

Shutesbury Historical Commission
Minutes – December 1, 2020
(approved 12/15/2020)

Meeting start: 7:01 pm

Commissioners Present: Henry Geddes, Mary Lou Conca, Janice Stone, Miriam DeFant, John Walter (joined at 7:07 pm,) Greg Caulton, Karen Czerwonka (joined at 7:26 pm)

Visitors Present: Leslie Bracebridge (joined at 7:20 pm)

Preliminary Discussion: Conca asked how to access Zoom recordings of meetings. Commissioners can request log in information from the Town Clerk. DeFant noted that the agenda and Zoom log in info for meeting is easily accessible on the Town website under Meetings>Calendar>Click on Committee Meeting to access agenda and Zoom link.

Meeting Facilitation: Geddes clarified that Commissioners should raise hands and be called on to ensure everyone gets a turn to speak and people don't all talk at once. DeFant asked to address Open Space Plan and SHC budget first as they are quick items. Geddes agreed to this adjustment. DeFant requested that speakers identify themselves for the benefit of participants accessing Zoom by phone.

Open Space Plan Request: DeFant shared that the Open Space Plan is being updated and she received a request to update the Town History section. Stone explained purpose of Open Space Plans. DeFant reported her intention to update section with expanded content about Native American, pre-colonial land use. Invited others to contribute references if they wished. She will share a draft with the SHC before the mid-January deadline for completion. General discussion about previous history sections on the Open Space and Master Plans. Bracebridge shared background on how the Master Plan was developed with input from Leslie Luchonok (town resident) and history content from Bill Carroll, a consultant used by the town about 20 years ago for a grant. SHC agreed that review of the draft would be helpful and perhaps the content can be used to update the town website.

FY2022 Capital and Budget Requests: DeFant noted that we need to submit budget requests to the Town; November 20 deadline was missed but not too late; does SHC want to make any capital requests and changes to budget? Budget requests need to be approved by the FinCom and then by Town Meeting. Would need to meet with FinCom to review request. Current budget line is \$360/year. Bracebridge notes that these requests usually have a built-in annual increase, but the Town is currently requesting level funding for this coming year. Bracebridge said that usually, budgets were level-funded if there was no increase. Walter: SHC may want to spend money on the foundation of the Old Town Hall and equipment to archive historical records. Archiving is on hold because it is not feasible to meet in person to look at the SHC storage closet because of the pandemic. SHC may need scanners and servers, but SHC is not prepared yet to make a proposal. Geddes: we need to determine what needs to be archived and who would do it. DeFant suggests this topic be tabled. She has been putting together information about digitization and will share it. There are grants available to assist SHC with a consultant in developing a plan, guide SHC in purchasing equipment, and training volunteers. DeFant notes there are grants available.

CPC Proposals: Commissioners reviewed proposals.

Historic District Signage Proposal: Stone shared info from the CPC about how to fill out the “applicant” section of the application. Commissioners reviewed the proposal and made minor editing changes. Bracebridge advised that SHC use POB 264 for correspondence. SHC clarified that Conca will be the primary project coordinator with assistance from another Commissioner. Bracebridge noted that managing grants can be challenging. Applicant needs to be prepared to defend the proposal to the CPC and FinCom when it is reviewed. Walter: anyone can apply for these grants, not just Town Committees. DeFant: any grant requires some grants management and cannot be all done by committee; need a manager to break down tasks and ensure that work flow continues, including coordination with other town departments, invoicing and post-grant reporting. Walter: Determination of Eligibility application will need to be expanded for the final application. Walter indicated he is willing to help with the project; might be able to get some other volunteers from the town. Caulton also willing to assist Conca, including design and getting quotes. Conca expressed hesitation about being the primary coordinator. DeFant expressed support for the project; volunteered to submit the final draft and copies to the CPC; final formatting edits were discussed and agreed upon by the Commission. DeFant asked for information about the budget proposal for \$8,500. Conca described plan: three districts, building markings, possible name plaques, church at Lake Wyola, possibly 9 street signs in all. Conca requested quotes from a sign maker(s.) Possible districts include Town Center, Lake Wyola, and Pratt Corner Farms. DeFant: would these be wood signs? Conca: wood ones in Leverett are degrading; a sign maker quoted PVC materials. DeFant: Mass. Historical Commission has a Vimeo site with examples of historic signage; neat to see different styles and materials, some towns use metal ones that seemed durable. Stone: what is the cost per sign? Conca: one sign maker quoted \$750/sign with design and installation. The exact number of signs and their locations has not been finalized. Walter: we don’t have to get all of the signs up in one year, money can be apportioned over time. Yusef Lateef’s widow had inquired in the past about erecting a plaque in front of their house. Conca: MACRIS map website has many historical resources documented online. Caulton: would be good to start a spreadsheet of resources. Geddes: should get multiple bids on signs. DeFant: the priority with these grants is to use local vendors; if you look online, there are sign companies can do durable, cast aluminum signs for about \$250; might be a good point of reference; costs can depend on the types of posts. DeFant will send a link to Commissioners for a MHC website with examples of historic district signs across the state. Geddes will review the draft of the full proposal to be submitted later in January. Caulton is also interested in helping. Conca will sign the proposal. She needs someone with a printer to make the copies. Caulton will help with printing. Application is due December 4.

Motion: Walter proposes motion that SHC sponsor the Historic Sign Proposal.

Second: Karen Czerwonka

Roll Call: approved by unanimous consent

Ceremonial Stone Landscape (CSL) Preservation Proposal: Geddes summarized the intention of this proposal: to hire a preservationist and also a Tribal expert to assist with preservation of Ceremonial Stone Landscapes. Geddes briefly described criteria for a suitable preservationist including having strong credentials, good working relationships with Tribal

Historic Preservation Officers or THPOs, familiarity with MHC policy, and technical skills. Commissioners reviewed formatting edits. DeFant agreed to be the contact for this proposal.

Stone asked whether this project would be limited only to Town-owned property and not state property. DeFant clarified that proposal could include state-owned forests. Scope of possible surveys would be determined at a later time if the project is funded. DeFant suggested the project could be joint effort between experts and trained volunteers who can take GPS-enabled photographs that can be imported into a mapping program. Can use maps to advocate for preservation. Stone noted that the state land has a great many stone features worth looking at.

Walter offered his response to the proposal. He noted that he feels the proposal's writers were missing the point because the document does not mention the requirements of the Town Solar Zoning Bylaw which allows the SHC to respond to any solar project applications with a 35-day deadline. Walter: that's what we are doing, we are writing a report and need someone to help with the report. Walter noted that meeting this requirement should be a priority.

DeFant responded that it was important not to mix apples with oranges. The CPC grant would not become available until FY22, while the SHC could get noticed about a solar project application at any time. Solar Zoning Bylaw requirements were intentionally not included in this project for a number of reasons: the timeline for CPC funding may not align with the timing of any future Special Permit applications, and there are many other tasks/projects that go beyond the specific requirements of any Special Permit applications before the Planning Board. DeFant stated that tying the CPC application to the Solar Zoning Bylaw requirements is problematic. The bylaw requirements should be addressed separately. DeFant suggested the SHC may wish to hire a consultant separately, out of SHC funds, to assist with a written response under the bylaw. It is also possible that the Solar Bylaw provisions may become unnecessary if an involved federal agency invokes Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to require Tribal consultation. Such a process would be independent of the Town government. DeFant noted that CSL preservation is a much larger goal of the SHC. The SHC voted in 2017 to make CSL preservation and town education about CSLs a long-term goal. There has been little action, however, taken since then to develop policies, educational programming, and surveys. DeFant noted that the deliverables for the CPC grant are unrelated to the review of any Special Permit applications. DeFant stated she felt that having input from Tribal experts is essential for any future projects to ensure that our efforts are accurate and respectful. Additionally, this grant aims to help the SHC with related projects such as developing a Town Archaeology Policy. She noted that the SHC never developed such a policy even when one of the Commissioners was an archaeologist. Walter expressed concern that this proposal will not be accepted at Town Meeting and may be difficult for residents to understand.

Walter stated that the application refers to educational activities and CSL surveying, all of which are new to him. He expressed concern about the proposal getting approved at Town Meeting, noting the text was hard to read. Walter stated it would be easier to present the project as necessary in order to fulfill the requirements of the Solar Bylaw. He asked if the SHC had a hand in crafting the new bylaw. He noted that the current proposal was ambitious, but he is willing to go along with it.

Geddes stated that the current proposal goes beyond the narrow requirements of the Solar Bylaw review process. He noted that it is unclear if and when any Special Permit applications will come to the SHC attention. While some town residents may not support this project, it is still worthwhile and necessary to create projects that have an educational dimension and help to build relationships with experts in the field of CSL research and preservation.

DeFant responded to the critique of the proposal. She noted that she did not agree with Walter's characterization of the proposal as missing the point. She did not feel this was a collegial way to respond to a proposal that some Commissioners had put a lot of time into. DeFant observed that there has been at least three years of discussion on the SHC about how to preserve CSLs and educate townspeople, and how to respectfully acknowledge the original owners of the land. She noted that only THPOs have the right and authority to determine what is a CSL for their cultural traditions and people. In 2017, the SHC voted to make CSL preservation a long-term goal and priority. DeFant left the SHC in mid-2019 and is surprised to find the SHC is relitigating what previous Commissions had already decided. She understands that there is some skepticism about CSLs in town and that the Planning Board never used a THPO when permitting the first solar project. She said she would be very sad if the Town refused to acknowledge CSLs' existence and did not fund a small project, especially when so much effort and money has been directed to preserving colonial history. Even if some residents are unfamiliar with CSLs, many in town are very interested in this topic. Out of a sense of fairness and balance, this small grant does not seem objectionable. DeFant further noted that she does not believe any of the Commissioners are "missing the point" or are ill-informed. Some Commissioners have spent years educating themselves about these issues. Regardless of the CPC grant, if the SHC does not start beginning some projects, it is unclear when anyone will accomplish anything.

Walter noted that he believes the CPC proposal should be linked to the consultation with the Planning Board. He thinks the application will be stronger if it is tied to the Solar Zoning Bylaw. He noted that that is what the SHC is supposed to be doing.

DeFant noted that the SHC is responsible for a number of roles, including education. She remarked that Walter advocated for greater educational programming at the 11/17/20 SHC meeting. The grant will help the SHC develop educational materials. Commissioners can create educational programming on our own but our product will be subject to criticism if it is not reviewed and approved by someone with expertise.

Geddes noted the real challenge is how to change narrative in town and how to help people see Native American history in a different light. If the SHC is unable to do this, other efforts won't make sense to the community. Geddes emphasized the need for an educational initiative, the development of a Native American CSL resource base, and an archaeological policy. He emphasized that the discussion about the Solar Zoning Bylaw in this context had the potential of mixing issue up and alienating residents who might otherwise be supportive of our efforts.

Conca stated she felt the application was difficult to understand. She also noted that the proposal included what she considers to be a lot of money. She indicated she is not convinced about what kind of consultant should be hired, but was learning that THPOs are politicians with their own

perspective. When asked by Geddes, Conca suggested the SHC use a Native layperson/researcher such as Rolf (Cachat-Schilling.) She also noted that some town residents are uncomfortable with the discussion of CSLs because they believe they may lose rights for their own property. Education is needed to better inform residents and reassure them that any SHC programming is voluntary.

