

West Newbury

Historical Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting date & place: 7:00 pm, May 9, 2023, Town Offices, 2d floor

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

Dot Cavanaugh

At the outset of the meeting, Chair Bob Janes held a moment of silence for former Historical Commission member Dot Cavanaugh, who will be sorely missed.

Town Hall

Jennifer Munson noted that Department of Public Works carpenter Brian Richards had been working to replace rotted wood on Town Hall's façade and that she had sent information and pictures to *Newburyport Daily News* West Newbury correspondent Jen Solis so there could be an article explaining the proposed paint job and how it was arrived at. She recently sent a follow-up email to Ms. Solis.

It was not clear whether a painting contractor for Town Hall had been selected or the paint purchased. *Ms. Munson will follow up with the Department of Public Works.*

Mr. Belmont raised a question about plantings in front of Town Hall, which previously had become overgrown and damaged the building. Ms. Munson stressed that any new Garden Club plantings should be chosen with the historic building in mind. *Ms. Grammer promised to give Ms. Munson contact information for the Garden Club person in charge of the Town Hall gardens so that the plantings can be coordinated.*

Training Field

Ms. Grammer noted that now that Town Meeting has been held, the Select Board may have space on their agenda to bring up the question of metal detecting on the Training Field. *Mr. Janes will inquire about getting this matter on the agenda.*

Historic Sites Survey

Ms. Conway reported that consultant Stacy Spies is working on the final piece of the project, and surveys should be ready by May 23. Ms. Conway will again check with Merrimack Valley Planning Council about mapping the surveyed sites. The project should be wrapping up around June. We will receive drafts for review. Once the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) gives its approval, the material can be published on the website and made available in the Library and the Clerk's office.

Ms. Conway said that she is still thinking about a final celebration of completion of the project. We might have an event where the consultants and MHC folks discuss the project, perhaps with a session at the library. It was noted that it might be fun to connect and map the homes surveyed with the monthly histories and the graves we have found. It's likely that we would send out letters to owners of surveyed properties in July.

Cemeteries

Student historians at Town-owned cemeteries Mr. Belmont described his project working with River Valley Charter School teacher Lynne Taylor to have several teams (about 100 students total) of 4th-6th graders act as archaeological research teams at the Quaker and Almshouse Cemeteries. He shared materials the teams use to explore and consider the cemeteries, having them use data and evidence to answer a series of questions about those who were buried at these sites. The Commission congratulated Mr. Belmont on this work, and he is hoping that the program can be continued and perhaps expanded.

Application to the Conservation Commission for Quaker Cemetery cleanup Ms. Grammer noted that Town Meeting voted to fund the program for clean up of Town owned cemeteries, so now the application can be submitted to the Conservation Commission. *The Commission voted unanimously to approve submission of the application and apply the remaining FY 23 Historical Commission budget to the cost of the newspaper notice.*

Firefighter & Schools

No update

Historic Preservation + Affordable Housing

Ms. Grammer said that she has begun a spreadsheet about possible properties, but has a way to go.

Monthly Minute Histories

The Commission voted unanimously to approve the Minute History about Physical Culture.

Other Business

Ms. Grammer reported that she received an inquiry about updating the website story about Indian Hill from one of the group who led revisions to historic markers concerning Indians. Ms. Grammer said she reminded him that his group agreed to draft the revised story, but had not yet done so. She also noted that Town Meeting passed a resolution urging a new state seal and flag, which currently feature a defeated Indian subjugated to a sword above his head.

Ms. Munson noted in this connection that it would be a good idea to include a first paragraph land acknowledgement, recognizing the indigenous peoples who were the first settlers in this area. *Ms. Munson will work on developing this.*

Minutes

The Commission voted 4-0-1, Ms. Conway, not present, abstaining, to approve the minutes of April 4, 2023.

Adjournment

8:18 pm

Meeting Documents

Draft Minute History about Physical Culture

Respectfully submitted,

Elisa Grammer