

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, January 3, 2023, Town Offices

Members Present: Chair Bob Janes, Jennifer Conway, Elisa Grammer. Also present, Allison Hardy, Historic District Commission.

Town Hall

The Commission discussed the lantern over the front door to Town Hall, which Ms. Hardy indicated had been discussed at the Historic District Committee. The hanging lantern obscures the rosette architectural feature over the door and, from the pictures, appears to have been added in the 20th century. The Commission discussed with Ms. Hardy the possibility of finding examples of lighting in similar structures. In response to Ms. Conway's suggestion of up-lighting, Ms. Grammer noted that Director of Public Works Wayne Amaral had stressed that it is important to keep in mind snowplow damage.

The Commission generally agreed that 1) the current lantern should be replaced, 2) lighting for safety is of prime importance, and 3) the design expertise of Ms. Munson will be important in choosing alternative lighting.

The Commission noted that Mr. Amaral is obtaining paint samples for Town Hall. Another step, possibly to be taken as painting gets underway, may be to have a newspaper interview with Ms. Munson and Jen Solis, explaining how the paint scheme was chosen.

Historic Sites Survey Update

Ms. Conway said that we are now in the third and longest stage of the final Historic Sites Survey. The list of resources has been finalized and with one possible exception all the photos and field work is complete. At the year's end, the consultants provided two sample forms, one for the Quaker Cemetery and one for the Emery Sisters' home on Main Street. Ms. Conway said that the forms look good and Ms. Grammer provided some supplementary information. The invoice for the second stage has not yet been received.

The third and final stage, which is due to end on May 19, 2023, involves research and write ups for the properties. Once the 77 forms have been received, Ms. Conway will contact Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) to do the mapping. Town Manager Angus Jennings has said that this cost will be covered in the Town's arrangement with MVPC. Upon completion the Commission will also mail a letter to property owners enclosing forms for their properties. Ms. Conway estimates the mailing costs will be around \$42, which can come from the Commission's \$600 budget.

The Commission noted with approval that the consultants added Laurel Grange to the list of properties.

Mr. Belmont proposed—and the Commission agreed—that a continuing agenda item should be a celebration for the completion of the Historic Sites Survey. The Commission discussed how this might be done, possibly with a presentation at the Library or a tour of certain homes or information signs in front of homes. *Ms. Conway will be considering this.*

Cemeteries

Ms. Grammer said that Bill Goss of the Newburyport Eco Angels Bike Group (who had read about this in the newspaper) had offered to help clean up the cemeteries, and after the last meeting she emailed him with notes from that meeting describing the need to go to the Conservation Commission about the Quaker Cemetery and the need to determine how cleared brush, etc. would be removed from the site. She said she never heard back from him, noting that this is a complicated project and may be daunting for volunteers.

Ms. Grammer also noted that when compared with the 1973 Survey, the 2022 Survey for the Quaker shows that many gravestones have been lost. This is distressing and shows the need for regular maintenance.

Budget

Ms. Grammer noted that for the upcoming Town Meeting, the Commission needs to submit

- Narrative for budget, which states the Commission's goals, new costs, who can sign for expenses
- Article request form for \$4,150 for initial cemetery cleanup
- \$600 expense budget

The Commission voted unanimously to approve these documents.

Ms. Grammer said that the Town Manager said that the MVPC mapping costs and the potential costs of a consultant or other resources for managing a Carr Post preservation restriction did not need to be included in the Historical Commission's FY2023 budget materials.

Firefighter & Schools History

Mr. Belmont described his work in researching and collecting additional information about firefighting in West Newbury. He said that he has been interviewing former Fire Department Chiefs Dower and Berkenbush about their years in the department. Other Commission members suggested additional resources for research.

Mr. Belmont also reported that he is continuing his research and editing concerning West Newbury's schools. He also located the Crane Neck school foundation that Ms. Munson had described. He noted that the West Newbury Fire Department has a junior firefighter program involving high school students, expressing enthusiasm about the potential tie-ins.

Monthly Minute Histories

Ms. Grammer described the stories about the Farmers Club and the 1919 Centennial. Since not everyone received the Centennial story, *Ms. Grammer will resend it. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the Farmers Club story.*

Ms. Grammer said that she is trying to complete the 2023 stories early so that she can turn attention to making the stories to date into a book that could be used to raise funds for the Commission. The Commission members expressed support for this idea.

Other Business

Firemen's Musters & Hand Tub Mr. Belmont noted that 2022 was the 100 year anniversary of the Veteran Firemen Association, which raises money for the Fire Department with various events. The Association also participated in competitive musters in which different towns compete with handtubs. In December the lane off Bachelor Street, adjacent to the Historical Society's Hills House Museum Property (where the award winning Gardener Handtub is housed) was unveiled as Handtub Lane. This was the culmination of a cooperative effort of the Veteran Firemen Association, the Fire Department, and the Historical Society. Mr. Belmont shared a story with photos about the Gardener Handtub and firemen's musters.

Future goals include:

- Clean up of the Gardener Handtub & its participation in the Memorial Day Parade
- Demonstration of the Handtub
- Participation in musters with the Fire Department
- A muster hosted in West Newbury

Plaques for Historic Homes

Mr. Janes said that the Clerk's Office received a request from a homeowner about where to get historic home plaques. *Ms. Grammer will provide additional information.*

Letter of support for Library Grant

—unanimous vote

Minutes

The Commission unanimously approved the minutes of December 6, 2022.

Adjournment

8:19 pm

Meeting Documents

Draft Letter in support of Library veterans grant

Draft budget narrative, Article request & Budget expense sheet

Draft Minutes Histories about the Farmers Club and the 1919 Centennial

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer