Ms. Grammer has prepared address lists for those properties and will do a mail merge and mailing once a letter to the property owners has been prepared. Regarding the target properties, Ms. Grammer asked to add Newell Farm at 243 Main Street and Long Hill Farm at 520 Main Street. Mr. Janes noted that 13 Turkey Hill Road, now on the list, has been torn down recently. Ms. Conway also noted that we need to let the Town and the police know that our consultants will be driving around taking photos.

Ms. Conway said that phase 2 of this project will be completed around Christmas. In this part of the work, the consultants will have the permissions to go on private property and will have begun work on the inventory forms.

In response to Ms. Munson's question about additional historic districts, Ms. Conway said that this has been considered. The surveys done to date have identified several additional potential districts and the Select Board has already given approval to have the MHC meet with townspeople about this. This question has, however, been on hold until the final Phase 3 survey has been completed.

## **Rocks Bridge**

The Commission noted that Rocks Bridge has finally been reopened. Commission members expressed hope that the additional signage will work to protect the bridge from large trucks.

## **Cemeteries**

Goodrich/Poor Family Cemetery Mr. Janes and Ms. Grammer reported that the Town Clerk's office had heard from Peter Carbone, son of the owners of the Indian Hill Street property on which the Goodrich/Poor family burial ground is located. Mr. Carbone said that the property will likely be sold soon, and he would like to discuss the cemetery. Ms. Grammer noted that this cemetery is described in Susan Follansbee's book *Cemetery Records of West Newbury, Massachusetts* as containing marked and unmarked graves dating back as far as at least 1802. The Commission realized that this burial ground was inadvertently omitted from those deemed historically significant *and the*

*Commission voted unanimously to declare this cemetery historically significant. The Commission determined to contact Mr. Carbone to ask him to meet with it to determine what Mr. Carbone would like to do about the burial ground.*

Almshouse Cemetery Mr. Janes reported that he has recently tried to confirm the pricing for the project to scan the Almshouse Cemetery with ground penetrating radar and has tried to find out when the project could start. The consultant offering these services has so far not responded. If answers are not forthcoming before the upcoming Town Meeting, Mr. Janes will move for no vote at the meeting and the Commission can raise the issue again at the following meeting in the spring.

Annual Cemetery Cleanup Program Ms. Grammer summarized her conversation with Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Wayne Amaral about an ongoing program to maintain the Town-owned Almshouse and Quaker Cemeteries.

- The annual cleanup for the two burial grounds would consist of removing downed trees and limbs, leaning/threatening trees, saplings, vines, bushes, etc, while continuing with leaf litter/pine needles/native groundcover as the cemetery floors (no grass). This would be done in early spring before vegetation emerges and late fall, after the leaves are down—the slow period for landscaping contractors.
- DPW's preference is to establish a budget for contractors to do this and DPW would lead the contract. Annual maintenance would cost \$800-\$2,000. The work will need to be done under Town supervision, perhaps the Historical Commission.
- Volunteers cannot be counted on to undertake annual maintenance, as seen with the Quaker Cemetery, which was cleaned up in 2010 by volunteers and then allowed to become overgrown again. Now the Quaker Cemetery requires an initial cleanup much like that done at the Almshouse Cemetery. Heavy work such as removing downed trees and limbs, dangerous trees, etc. should occur sometime between late November and March, when the ground is frozen. After the heavy duty work is done, clearing of vines, brush, saplings can be done. The initial Quaker Cemetery cleanup would be around \$4,000.
- Steps to put such a program in place include
  - Meeting with the Select Board to explain the proposal and obtain approval
  - Historical Commission preparation of a Request for Determination to be submitted to the Conservation Commission to allow work at the Quaker Cemetery adjacent to the Artichoke Reservoir
  - Contracting for initial Quaker Cemetery cleanup
  - Contracting for annual spring & fall maintenance

*The Commission voted unanimously to approve the plan described above and Ms. Grammer will draft and circulate to the Commission members a powerpoint presentation that Mr. Janes could make to the Select Board.*

### **Town Records & Annual Town Report Digitization Update**

Ms. Grammer noted that the safe containing valuable historical documents in the Town Offices basement has been reopened and that she may take a scanner there to do some digitization. Mr. Belmont offered to help with this. Ms. Grammer also noted that she has scanned Haverhill Gazette newspaper articles by West Newbury native Leonard Woodman Smith (1844-1936).

## **Firefighter & Schools History**

Mr. Belmont provided the Commission with his extensive essay about the history of schools in West Newbury. He explained that he has built on the work of others and outlined the time periods he addressed and his purpose to use many illustrations. The Commission praised his remarkable work and *it was generally agreed that this piece should go on the Historical Commission website once finalized*. It was noted that certain typos and discrepancies need work and the resource *Contentious Citizens* was recommended.

## **Town Hall Paint Colors**

Ms. Grammer reported that the DPW wants to have Town Hall painted in the spring and needs to decide on a color scheme soon. Mr. Amaral would like to have a public meeting with the Historical Commission and the Historic District Commission at Town Hall to decide this. Ms. Munson, whose professional design work includes paint color schemes in historic buildings, said that she will work on a recommendation that will consider the original intent (and the Commission has a collection of photos of Town Hall with various paint jobs) and will recognize the Town identity and context. She will circulate a powerpoint and can provide paint samples and a rendering of the building with the proposed paint scheme.

*The Commission voted unanimously to propose a meeting time of 2:30 pm on November 8 or 15. Ms. Grammer will inform Dot Cavanaugh of the Historic District Commission and DPW Director Wayne Amaral of this proposal.*

## **Monthly Minute Histories**

*The Commission approved the story about Charles Bradley for November.* Ms. Grammer said that she was working on something about Lt Col Eben Stanwood in the Civil War for December. The Commission will consider topics for next year, perhaps old time entertainments in West Newbury.

## **Other Business**

Ms. Grammer passed around a plaque concerning [Elmer Burnham](#), a famous coach and athlete from West Newbury. The plaque had been removed from his former home here and was just given to the Town Clerk. *The Commission agreed to ask the Select Board to put the plaque in the gazebo close to the playing field named after Mr. Burnham.*

## **Minutes**

*The Commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of September 6 and September 18.*

## **Adjournment 9:26 pm**

## **Meeting Documents**

Charles Bradley draft story  
Town Hall paint job photos  
E Grammer comments on Carr Post preservation guidelines  
Draft essay about town schools history

Email with DPW about cemetery cleanup program  
Historic Sites Survey list of properties

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer