

CONCORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Public Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2016

7:00 P.M.

Second 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 Second Floor Conference Room at 141 Keyes Road, Concord starting at 7:00 P.M. Commission members Clair Gauthier, Diann Strausberg, Geoffrey Taylor and Electa Tritsch were present. Select Board Representative Alice Kaufman and Senior Planner Lara Kritzer were also present.

Commission Member Annette Bagley was not present for this meeting. Chair Geoffrey Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:05 P.M.

Commission Memberships

Ms. Bagley was not able to attend this meeting and Mr. Taylor noted that her term on the Commission had come to an end on June 1. It was noted that she would remain a member until her replacement was appointed, and Members agreed to not act on appointments until after the Preservation Awards presentations on June 20. Mr. Taylor asked Ms. Gauthier if she was willing to take over Ms. Bagley's position on the Commission and Ms. Gauthier answered yes. Members discussed possible options for new alternate members as well.

It was noted that Mr. Koh's term on the Commission had also ended on June 1 but that he was eligible for reappointment. Members agreed to contact the Town Manager's office in support of reappointing Mr. Koh for another term and moving Ms. Gauthier to the open full member position.

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Tritsch moved to approve the agenda as written. Ms. Strausberg seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

CHC Preservation Awards

Mr. Taylor stated that the Preservation Awards would be given out at the Select Board meeting on June 20, which would begin at 7:00 P.M. in the Town House Public Hearing Room. Ms. Bagley was working to generate an award certificate which would be given out to the property owner, architect and builder of the project. The draft certificate was passed out and noted to include an image from N.C. Wyeth's Men of Concord which is owned by the Concord Free Public Library. The Library has given approval for the image to be used. Ms. Bagley had also contacted the Concord Journal and an article would run in the paper as well. She was preparing a brief Power Point presentation to be used at the Select Board meeting that would show six before and after photos of the selected projects. He explained that the final certificates might not be ready in time for the meeting but that draft certificates would be handed out. He reviewed the awards themselves and noted that Ms. Bagley would be handing them out.

Members discussed with Ms. Kaufman the presentation with the Select Board. It was noted that the presentation would be taped by CCTV and could be pulled out for later use. Ms. Kritzer or Mr. Dugan would be asked to take pictures. Mr. Taylor agreed to begin the presentation and introduce Ms. Bagley, who would give a brief description of each project and the award. Awardees could then come forward and be photographed receiving their certificates.

Demolition Review Bylaw

Ms. Gauthier passed in edits on the draft form sent out prior to the meeting. Members had no further edits and agreed that Ms. Kritzer should finalize and distribute the form with Ms. Gauthier's changes.

Ms. Kritzer stated that the Commission would be receiving a request for review under the old Demolition Review Bylaw of the house at 550 Old Bedford Road. The house was noted to be a ca. 18th century farmhouse located close to the road with open conservation land behind it. Both Ms. Tritsch and Ms. Gauthier were familiar with the house, which had been for sale for a long time.

Ms. Strausberg was noted to be the Member who would complete the initial review of demolition applications going forward. Members agreed to assist with this review if the load became too heavy. If Ms. Strausberg had any questions about whether a building was historic, it would be added to the next agenda for discussion by the Commission. Members discussed how abutters would be notified going forward and the importance of looking widely at impacted properties. Ms. Tritsch stated that she had heard from Susan Martin about the demolition of one of the Veteran's houses, a Cape style house on Sudbury Road, which was being replaced with a larger structure.

Archaeology Project Update

Members noted that they had raised concerns at the last meeting about the plans to replace the storm drain near the Assabet River in part of the area where Camp Massachusetts had been held. Members had received a letter on the project a few months earlier but their concerns had not been answered. It was noted to be a Concord Public Works project and Ms. Kritzer was asked to reach out to the Engineering Division to ask if they could give the CHC notice when they were ready to begin the work. Ms. Tritsch thought that the work was as likely to find riverfront Native American artifacts as Camp Massachusetts items.

Ball Benson House and Barn

Ms. Tritsch, Ms. Kritzer, and Ms. Rasmussen had met with Architect David Ottinger since the last meeting about the Ball Benson House and Barn. Mr. Ottinger had been hired by Jeri Bemis to assist in the deconstruction of the barn and its preservation in the storage units. He had taken many photos and had detailed plans for the building with notes on the condition of the structural elements and which ones would need to be replaced to reconstruct the building. He had explained his work on the project and some of the unusual findings of their work. He had notes on both the house and the barn which he was happy to share with the Town, including information on the bricks, which he believed had come from another location, the 19th century soapstone sink, and the layers of construction history in the house. He had found evidence of many different eras in the building and explained his philosophy for moving forward with the building.