DeFant discussed how she and Geddes approached the draft proposal. Based on her past experience with grant-writing, she thought it important to direct the proposal to the CPA grant criteria and to explain how the proposal meets those criteria. She acknowledged that readers might not have much background knowledge about CSLs in this region. For that reason, the proposal includes plans for educational programming, including presentations, web content, and brochures. In her experience, people appreciate an explanation of how the grantees meet the intent of the grantor. DeFant affirmed the importance of engaging with Native experts, including THPOs. It is unclear what, if any, THPOs would be interested in this project. DeFant and Geddes are attempting to reach out to some regional THPOs. DeFant noted that THPOs will not work for us without being paid for their time. DeFant heard one estimate that consultation time might be in the range of \$100/hour. DeFant observed that many of the tasks and deliverables in this grant are time-consuming but could be completed by a non-THPO consultant, working at a lower hourly rate. She noted that the consultant need not be Dr. Lisa McLoughlin, but it should be someone who can manage GPS-encoded data, mapping, writing, policy development, and educational programming. These are not tasks that a THPO would do for us. For example, DeFant noted that a consultant could help develop an Archaeology Policy, a policy which the SHC has never been able to develop on its own. The grant could be used to develop a procedure whereby town residents could obtain consultation about stone features on their properties if they desired. DeFant noted that perhaps Doug Harris, the former Deputy THPO of the Narragansett Tribe, might wish to be involved in some way. Although no longer a Deputy THPO, he has a very deep knowledge of CSLs in this region. DeFant hopes that this project, rather than being polarizing, could increase town enthusiasm for CSL preservation. DeFant does not want to see town-wide CSL preservation efforts to be confused with solar project permitting.

Stone: I think this is a good idea. We tried to get a cultural grant to bring Doug Harris back to town but were unsuccessful. The SHC has been just treading water since then. If we don't do this, who will? This is our responsibility. Would be good to start making connections with experts to guide us. Stone proposed a series of public meetings to provide information to the town and build support. Stone noted that she was not originally in support of CSL preservation, but now knows more. Other people can also change. She noted the town is lucky to have this cultural resource.

Caulton expressed concern about how to get this proposal approved at Town Meeting. Suggested that writers work on ways to make proposal clearer and easier to understand.

DeFant noted that she believes the Town Meeting approves the final project proposal, not this brief initial application. She likes the idea of holding public meetings to invite conversations and educate residents about the grant. DeFant added more details about how the funding was structured. She received one quote from Dr. McLoughlin who estimated the project would require 100 hours of her time at a discounted rate of \$40/hour. Working from that, DeFant

proposes to use an equal amount of funding for THPO consultation. Hope to get quotes by time of the full application deadline.

Walter proposed that the SHC put aside time at meeting soon to plan how to respond to any requests for comments from the Planning Board.

Geddes feels this project is relatively small and noncontroversial. It will help the SHC with future projects and grants. He found the language in the proposal to be typical for grant applications. He feels this proposal is a good starting point.

DeFant noted that the SHC has discretionary funds it can use if it finds a need for a consultant to review any Planning Board requests. DeFant does not believe it is necessary to ask Town Meeting to fund a function that has already been approved for the SHC. DeFant notes that the Commission can author its own report. DeFant has significant writing experience as do others on the Commission. DeFant proposes that the SHC table this discussion and decide at a future meeting whether it wants to hire a consultant for this task.

The Commission briefly discussed the possibility of seeking input from Doug Harris. There was general agreement that he has made major contributions to the field of CSL preservation and should be involved if possible. Geddes introduced idea of Dr. Rae Gould, the Nipmuc Nation THPO and a professor at Brown University. He noted that she has many valuable credentials, including being the THPO for the Tribe that is closest to our community. There was brief discussion about getting information about other THPOs. The Planning Board can hire an expert of its own to review Special Permit applications.

DeFant introduced the idea of asking for \$1,000 of financial support from the Friends of the Shutesbury Historical Commission for the CPC project.

Motion: Geddes proposes motion to approve the CSL CPC proposal as written.

Second: Stone

Roll Call: approved with unanimous consent

Motion: DeFant proposes motion to authorize DeFant to request \$1000 from the Friends of the SHC.

Second: Geddes

Roll Call: approved with unanimous consent

Walter notes that he and Conca need to think about fundraising for the Historic District Sign Proposal.

DeFant agreed to get copies of both proposals submitted to the CPC on Thursday.

Next meeting: 12/15/20, 7 pm. Agenda: meeting with Dr. Lisa McLoughlin, Joan Hanson, and Michael DeChiara.

Adjournment: 9:26 pm

Submitted by Miriam DeFant, Historical Commission Secretary