

MINUTES OF THE
EMERY ESTATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

PRESENT: Pat O'Leary (Chairwoman), Mary Jordan-Roy, Cathy Torrey, and Heidi Lewis Smith

ABSENT: Laura LeBarron, Ron Boretti, Janelle Quinn, and Bill McCarthy

OTHERS: Mayor Robert Hedlund
Bob Luongo, Planning Director
Nicholas Bulens, Administrative Services Coordinator

Chairwoman Pat O'Leary stated that they do not have a quorum this evening so no votes will be taken. The Emery Estate Advisory Committee began their discussion at 6:00 pm at Town Hall, 75 Middle Street, Weymouth.

Mary Jordan-Roy updated that the committee members on the Halloween event. She brought the opportunity to the Community Events Committee, but they are too busy with the Great Pumpkin Give-a-Wey and the Town Tree Lighting to take on another event. They said that the Emery Advisory Committee could use the left over pumpkins and decorations if we wished but they would not be able to help. The Committee decided not to do this event.

Mayor Hedlund updated the Committee on some ongoing issues with Emery:

- Nick Bulens has been working on the PARC grant.
- Mike Parker, the Animal Control Officer met with the Mayor to say there are rodents and raccoons in the Emery house causing damage.
- There have been no recent event requests for the estate.
- The Eagle Scout project is almost complete. They began at Commercial Street and are making their way up to the Emery house. It may very well be completed by now.

Nicholas Bulens stated that the Town's PARC grant application was submitted on July 13, 2016 and requires a site visit, which was conducted on August 19, 2016. The Town chose to add an on-site interpretive panel to the grant application to receive additional points for the project. The Massachusetts Historical Commission is requiring that the Town obtain a state archeologist permit as part of any PARC grant award. This is because the general area of King Oak Hill was used and occupied during the ancient and early historical periods, and archaeological resources have previously been recorded in the vicinity of the estate. Award decisions for the PARC grant program will be made in November or December. Before the end of the calendar year, the Town must complete a municipal vote allocating the full \$1.7 million in project costs as well as dedicate the land as projected parkland. This will be done in October or November.

Once the land becomes protected, the state has some say in the fees that we charge and the use of any buildings. Regarding fees, the Town cannot charge non-resident more than twice what it

charges residents for use of the property. All revenue from fees must go back into the local park system. Regarding the buildings, we want to keep our options open so there will be a subdivision of the land that will take the house out of the equation.

Pat O'Leary asked if the conservation restriction required under the CPA had been added to the property. Bob Luongo said it has not but this grant-required dedication might accomplish the same purpose. The only problem is that when we bought the property for open space, it included the house; so we need to review the CPA requirement. If the house is being used for purposes unrelated to open space by a non-profit or for-profit organization, it could be an issue. The open space land cannot be shut off to the public at any point.

Cathy Torrey had a couple questions provided to her by the Weymouth Historical Commission. She asked if the house was on the Town's demolition delay list. Bob Luongo said he believes yes, which could delay any demolition of the house for up to 6 months. The idea behind such a delay is to afford the Historical Commission an opportunity to comment and propose a viable plan to save an historic property.

Cathy asked if there is a maintenance plan for the house. Nicholas Bulens said there is no written maintenance plan. Bob Luongo said a landscaping company cares for the lawn, and the house is heated as needed in the winter. Cathy said there are some concerns about the boarded windows as it makes the property appear vulnerable and easy to enter. Bob Luongo said there is a camera that monitors the outside of the building.

Mayor Hedlund asked if anyone has done an inventory of the contents of the house. It was stated no. Mayor Hedlund asked that a member of the Historical Commission make arrangements to visit the house and make a simple list. He would like to see this done within the next 30 days and would be interested in joining.

Mayor Hedlund said he has been receiving PARC grant input from his staff and the Town Council, and it is the opinion of many that the building should be demolished. Mayor Hedlund does not want to have to do this.

Mayor Hedlund stated that he has decided to dissolve the Emery Estate Advisory Committee and will form a new committee which will be charged with making a determination on the future of the main house. This committee will have 4 months to provide recommendations on how the building can be preserved and become self-sustaining. With all the other capital needs in the town, it is very difficult to try saving the building.

Cathy Torrey said a Friends of Emery should be created to do the fundraising for the estate. She doesn't want to see any more of Weymouth's history destroyed. Highfield Hall in Falmouth was about to be demolished and was saved at the midnight hour by a community group. Mayor Hedlund said Weymouth is a different demographics than Falmouth, Hingham, etc. We don't have access to deep pockets.

Cathy said over the past 5 years, every time a "friends" group has been brought up, the Committee was told no from the administration.

Resident Debbie Doyle, a neighbor of the Emery Estate, said she suggested doing fundraising. She is part of the Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands. She would like to be more involved. She is interested in being on this newly created committee as she does not want to see the building demolished. Neil Murley's father was the driver for Mr. Emery.

Pat O'Leary said that parking is still a problem at Emery.

Cathy Torrey feels that we haven't given Weymouth a chance to raise the money to keep the building.

Mayor Hedlund said that is what he's doing with the new committee. Now is the last chance or the building will be demolished.

Bob Luongo said the new committee needs to come up with a viable economic plan to sustain the building. He believes there is opposition on the Town Council to do even small maintenance, such as painting or roof repairs. Why throw money at the house if we don't know what we are going to do with it?

Cathy wants a "friends" groups to fundraise for Emery, but Bob Luongo said the fundraising would only be to restore the building. We don't have a plan to use the building. There is a renovation project, and there is a business model to operate the building. We need both.

Mayor Hedlund said a decision needs to be made and the Town Council is putting pressure on him. This has been five years in the making and people are frustrated.

Nicholas Bulens said it is not fair to say that the Weymouth community has not had its chance to save the house. It's been five years and a "Friends" group has been suggested since the reuse report was published in 2012. We cannot blame not having access to the building, because houses like Highland Hall and the Daniel Webster Estate were dilapidated and unusable before community groups stepped up and raised money. No resident has come forward to say they will file the 5019(c)(3) paperwork, and neither the government nor the Committee can do it. Weymouth is lacking in grassroots energy which is evident from the small number of public interest non-profits in the community. We have one friends group left in the entire town (Friends of the Libraries), and the Food Pantry is the only active public interest non-profit.

Cathy Torrey said she was previously informed that unless they got the green light from the administration no "friends" group could be formed. Bob Luongo said that is false information. Cathy said no one ever told her she could resign and start a "friends" group.

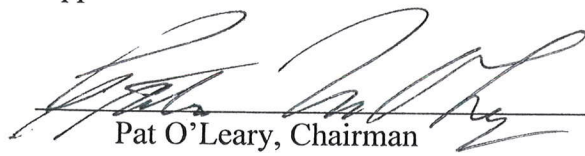
Pat O'Leary said she does not feel that the Committee failed. Let's move on and let the Mayor convene this new committee and see where it goes.

There being no further business for discussion, the Committee adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lee Hultin
Recording Secretary

Approved:


Pat O'Leary, Chairman

03/28/2017
Date