Ms. Tritsch suggested that the next step for the project could be to sit down with Mr. Ottinger to discuss his findings and what was needed to reconstruct the buildings. Ms. Rasmussen had suggested that it would be possible to hire Mr. Ottinger to develop plans for the building and a proposal for its reconstruction. Members discussed the possible use of either building for archeological artifact storage. It was noted that the barn was a classic New England structure that could be adapted to other uses. The house was considered to be more problematic, as it could be a museum piece but lacked an institution to oversee it.

Ms. Kritzer stated that the Planning Division was planning to submit an application for a Wheeler Harrington site Management Plan which could be the first step to locating either structure on that property. Ms. Tritsch noted that CPA funds could also be requested for the building's reconstruction. Members agreed that they were in favor of pursuing the reconstruction and relocation of the building and to consider all options for that project. Ms. Tritsch suggested that the most significant goal of the Commission could be to find someone to restore the house for use as a museum. Members agreed to support the Management Plan for the Wheeler Harrington site as a means of moving the project forward.

Historic House Marker Review (if any)

There were no new applications to review at this time. Members discussed the need to get the word out about the project and Ms. Gauthier offered to write an article for the Concord Journal. Ms. Kaufman suggested that the Commission mention the markers during the award presentations with the Select Board. Ms. Strausberg asked if the Commission had ever approached a homeowner about adding a marker to their home. Members stated that they had not yet taken that step. Ms. Tritsch suggested that the Commission send out a brief postcard or letter to historic homeowners to suggest that they consider the program.

Members discussed the possibility of having Henry Schwann of the Concord Journal do an article on the program and agreed that this would be a great advertisement. Ms. Tritsch thought that it would be good to emphasize the range of buildings that were eligible. Members discussed how recent a building could be and still be approved for an historic house marker. Members asked about the cost of the markers as well. Ms. Kritzer agreed to contact Crosby Designs to find out what they charged. Members also discussed having local architects and builders nominate potential buildings or talk to their clients about adding signs.

Discussion of Potential Change in CPA Surcharge

Mr. Taylor stated that he had spoken with Ms. Bagley about this issue and that she opposed changing the amount of the surcharge. Mr. Taylor explained that the Community Preservation Committee was considering putting forward a warrant article to raise the surcharge from 1.5% to 3%. Mr. Taylor did not think that it would go forward this year as there was no groundswell of support for the change. Ms. Kaufman suggested that the CPC could put forward a more modest raise to 2%. Mr. Taylor noted that a request for 3% could always go down and noted that the former CPC chair's main concern was with having enough funding for future land acquisitions. He noted that Historic Preservation projects had used the highest percentage of CPA funding and that most of the projects submitted for funding received it.

It was noted that CPA funding would be used for the upcoming purchase of the Ball's Hill Road properties. Ms. Gauthier asked if there were trails in that area and Mr. Taylor explained that there were private trails already on the site. Ms. Tritsch asked of those areas were publically accessible and Mr. Taylor noted that they were not accessible at present but would be after the land was purchased. With the Town's acquisition, there would be access and parking for the sites from the Ball's Hill Road area. It was also noted that the current Owner was retaining six five-acre lots for her family in that area. Discussion turned to Estabrook Woods and the recent access concerns at that site.

Review of Historic Signs

Members asked Ms. Kritzer to invite Maria Madison of the Robinson House and the members of the Rivers to Revolutions class to meet with them at a future meeting. Members wanted to thank the students for their letter and to work with them to develop more accurate signage. Members asked Ms. Kritzer to look into the cost of new historic signage.

Other Business

Members discussed the recent proposal to relocate the cellular antennas at Middlesex School.

Ms. Kritzer reported that she had met with representatives of the Trustees of Reservations about their proposal to build a new visitor's center in the form of the site's earlier barn. She passed out information on the site and noted that the plans were only schematic at this time.

Members discussed the July and August meeting schedule. Members agreed to cancel their August meeting at this time.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Tritsch moved to approve the May meeting minutes as revised. Ms. Strausberg seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR.

Ms. Strausberg moved to adjourn. Ms. Tritsch seconded the motion and ALL VOTED IN FAVOR. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lara Kritzer
Senior Planner

Minutes Approved on: July 14, 2016