

CONCORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Public Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2016

7:00 P.M.

First Floor Conference Room, 141 Keyes Road

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk's Office, Concord's Historical Commission held a public meeting in the First Floor Conference Room at 141 Keyes Road, Concord starting at 7:00 P.M. Commission members Andrew Koh, Clair Gauthier, Geoffrey Taylor, and Electa Tritsch were present. Select Board Representative Alice Kaufman and Senior Planner Lara Kritzer were also present.

Commission Member Annette Bagley and Diann Strausberg were not present for this meeting. Chair Geoffrey Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:08 P.M.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Taylor explained that the Commission had been asked to add a discussion item and that Mr. Paul Macone was present to explain the work underway to research Camp Massachusetts. Members agreed to add this to the agenda.

Ms. Kritzer passed around a postcard sent to the Commission by a person in Michigan. The postcard showed an early 20th century Concord baseball team and had been sent for the Commission's archives. Members were interested in the origins of the card but were not familiar with the team.

Ms. Tritsch moved to approve the agenda as revised. Mr. Koh seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

Approval of Minutes

Members had reviewed the November and December minutes prior to the meeting and Mr. Taylor corrected a typo at this time. Ms. Tritsch moved to approve both sets of minutes as revised. Mr. Koh seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

Camp Massachusetts Discussion

Paul Macone, 33 Grove Street, explained that he was working with another Concord resident, Joel Bowie, researching the long forgotten Camp Massachusetts, which was held on September 7-9, 1859 in the West Concord area. A pre-cursor to the Civil War, the then Governor and legislature had called all local Massachusetts Militia to gather for several days in one location to plan for the anticipated war. This was largely a political move and a show of force. Massachusetts had been at the forefront of planning and Concord had been chosen as it was a central location near several train lines. Mr. Macone explained that they were working to research the event with the goal of nailing down its exact location.

Mr. Bowie had conducted research at the Boston Public Library and had found a Batch Elder etching of Camp Massachusetts in their archives. A key to the etching had also been made which provided a very detailed map of the encampment of 6,000 soldiers. Mr. Macone noted that this had been very popular at the time and that the Camp was believed

to have had 100,000 spectators. Mr. Koh stated that he had heard of this event years ago and had mentioned it to the former CHC Chair, but had not found any further information. Mr. Macone explained that the Camp had been a three day exercise, with a two mile parade to the North Bridge Monument held on the second day. All of the participants had arrived by either horse or train and Henry David Thoreau was known to have been a spectator as he had commented on the event in his writings.

Mr. Macone showed a copy of the key to the etching and pointed out the detailed notes of the locations of the different regiments and features. He noted the location of the sentries around the camp and explained that they believed the Camp to have extended around the area of the current Commonwealth Avenue and Laws Brook Road, roughly from the location of Route 2 to the Nashoba Brook/Loring Corner area. Mr. Macone noted an early bridge on the map which was believed to be near the existing footbridge over Nashoba Brook. The Town had not had a police force at that time, so they had had to bring one in for the event. It was the largest gathering in Massachusetts until WWI. Mr. Macone then showed a ca. 1950s aerial view of West Concord and explained where they believed the encampment features could still be found.

Much of the area had never been developed, and it was thought that it might be possible to find artifacts. Mr. Bowie was interested in battlefield archaeology and his long term plan was to further research the site. They hoped to do a metallic scan of the area in the near future as the land was now undeveloped, but was proposed to be part of the future home of the Junction Village project. There had not been any deaths during Camp Massachusetts so they were not expecting to find any burial sites. They had talked to Chris Hart, who owned some of the land, and were making arrangements to look at his property. Members discussed the possibility of finding artifacts on the site and the areas that might have had more disturbance. Mr. Macone stated that they knew someone who did conflict archaeology who would be able to help with the project.

Mr. Macone stated that they were working to get permission from the Concord Housing Development Corporation to look at the land along the Assabet River. Mr. Koh wondered if they could locate the footings for the old footbridge as he thought this would give them good reference points. Mr. Macone stated that they would be completing a professional metallic survey and that they were working with Natural Resources Director Delia Kaye to secure permission for that work near the river. They were not sure whether the encampment had cleared out its trash, and discussed what might be found. Mr. Koh was asked about the possible depth of any finds. Mr. Koh thought that they would be relatively close to the surface but noted the potential impact of flooding in the area, brownfields, homes, and the adjacent rail road which might impact their sites.

Mr. Taylor asked if they had a timeline for the project. Mr. Macone stated that they were securing permissions now and hoped to begin survey work soon. Mr. Taylor encouraged them to look into doing this work as a CPA funded project and Mr. Macone stated that they would be open to that in the future. Mr. Macone added that he would like to install an interpretive sign in the area, perhaps along the Rail Trail, and Mr. Taylor thought that this would be a great addition to the area.

Members agreed that they would like to add any reports produced through this work to the CHC's webpage. Mr. Macone stated that they also believed that Homer Winslow may have done three etchings or drawings of the event and that they were working to find them. Mr. Koh and Ms. Tritsch were asked to comment on what might be found on the site. Mr. Koh thought that this area was a dream come true for an archeologist as it was

relatively pristine with few changes to the topography. He noted that archaeologists did not usually have a map and drawing to guide them in their work and believed that it might be possible to relate any found artifacts to individuals at the event. Mr. Taylor thought that this might be a great future exhibit at the Concord Museum. Mr. Macone stated that they hoped to turn over any findings to the Museum and Mr. Taylor noted that pre-Civil War history was rare in Concord and could be a great opportunity.

Ms. Tritsch suggested that this project be coordinated with the Brandeis work at McGrath Farm. She stated that she would like to see any information found here included in a broader sensitivity map of the area. Mr. Koh stated that they would overlay the results of the scan with the Brandeis program's GIS information. He noted that they were working at the moment with the Town's GIS manager to overlay this information. Mr. Koh agreed that they would want to work with the Museum on this project but reiterated his ongoing concern with the storage of any found items and suggested that the Wheeler Harrington property might be a better storage location. It was suggested that a future CPA application could assist in dealing with artifact storage.

Members discussed with Mr. Macone the needs of the program and the benefits of being proactive and prepared for the project and what it might find. Members agreed that it was better to do this work now, before things could be lost to future development. Mr. Koh thought that volunteer assistance could also be arranged for the project. Mr. Macone stated that they had a lot of professional assistance arranged with the metallic detector work and noted that they will loan the equipment to the students if possible.

Mr. Taylor thought that Mr. Macone and Mr. Bowie were doing exactly what should be done to investigate this lost piece of Concord history. Mr. Macone stated that with the permissions gathered in the next few months, they hoped to be ready to begin preliminary scanning work in the spring and summer. Mr. Taylor offered the Commission's assistance and support for the project. Mr. Macone stated that their goal with this discussion was to inform the Commission on their project and gather support.

Discussion turned to other lost areas of Concord History. Mr. Macone stated that his second cousin had known some of the German POWs working on the McGrath Farm. Members noted that Edith Bailey had completed a history of West Concord that could be useful to this project. Mr. Koh explained that they had located evidence of the horse track off of Barrett Farm during their work in the fall. Mr. Macone stated that he would keep in contact with the CHC during the project and let them know of its progress. Mr. Macone also noted that he had a lot of photos of the area that he could bring in for the Commission to review.

Discussion on Potential Demolition Review Bylaw Presentation and Handout Materials

Members began the discussion with the question of whether the Bylaw should apply to buildings that are 75 or 100 years old. Mr. Taylor was not sure whether there was a strong argument for 75 years, and asked Members to address this. Ms. Tritsch thought that if the question came up, the Commission could produce a handout with bulleted reasons on why 75 years was an important cut off point. Ms. Gauthier offered to assist in developing that list if needed.

Ms. Kritzer stated that a list of all buildings in Concord built before 1941 had been developed and cross reference with the Historic Resource Survey (HRS) properties.

There was a difference of about 250 properties between the two lists (250 properties built before 1941 but not on the HRS). Ms. Kritzer presented a map of Concord with the buildings constructed by 1916 and 1940 highlighted. Members reviewed the difference between the two dates and what structures might be lost if the Commission recommended 1916 rather than 1940 as the cut-off date. Members reviewed the length of time required for the review process and what would be necessary to complete those reviews. It was noted that FAR (Floor Area Ratio) regulations had previously been suggested when these issues were raised. Members agreed to stay out of that discussion for the time being, as the FAR bylaw did not address preservation, but rather re-use.

Members also discussed what elements to emphasize during the Town Meeting discussion and it was suggested that a list of potential salvage companies might be useful for future applicants if recycling historic elements was a goal of the process. Ms. Gauthier thought that most residents would be concerned with the burden that this review would place on them if they wanted to make changes to their property. It was noted that the preservation of the unique character of Concord was part of the Commission's charter and that the Bylaw was an effort to make resident's cognizant of the Town's past. It was agreed that the presentation would focus on the Bylaw as addressing a communal concern which is important to the fabric of Concord. Members discussed the various arguments for and against the proposed Bylaw. Members agreed that the demolition review must be pragmatic and agreed to complete property reviews within two weeks and to hold any public hearings within a month of being notified of the application. Ms. Gauthier suggested that if and when the proposed Bylaw passes, the Commission should plan to get details on the review process out to realtors as soon as possible. Members agreed that education would be key to the smooth implementation of the Bylaw and that educational materials would be developed as part of the upcoming Town Meeting process.

Members reviewed the benefits and goals of the Bylaw. It was suggested that the Commission might want to reach out to the Planning Board before the Public Hearing as that this discussion could serve as a dry run for Town Meeting. Ms. Kritzer and Mr. Taylor agreed to meet the following week to work on the PowerPoint presentation for the Planning Board.

Claiborne Dawes, 29 Munroe Place, asked why the Commission was not asking for the Demolition Delay to apply to any building 50 years or older. Mr. Taylor explained that the Commission had wanted to start conservatively in order to make it through Town Meeting, but that 50 years could be a future goal. Ms. Dawes stated that she was very much in support of the proposed Bylaw and would be writing to the Concord Journal on the subject.

Members discussed whether it would be helpful to meet with realtors before Town Meeting to seek their support for the Bylaw.

Historic House Marker Review (if any)

There were no new applications to review at this time.

A Place in Concord Articles Update

There were no articles ready to publish at this time. Ms. Tritsch suggested that the Commission try to get a few articles in before Town Meeting focusing on the character of neighborhood streets and what makes a neighborhood special.

CHC Preservation Awards

There was no update on this program at this time.

Other Business

It was noted that the Commission had wanted to nominate the Caesar Robbins House for a state preservation award. Ms. Kritzer was asked to look into the nomination process.

Ms. Tritsch moved to adjourn. Mr. Koh seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lara Kritzer
Senior Planner

Minutes Approved on: _____ July 14, 2016 _____