

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, April 4, 2023, Town Offices

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

Town Hall

Painting The Commission noted that work is beginning on Town Hall. It was observed that it would be useful for the Commission to explain how the paint scheme was determined based on the historic paint and reference to current surroundings where white buildings are prevalent. The new paint job will reflect original intent and will make the building again appear as an important civic structure. *Ms. Munson, who had experience in working to explain changes when she restored Elm Park in Groveland, and used her design expertise to develop the paint scheme, will do a write up (to be run by DWP Director Wayne Amaral) that will be put on the Historical Commission web page and blasted to emails and shared on social media. Also, the write up will be shared with Newburyport Daily News writer Jen Solis, who may make this into a news story. Ms. Munson also suggested setting up a table in front of Town Hall during the Memorial Day parade to explain the renovations to Town Hall's exterior.*

Above-door light The Commission discussed the lantern over the door, which was not historically accurate and which obscured the decorative medallion. This has been removed. *The Commission suggested an unobtrusive light placed in the overhang above the door.*

Monitoring & coordinating as painting work progresses *Ms. Munson had offered at last month's meeting to consult on a continuing basis as the painting progresses. Ms. Grammer said that this would be particularly important now that Mr. Amaral will be leaving West Newbury for Newburyport on May 1. Mr. Belmont and other Commission members will photograph the progress of work at Town Hall to document its renovation.*

Training Field

The Commission discussed metal detecting on Town property. Ms. Grammer had identified a model regulation from Fairhaven Massachusetts that bans metal detecting in groomed lawns, monuments, wetlands, etc and thus would cover the Training Field. It also allows metal detecting with a permit on other Town lands and calls for reporting of significant finds. Ms. Munson provided information about England and metal detecting. The Commission discussed how far back in history and how recent a find might be to be valuable and concluded that important finds might be given to the library or the Historical Society.

It was decided that the Commission would recommend to the Select Board using the Fairhaven provision with a short explanatory paragraph written by Ms. Munson and installing metal detecting prohibited signage at the Training Field.

Historic Sites Survey

Ms. Conway sent word that she could not attend the meeting, and sent a report about the Historic Sites Survey, which the Commission reviewed:

For the Historic Sites Survey, materials are not due from Stacy until the end of May. I have been trying to come up with a celebration idea, but the only thing sticking with me is perhaps a panel discussion at the library or annex with Stacy, Wendy and Peter or Michael from MHC about the

findings and overall town history they uncovered. If we think it would be worth it and well attended, we could potentially break it into a series. The work to secure the hours for the digital mapping is underway, so we are good there.

The Commission discussed this and recommended a strong visual component such as slides of some of the interesting historical resources covered in the survey. Also, snacks would be good.

Cemeteries

Quaker Cemetery Ms. Grammer recapped the status of the Quaker Cemetery:

- The Town owns it as well as the Almshouse Cemetery, yet it has not been clean up in over a decade.
- Because it is located near the Artichoke Reservoir, no cutting of any kind can occur without Conservation Commission approval.
- Funding of annual cemetery cleanup (under DPW contracting with Historical Commission supervision of work) is on the agenda at the upcoming April 24 Town Meeting—which Historical Commission members should try to attend in order to vote for this article
- After funding is approved, we can submit the application Ms. Grammer has already prepared to the Conservation Commission for Quaker Cemetery cleanup
- Before these steps are taken, no cleanup can occur at the Quaker Cemetery.

Almshouse Cemetery Ms. Grammer recapped the status of the Almshouse Cemetery:

- The Town authorized cleanup in 2021, which was completed by an Eagle Scout candidate
- The Almshouse Cemetery is located in the Mill Pond Conservation Area and is subject to the Mill Pond [Conservation Restriction](#) (CR), which is available on the [Mill Pond Committee webpage](#)
- Because of its location in the Mill Pond Conservation Area, any significant activity (like pouring concrete or digging) in the Almshouse Cemetery should be undertaken only after 1) a careful reading of the Conservation Restriction and 2) consultation with the Mill Pond Committee, the Conservation Commission, the Open Space Committee, and perhaps the Select Board—as was done when the Almshouse Cemetery was undergoing cleanup

Ms. Grammer suggested that merely 1) clipping saplings, etc. as part of annual cleanup and 2) placing 4” x 4” granite blocks at the roughly 10 Almshouse gravesites identified through ground penetrating radar should not require permissions, but more elaborate work to establish a foundation for the granite blocks would likely require a review of the CR and coordination with a number of groups in Town.

Mr. Belmont described his discussion with Landscaper’s Depot about digging a trench and using mortar to make the blocks placed more permanently. Ms. Munson noted that although we have found means of recognizing deaths of paupers, we have not done this in the case of indigenous peoples.

It was determined that the River Valley School children could do the clipping cleanup and placement of granite blocks at the flagged gravesites as community service. Mr. Belmont will coordinate with teacher Lynne Taylor and will determine if there are any potential liability issues with having the school children do this.

The Commission also discussed the fact that West Newbury has no Cemetery Commission, but the Historical Commission is functioning in that role in terms of maintaining the Town owned cemeteries.

Firefighter & Schools

Mr. Belmont described his work researching Dr. John Page, an important force in Town education. Mr. Janes recalled Dr. Page from his own school days.

Historic Preservation + Affordable Housing

Ms. Grammer said that she had spoken with Wendy Reed of the Town's affordable housing group about the possibility of promoting goals of both affordable housing and historic preservation, perhaps with acquisition of historic homes for affordable housing and with a façade easement paid for by the Town with requirements for or support of affordable housing as part of the transaction. Ms. Munson pointed out that antique homes can be costly to maintain and unattractive to many.

The Commission will work on a list (to be shared with the affordable housing group) of homes that could potentially address both historic preservation and affordable housing goals.

Monthly Minute Histories

Ms. Grammer said she is continuing to research means of publishing the monthly stories as a book. She said that the last story to be written for this year will be about Physical Culture. *The Commission unanimously approved the Cadet Band story.*

Minutes

The Commission unanimously approved the meeting minutes of February 7 and March 7, 2023.

Other business

*The Commission unanimously decided to revise the standard meeting schedule to the 2d Tuesday of each month, making the next meeting **May 9, 2023.***

Adjournment

8:50 pm

Meeting Documents

Fairhaven metal detecting provisions; British policies and laws for metal detection
Draft Minutes History about the Cadet Band

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer