

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

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

Members Present: Chair Bob Janes, Elisa Grammer, Jennifer Munson, Robert Belmont

Cemeteries

Ms. Grammer noted that Town Cemeteries will be included in this last phase of the Historic Sites Survey and that we have a collection of remarkable headstones, as well as a vault with a knocker on the door. Ms. Munson suggested looking into obtaining a collection of photos of the Town's important headstones. Ms. Grammer said that that could be an interesting photo book. *Ms. Munson will look into this further and Ms. Grammer will forward information about headstone carvers, etc.*

Ms. Grammer said that the Finance Committee voted unanimously in favor of the article to establish and fund an annual clean up and maintenance program for the Town-owned Quaker and Almshouse Cemeteries. Some on that committee expressed surprise that the Town did not already have such a program. Ms. Grammer said that it is likely that this item will be on the Annual Town Meeting warrant, making the funds available in July.

Quaker Cemetery

Ms. Grammer noted that guidance about preservation of municipal cemeteries provides that they should be kept in their original shape as much as possible. She wondered about the artificial flowers and American flag at the entrance to the Quaker Cemetery—which would not have been put there by the Quakers. *The Commission generally agreed that these items could be removed as part of the cemetery clean up.*

Ms. Grammer reported that she inquired with the Conservation Agent about using goats to clean up brush, etc. Goats require very close supervision. They would be inclined to eat anything—including the bark of trees and climb on anything—including gravestones.

Almshouse Cemetery

Mr. Belmont said that he had not heard from the schoolteacher whose class may want to participate in annual cleanup of and potential placement of granite blocks at gravesites in the Almshouse Cemetery. He is waiting for her to reach out to him.

The Commission had no updates about the possible base for the 4" x 4" granite blocks. *Mr. Belmont will reach out to his friend who serves as a Cemetery Commissioner in Amesbury for ideas about this.*

Historic Sites Survey Update

Ms. Conway was unable to join the meeting, and provided updates indicating that the Town is acting to secure Merrimack Valley Planning Council services for the mapping of properties in the Phase 3 inventory.

The Commission had no updates about plans for a celebration of the completion of the Historic Sites Surveys in West Newbury.

Town Hall

Mr. Belmont asked what the painting scheme would look like and shared photos of prior paint schemes used at Town Hall. It was noted that these photos of prior paint schemes had been circulated to the Commission earlier and were included in the two paint designs that Ms. Munson had presented to the Commission at the [November 1, 2022 meeting](#). The Commission voted unanimously to support Ms. Munson's second option at the [December 6, 2022 meeting](#). Ms. Munson brought up her paint design presentation on her computer and shared it again with the Commission.

Ms. Munson suggested using eggshell black and white paint for the building overall with gloss black paint for the Town Hall door to make the door pop. *Ms. Munson will discuss this with Department of Public Works Director Wayne Amaral.*

With respect to the lantern over the door, it was agreed that the fixture should be removed. The replacement is still under consideration but could be a light hidden in the canopy over the door.

Metal Detecting on Training Field

Ms. Grammer noted that the Town Manager indicated that the Select Board might address metal detecting on Town property in a March 27 meeting. The Commission discussed the model metal detection permitting program that the Town of Fairhaven, MA developed. Fairhaven's program prohibited metal detecting in certain areas, including gardens, manicured lawns, and wetlands, and provided that important finds needed to go to the town. *The Commission generally approved using the Fairhaven model.*

Firefighter & Schools History

Mr. Belmont reported that he has been doing research in the Town archives—in particular the scrapbooks of newspaper articles put together by Adelaide Janes and preserved by her son, Commission Chair Bob Janes.

Monthly Minute Histories

The Commission voted unanimously to approve the Monthly Minute stories about the Winter entertainment, Town Hall Players, and Taxidermy with corrective edits. Ms. Grammer said that additional topics could include Physical Culture, the West Newbury Cadet Band, and a repeat of the Adventureland story.

Other Business

Ms. Munson said that she has thought about the Commission taking field trips. She is currently working on curating information for the public about Chinese wallpaper at the Crane Estate, and also noted an exhibit opening April 6 at the Atheneum in Boston about photographs of ruins in that city resulting from the 1872 fire. The Commission also discussed ruins in Town, including the foundation near the intersection of Meetinghouse Hill Road and Bachelor Street and the foundation in the Riverbend Conservation Area.

Minutes

Deferred.

Adjournment

8:30 pm

Meeting Documents

Draft Minute Histories about Winter Entertainments, Taxidermy, and the Town Hall Players

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer