

Historical Commission Meeting

Minutes for February 28, 2018, 4:30 PM

Approved at the 5/7/18 meeting

Shutesbury Town Hall – Community Lounge downstairs

Members Present: Miriam DeFant, Karen Czerwonka, Christopher Donta, Henry Geddes, James Schilling-Cachet, Janice Stone, Kristin Van Patten, Mary Lou Conca (Associate).

Members Absent: none.

Visitors: Joan Hanson (Friends of Historical Commission), Leslie Bracebridge, Becky Torres (Town Administrator).

1. Announcements. Miriam reminded the group of the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner being held at the AC club this coming Friday at 6 PM. Historical Commission members are included in the invitation. Miriam told the group that she has been in communication with Town Clerk Susie Mosier and Town Administrator Becky Torres and wishes to remind the Commission members to be careful about not violating the Open Meeting Law (OML) with their emails. All of the members' emails (both the special Shutesbury email addresses and our own private ones) used for any historical commission discussion are considered public documents. Two or more members involved in an email correspondence is a violation of OML unless the subject only pertains to distributing materials, setting meeting dates and similar administrative actions. When information is sent to the members, members should not reply, and especially not "reply all".

There was a question about whether emails sent to the Historical Commission email address labeled "please read this into the minutes of the next meeting" have to be read at the public meeting. According to the town officials Miriam spoke with, the Commission members are not required to read the emails out loud at the meeting. It is up to the members to decide at the meeting if they want to read them aloud and discuss them or not. It would be better for the person to come to a public meeting and discuss their concerns.

2. Meeting with Joan Hanson, Friends of Shutesbury Historical Commission. Joan explained that the Friends group is a 501C3. Its purpose is to support the Shutesbury Historical Commission in the preservation and restoration of the town's historical items and buildings, include the Old Town Hall, which was their first project. They are able to accept tax-deductible donations for the Historical Commission and do fundraising for the Commission. Joan showed a number of the items for sale and explained they would take them to public town events such as Town Meeting and Celebrate Shutesbury. She handed out membership forms to the Commission members. She mentioned three projects they donated funds towards for Community Preservation Act (CPA) historical projects. These included \$1000 towards the old cemetery tree removal and gravestone restoration, \$500 towards the hearse house renovation, and \$1000 for the West Schoolhouse foundation.

Miriam mentioned the Commission's interest in getting the town's historical records (carefully) digitized as a possible CPA project. Joan said the CPC (Community Preservation Committee) meets in October, and let the Friends know if they are applying for any funding. Kristin volunteered to provide advice to the Records Storage committee on the work they are doing with town records and will explore what would be involved in digitizing the town's historical records and present the information at a future Historical Commission meeting. Joan mentioned that the profits from the snack bar upstairs go to

the Friends, and in the past she and her husband held two dinners at the AC as a fundraiser. Miriam told Joan the Commission was planning to hold a tea on March 15th to honor the prior members of the Historical Commission, and the invitation also includes the Friends group. It will be 1 PM that day, followed by the annual meeting of the Historical Commission.

3. Approve minutes from 1/29/18 meeting. Kristin made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Karen seconded. All voted in favor.

4. CPA Committee updates. Chris, as representative for the Historical Commission, attended their meeting yesterday. There was only one application this time, involving an engineering study of the North Cove. The CPC encouraged Chris to have the Historical Commission consider submitting an application to the CPC next year. These projects could include digitizing the historical records, or some sort of Native American preservation. There is a local group forming to work with towns on Native American preservation projects. They need to be approved by each tribe, so it will take a little while. What are some feasible projects to start considering for Shutesbury? Jim suggested starting the discussion with Rolf at the next meeting, and Commission agreed, although it should be the April meeting since the Annual Meeting and tea are in March.

Miriam told the Commission DCR is planning some forest cutting in Shutesbury. Unclear where in town it is. There was a public hearing on it yesterday in Amherst, did anyone go? (No.) Wendell Historical Commission has an agreement with DCR to mark off CSL areas to keep them undisturbed during forestry operations. Perhaps Commission should meet with DCR about this, or their archaeologist Marilyn Berkland. Comments are due to DCR on this new cutting proposal 3/27/18.

5. Website working group updates. Commission had more discussion on what should/could be put on the website. Suggestions included links to local archives, historical preservation and Native American resources. These could include digital commonwealth, MA cultural resources, American Antiquarian Society, and free genealogy resources. Miriam suggested the group come up with 10 things to put on the website by April, such as news updates and links. Commissioners should look at the present website to see items listed there.

Mary Lou showed a handout done by the Pelham Historical Society, and a copy of the Uniquely Quabbin magazine, which included an article on Shutesbury. Leslie was the previous contact for the magazine. Regarding research tool, Susan Millinger has been doing family history research in town, perhaps have her write something up for the website. A suggestion was made that she be invited to a future meeting to discuss ideas with the Commission.

Commission made arrangements with Leslie for a tour of the Old Town Hall, to view the historical records kept there. The group will meet her at 8 AM on Wednesday March 21st. This will be a short introduction to what is where. It would take several hours to go into more detail on the records there.

6. Planning discussion regarding meeting with former Commissioners and Annual Meeting. Miriam will create an invite for former Historical Commission members and Friends members to tea on March 15th. Commissioners discussed who was bringing what for the event.

There should be election of officers at the Annual Meeting. At least Chair and secretary. Commissioners asked how the previous members handled it when the Chair was away. Leslie stated they would vote for someone else to be the Chair of the day. Becky will send Miriam the "bylaws" of the Historical Commission, last amended in 1998. Miriam will get copies to the members. They are actually more policies and procedures, not a town bylaw, and therefore can be amended at a public meeting with notice. Annual meeting is needed for the Commission to be eligible to receive annual funding from the Eleanor Schmidt fund. The Commission is also required to participate in the Quabbin Memorial Day parade, which should be Sunday May 27th this year. Karen and her husband Bill have marching in the parade for Shutesbury for about 14 years. Other members should consider attending as well.

7. Discussion regarding a possible public showing of Hidden Landscapes video. The video is about 2 hours long. Does the Commission wish to sponsor a showing for the public? Chris, Henry and Miriam have seen it and think it would be good to offer to the public. It is about the project in Turners Falls. Commissioners discussed checking with the film maker, to make sure it was okay to show on our own, who might be available to help by being willing to lead a Q&A afterwards, and where to get the equipment. When to plan the showing? Perhaps early June, before school gets out. Commission could advertise it at Town Meeting (TM), and in the newsletter that comes out just before TM.

8. Unanticipated Business. Mr. Robert Decker wishes to meet with the Commission concerning an application he wants to submit to DCR for renovation of the Bennet House at Lake Wyola. He is looking for support for his application. He will be invited to the next regular meeting.

9. Next meeting date. Next meeting is Thursday March 15 at 1 PM for tea and Annual Meeting, then April 11th at 4:30 PM.

10 Adjournment. Henry made the motion, seconded by Karen, to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Janice Stone, Secretary
Shutesbury Historical Commission

List of Documents used at Meeting:

1. Agenda for this meeting.
2. Draft minutes of 1/29/18 meeting.