

WEYMOUTH HISTORICAL COMMISSION
September 18th, 2012 Meeting
Francis Kelly Room/Weymouth Town Hall

PRESENT: Chairman Ed Walker, Mary Dorey, Jody Purdy-Quinlan, Don Mathewson, Cathy Torrey and Rodney Lundin

ABSENT: Ted Clarke

ALSO PRESENT: Jody Lehrer/Community Development Coordinator, Office of Planning and Community Development

Call to Order 7:00 p.m.

Chairman Walker called the September 18th, 2012 meeting of the Weymouth Historical Commission to order at 7:05 PM.

Approval of June 11th, 2012 Minutes

Ms. Torrey moved to approve the minutes of the June 12th, 2012 meeting.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Reports - Town Liaison

Fogg Library Update

Ms. Lehrer reported there are two more phases that they are working on - with the next phase, Phase 2, 'window restoration'. This work will be going out to bid in the Fall. Phase 3 involves the interior/site work and they will seek the funding for this phase from the Community Preservation Committee.

Legion Field Update

Ms. Lehrer reported that presently they are preparing the scope of work, adding they will need to request the funds to complete the repair of the brick wall and Iron Gate work.

Emery Estate Update

At this point the Emery Estate Committee report/findings is under review. Presently they have a wedding scheduled to take place at the Estate for September 30th and on November 4th a Road Race.

Ms. Torrey, who serves on the Committee, stated that this Committee reports to Mayor Kay, who will accept the report and review the Committee's findings, comments and recommendations. Additionally it is expected that the Mayor will request this Committee stay intact. She said after the Mayor reviews their report they will meet again. She believed that after the Mayor, the report will then go to the Town Council for their review/comments.

Ms. Torrey went on to inform members that one of their ideas for use of the property was for a community garden to be administered by a farmer with people buying 'shares'. One of the purposes of the garden is the volunteering of your time.

The second recommendation was to use the Emery Estate as a place to hold functions/events; i.e., weddings, and the third idea was to use it as a facility for community events.
Chairman Walker said he heard the estate should remain.

Ms. Torrey said this was correct, adding the Committee was unanimously in favor of keeping it.

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It was noted that the building is over 100 years old and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan added that it was also on the 'Demo Delay' list.

The question was asked 'do you keep the façade and change the inside'

Ms. Torrey said that they discovered many homes and mansions were available for restoration, but she felt the Emery Estate stood out because it had the added feature of a magnificent view - although, she said, the need for adequate parking would need to be addressed. She told the members that the neighbors would like to see something done.

Chairman Walker reported that he heard someone was up there with a 4-wheeler and did some 'donuts' on the grass.

Ms. Torrey informed members that there is security there; i.e., cameras and an alarm, and in addition the police monitor the site, noting there is only one way up and down.

Update on Site of King Phillip War

Next Ms. Lehrer reported that the King Phillip's tablet has been completed.

Chairman Walker said he asked the DPW to re-install the sign.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan reminded members that at their last meeting they were shown the future plan and at that time the members voted to approve it, with Rob Lundin abstaining from the vote because he did not feel he had enough information to make an informed vote - and was uncomfortable with it. She said now I think we were fooled, pointing out that the memorial is on the sidewalk and based on that location she felt it would be destroyed when they plow. Further, she noted, it was not the original wall. She pointed out that the way the site was handled was past member Dick Pattison's big concern. He felt that the right thing wouldn't be done and now, she said, it's evident that it wasn't. She commented that she felt the planning by the State was poor, adding that the Planning Board also approved it - along with the Commission.

Mr. Lundin referred to the elevation on the side, which was just dirt - he thought there would be flowers.

Ms. Lehrer reported that the wall/plaque is finished; but she wasn't sure about the status of the landscaping.

Chairman Walker also wanted to know who would be responsible for maintaining the grass/landscaping.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan described the area as just having brick there.

Ms. Torrey asked 'shouldn't the focus be on what we can do?' commenting, "I don't see the state building a new wall". She suggested that possibly the Commission could focus their efforts on the plantings, landscaping and maintenance.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan wanted to point out that it was town property. She wanted to emphasize that it is the members' role to protect the Town's resources. She noted that they had given the land to the state for the purpose of widening the road.

Chairman Walker reported that the state took the land in the 1960's.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt that they just keep encroaching and taking more land.

Chairman Walker told members their land is where the trees are growing behind it – and he saw it as a beautiful piece of land.

Ms. Torrey asked if they could make the request to the state.

Ms. Lehrer responded that she wasn't sure if the property belonged to the state or the Town, but she would check it out – probably with the DPW.

Chairman Walker again wanted to reaffirm that they could beautify the land behind there, maybe designate it as a park.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt that basically the damage had been done and it now needed to be addressed, adding they could have had better mitigation. She commented that she felt guilty about it.

Chairman Walker noted that it sits on a solid ledge, adding that he previously spoke to Mr. Clarke about it. He felt that there should be at least a brick retaining wall.

Ms. Lehrer said she was not sure if plans were to add sod, but again she would speak to Jim Clarke about it.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan moved the Commission look further into making it a better historical site, as it was the site of the first Town Hall/school – not just the site of the King Phillip War.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan amended her motion to have the Weymouth Historical Commission investigate, research and to put together plans for the King Phillip parcel.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

Discussion:

Ms. Lehrer told members they would need someone to volunteer to do this research work.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt the area has become a focal point due to all the construction work going on there, with people asking "what is this place?" She said we can see if anyone wants to take up the task.

Chairman Walker suggested that Wal-Mart might be contacted to see if they wanted to do some plantings around the King Phillip monument.

Ms. Torrey commented those in charge just might need a reminder.

Ms. Dorey felt that first of all they needed to find out just 'who' is responsible.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan offered to look into it, with Rob Lundin volunteering to assist her.

Ms. Lehrer wanted to be clear on what they would be investigating and Mr. Lundin said they would look into seeing who was responsible to finish what has been started; i. e., landscaping, architecture around the monument, possibly add a retaining wall, planter. He told members that Mr. Clarke had spoken with him and he thought Jim said plantings were going in, with Ms. Lehrer agreeing – it was most probably 'plantings'.

Chairman Walker asked if the Town still had a Beautification Committee or Garden Club, with Mary Doer responding "that's me".

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan reaffirmed that she and Mr. Lundin would investigate the matter further, and asked Ms. Lehrer to see if she could get the sketch back they viewed at last meeting.

Chairman Walker then referred to the Whitman's Pond site, referring to how benches and a gazebo were added to the park/Middle Street side of the pond. He then spoke about the parking behind Winter Court, commenting that they need to make it more visible.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan wanted to emphasize that they also need to watch out for the snow plows, letting the DPW now that they will need to be cautious in this area as the plows can be very destructive.

The Chairman took Ms. Purdy-Quinlan's motion.
UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

List of Weymouth Historical Sites

Ms. Torrey wanted to point out that just because a structure is listed on the National Historical Register, it does not restrict the (private property) owner from what they can do with their property, clarifying 'there are no restrictions'.

Mr. Lundin asked if this policy applied to Town property.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan wanted to emphasize that the Historical Commission is here to protect Town property, adding that she felt they could do that with Emery Estate. She felt that the Estate property should also be eligible for grants.

Ms. Torrey agreed that protection of property is not guaranteed, with Ms. Lehrer adding - nor does it bar it from being torn down.

The Chairman said that the historical designation is viewed as a matter of prestige.

Ms. Lehrer wanted to clarify that the Mass. Historical Commission gets involved with restoration work; i. e., the Fogg Library. She pointed out that in order to do restoration work it takes a good amount of money due to the detailed requirements.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt that any funding needed for Emery Estates could come out of the Greenbush money - which, she said, was set aside for Historical Districts.

The Chairman felt they could draw up a list, adding he thought their original idea re. putting this item on the agenda was to give some thought to long range ideas/projects.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt the owner, John Deedy, would be interested.

Ms. Torrey commented that some of the sites are privately owned, emphasizing that the owner has to be in favor of the designation or they can't nominate it.

Other suggestions included:

- The building that houses Marylou's Coffee on Rt. 18/Main Street.
- John Benson's property

18 Charles Street

Ms. Lehrer stated that this property was not listed on the 'Demo Delay' list, pointing out that the Commission did not have any authority in this area. She said that at this point the proposal was before the Planning Board for review and that the applicant was proposing housing for (8) families.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt that the zoning designations in the Town were a serious issue, referring to 18 Charles Street, which is zoned R-3. She felt that the Commission needed to familiarize itself with the zoning designations in regard to historical properties.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan went on to sight an incident that happened in the Central Square Historical District, stating that some years back in 1999 there was an attempt to have the zoning changed from Residential to Business as Costco wanted to go in there. The neighbors became upset and got involved. The people felt that the Planning Board was supportive of Costco's plan, but the residents remained opposed to it. Once the neighborhood got involved in the process, they were able to get the zoning changed to R-2. She commented that she didn't know how they could have missed Charles Street, especially because it was on the 'Demo Delay' list.

Ms. Lehrer said she would look into this, adding that the Demo Delay list needs to be updated annually.

Mr. Lundin asked "how come Hingham is so powerful?"

Ms. Lehrer replied that was because they have a 'Local Historical District' designation and, in addition, their Historical Commission has much more clout than Weymouth's.

Chairman Walker pointed out that Weymouth is the report/findings 98% built out now.

Mr. Lundin felt that Weymouth should create a Local Historic District too. He referred to Front Street, commenting on the beautiful homes there. He said he would like to see it stay that way, referring to some beautiful Victorian homes.

Chairman Walker then spoke about Queen Anne's corner, commenting originally there was a federal house located there and they were ready to knock it down, but then the Town stepped in and the person was fined.

Ms. Dorey asked if members thought it was worthwhile to involve civic groups and/or other organizations to assist in the formation of a Local Historic District.

Ms. Lehrer commented that it is very difficult to do, pointing out that people don't want to be told what they can/cannot do with their house/property.

Mr. Lundin suggested them might want to think about sending a note to the local civic organizations explaining the Commission's limited control. He felt it might be worth considering doing something like that to preserve the historical buildings in their area.

Ms. Torrey said that possibly at a later date they might offer an educational forum on this subject to the civic groups and at that time the members could voice their concern over the loss of historical homes - and that the civic organizations, etc. have the ability to do something about it. He suggested that they could possibly invite a representative from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to speak on the subject.

Members thought this was a great idea.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

There were no other nominations.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

390th Anniversary of the Town of Weymouth

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan reminded members that they previously spoke about doing something in the Spring to celebrate the Town's 390th anniversary. She wanted to offer her services. She noted the dates/names of Thomas Weston 1622 and Robert Gorges 1623. She said there could possibly be some kind of talk with Jack Dempsey, at which time they could discuss the history and a lecture. She told members that Mr. Dempsey has his Doctorate from Brown University and is a Professor of History.

The Chairman suggested including Ted Clarke.

New Business

Ms. Torrey told members that she has heard comments that some of the information coming out of the Commission was not accurate and she was concerned with their credibility, which she felt was very important. She cautioned members about giving out inaccurate information or referencing any comments regarding information that comes before the Commission.

Fore River Bridge

Ms. Lehrer passed out information on the Fore River Bridge, including a 'Parade' article on the new replacement bridge. She then referred to a draft brochure from the Mass. Department of Transportation (DOT) entitled "Fore River Bridge"replacement (which ended up being the vertical lift bridge). This information also included the history of the original Fore River Bridge.

Re. the brochure - Ms. Lehrer said there was a comment period for the City of Quincy and the Town of Weymouth to respond - with a deadline of November 1st, 2012. Any comments would need to be forwarded to Jeffrey Shrimpton/DOT who is the Cultural Resource Specialist.

Other Business

At this point Ms. Purdy-Quinlan spoke about a Blue Spruce tree that was planted in 1997 in memory of Joe Piper who served the Town as a Selectman and Firefighter. It was dedicated at the Town's 375th anniversary and is planted at the Ralph Talbot Amphitheater. Then, she reported, it was dug up and moved across the street and it now appears to be dying - she wanted to know how she should proceed in saving it.

Chairman Walker suggested she speak with the Town's arborist for his professional opinion.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said she didn't think it could be moved again, commenting that the bushes around it have grown out of control, with the Chairman responding 'it just needs to be pruned back'.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said that she would contact the arborist.

Disposition of old Town Reports

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan informed members that the Town Clerk's office was cleaning out the vault and had put old Town Reports out in the hall (keeping two copies of each year for their records). She said she didn't want to see the old copies going to other people.

Ms. Torrey noted that the Town Clerk was retaining two copies which was all they felt was needed.

Ms. Lehrer said it was okay for the people to take them, commenting that she saw one from 1901 today. She noted that they are keeping one set here at Town Hall and that the Libraries would also retain some.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt the Commission should have their own set and they could be stored in the Library, with Ms. Lehrer reminding her that the Libraries would already have a set.

Mr. Clarke would speak with the librarian about the matter.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan moved that the Chairman look into the protocol re. the proper storage of Town of Weymouth historical documents and how they are protected.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

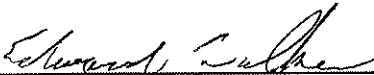
SO VOTED (Ms. Torrey opposed)

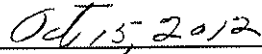
Adjournment

Ms. Torrey moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 PM and to meet again on Tuesday, October 9th, 2012.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED


Ed Walker, Chairman, WHC


Date
Respectfully submitted,
Susan DeChristoforo
Recording Secretary