

Historical Commission Meeting

Minutes for March 9, 2020, 7:00 PM

Approved at July 20, 2020 meeting

Town Hall

Members Present: Karen Czerwonka, Chris Donta, Craig Pepin, Janice Stone.

Members absent: Mary Lou Conca, Henry Geddes.

Visitors: Leslie Bracebridge, Greg Caulton, Michael Shershow, John Walter.

Old Business

Update on CPC 1829 Town Hall project. Janice has emailed Groves for an update, awaiting a response.

Update on letter to Tribes & other experts about collaboration. Commission members discussed how to move forward on this. Janice has googled various sources to find out who the contacts for the different tribes are and their contact information, but it is confusing. Chris may be able to get more information. Group went over list Janice had created from various sources, including what the Cell tower people used for notifying federally recognized tribes. Mashpee Wampanoag and the Wampanoag Aquinnah are the only two federally recognized tribes in the state. But the Narragansett, although not in Massachusetts, have interests in other states including Massachusetts. The Nipmuc tribe, not federally recognized, is in central MA traditionally. They are recognized by the state. There are two separate Nipmuc tribes that work together. The Pocumtuck tribes (not organized) are traditionally in the Connecticut River Valley. The larger goal for a MOU with tribes would be to initiate more longer-term contacts to build relationships with tribes that are interested. Nolumbeka should be added to the list as well.

Results of Phase 1B archaeological work January 14-16 off Wendell Rd. The Mashpee tribe requested the Phase 1B. The archaeologists have completed their work and have found nothing. They were looking for specific artifacts in the ground. Unless representatives of the Tribes come up to identify CSLs specifically, we or the archaeologists cannot actively identify them. Chris stated that the Mass Historical Commission generally does not record above ground stone structures (of any origin – colonist or Native American). Janice commented that this is the reason why some of the town Historical Commissions have entered into MOUs with Tribes to identify some of these above ground structures. Optimally, Janice would like to identify areas in a general way where these CSLs exist, to enable better preservation of them. John -mentioned it gets tricky with private property owners. Commissioners agreed it might be restricted to public land. Janice will add this to her list of questions to other towns with MOUs (locally Wendell and Northfield).

Approval of Minutes February 10, 2020. Commission agreed to wait until next meeting so Mary Lou and Henry are present.

Old & New Business

Meeting potential candidates for Historical Commission. Greg Caulton, Michael Shershow and John Walter were present as people interested in serving on the Historical Commission. They each gave a little background of themselves. Another person was not able to make it tonight.

Opportunities to digitize some audio and video records for Historical Commission files.

Commission members and Leslie discussed what kind of material is already digital (the Hepler report on historical buildings and other structures in Shutesbury) and available through the MA Historical Commission website. Leslie described to the group interviews she has recorded with various people in town. She started audio tapes in the 1970s and the videos in the mid90s, so the information is on various kinds of audio & video tapes, and should be updated to digital form for long term storage and use. Leslie showed parts of some of these tapes to the Commission. These included an interview with Millie Bennett and another with Julian Janowitz. Craig told the group he has the capacity to convert audio recordings to digital and will investigate how best to do it with his system. He will also investigate how to convert speech audio files into text to create transcripts of the recordings. Janice asked the Commission if they would reimburse Leslie for the conversion of 3 video recordings and the cost of the thumb drive to put them on, for the Historical Commission archives. The total cost is \$135 for 3 copies of the material and 3 thumb drives (information requested by a member of the public), so the cost for one set on one thumb drive is \$45. Craig made the motion to reimburse Leslie Bracebridge \$45 for the cost of the thumb drive and conversion of 3 video recordings of historical interest for the Historical Commission records. Seconded by Janice. Passed 4-0.

SHRAB Veterans Grant implementation. Janice told the Commission that they have received the grant for \$2105, to paint the War Veterans Monument on the Town Common, and to help in the cleaning and restoration of 7 Veteran graves in the West Cemetery. Janice told the Commission she is asking the painter to give an estimate for repainting the historical Guideboard on the Town Common. There is no grant for that, but it needs to be done and there is money in the Historical Commission accounts. She will let the Commission know what the painter says.

Digitizing Historical Commission records. Commission discussed this and creating webpages about town history. Craig suggested selecting photos from the Historical Commission collection and adding information and anecdotes about the people, place or event. Leslie made a suggestion of digitizing the “tramp counts”. Once a year the state would do a tramp count where they were trying to catalog the number of vagrant/homeless people in each town. She said it is a fascinating series of letters. Commission is open to ideas and suggestions, and people willing to work on them.

Discussion about Scenic Roads bylaw & other ways to protect stone landscapes. Janice discovered that the deadline for articles for the Annual Town Meeting warrant is March 11th (2 days), so too soon for this year. the Commission doesn't need to rush the review and public information process, but could still get started. Janice will check out what already exists in Planning Board bylaws and policies and then ask them about their interest in doing something.

Locating reference materials on CSLs. Janice had sent around an email with a list of recommended journal articles and publications for the Historical Commission to read. She was having trouble finding most of the citations, so is asking for help to collect these materials for the Commissioners to read. Craig asked Janice to send him the list. Chris may have access to some of the journals. Very recently Janice received a folder from Mary Lou (who could not be here

tonight) with copies of some information that will be useful. Janice has not had a chance to look it over and make copies yet. Some of this material (esp. some books) might be good candidates to give to the public library for everyone to have the opportunity to read them. Janice will talk to Mary Anne the Library Director about Historical Commission donations.

Consider preparing applications for National Register of Historic Places for Guideboard and 1829 Town Hall. Janice just wanted to get people thinking about these two structures and the need to protect them. It would help if they could be added to the National Register of Historic Places, which has already been done by a volunteer for the South Schoolhouse on Baker Rd. Leslie suggested the Commission may want to hire a professional to help. There were forms completed back in the 1970s for MA State Recognition, which might be a good start for the National Register. Chris clarified that the National Register does not guarantee protection, it just creates more steps is someone wants to demolish it. Janice will contact Peggy Hepler, who has already written good background information on these two structures, and MA Historical Commission (MHC), what more would be needed for the National Register, and how much it might cost to have it done. Maybe this would fall under a MHC grant?

Library Lecture Tuesday 3/24 7 PM Larry Spotted Crow Mann on Nipmuc history & cultural-political issues. Janice mentioned this event to the Commissioners, in case they were interested in going to hear it.

Article for Our Town Newsletter? Janice will write a short article for the next Town Newsletter about the Historical Commission receiving the SHRAB grant.

Unanticipated business at the time of posting, as time permits. Commission discussed with candidates submitting a written letter of interest in serving on the Historical Commission to the Selectboard. Janice asked them to consider if there were a project they would like to work on.

Next Meeting Dates. Commission agreed on Monday April 13 at 7 PM and Tuesday May 5th at 7 PM.

Adjournment. Craig made the motion, seconded by Karen, to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Janice Stone, Secretary
Shutesbury Historical Commission