

WEYMOUTH HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Weymouth Town Hall – Kelly Room
January 12, 2010 Meeting

PRESENT: Ted Clarke/Chairman, Mary Dorey, Ed Walker, Joan Rotundo, Don Matheson and Phil Smith.

ALSO PRESENT: Jody Lehrer, Community Development Coordinator
Tom and Betty Jacobs, 237 Pine Street, So. Weymouth

Chairman

Chairman Ted Clarke called the January 12th. 2010 meeting of the Weymouth Historical Commission to order at 7:00 PM.

Minutes – December 2009

Mr. Smith moved to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2009 meeting as amended.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Reports – Town Liaison

Wessagusset

The Chairman stated that Ms. Purdy-Quinlan wanted this item on the agenda and asked to hold off on discussing it until she arrived.

Town Liaison

Ms. Lehrer began her presentation by addressing the status of the historical plaques for Weymouth homes, pointing out that they have an application before them this evening re. 237 Pine Street (Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs, homeowners were present this evening), and if approved it would make a total of (4) plaques ready for processing – and at that point could be forwarded to their sign vendor (meeting the minimum order).

Additionally, Ms. Lehrer informed members that Mayor Kay has scheduled a meeting for the end of the month to meet with all Board/Committee/Commission members.

At this point the Chairman invited Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs to address the Board regarding their request for a historical sign for their home.

Mr. Tom Jacobs addressed the Commission. He stated that his family's history in Weymouth dates back to 1920 – referring to the previous property owner of 237 Pine Street, his uncle Frank Gallahue, born in South Boston. He said a lot of renovation work was done to the house back in the 1930's. Further it was noted that Tom and his wife Betty offered the property 3 years ago as a wedding gift from his mother.

Mr. Jacobs went on to say he has taken the time to research the history of the site, because of its personal interest to him. He was able to trace it back in the Town's records to 1918. In checking with the Registry of Deeds he was not able to go back any further than 1808-1810. He informed members that a map dated 1830 listed Warren Bates as the owner.

With regard to the house's history, he told the Commission that since purchasing the property they have been working on upgrading/renovating the house and during this time they decided to remove a wall and at that point

they discovered a baby's shoe planted inside the wall. Upon finding the shoe it aroused his curiosity so with additional research he discovered that back in the 1750's the Bates family had eleven (11) children while they lived there - and in 1959 they lost five (5) of the children died. Further he believed that at that time it was a superstition to bury a child's shoe (who had died young) in the wall. He felt that might be the origin of that shoe.

Mr. Jacobs went on to describe the property as having a center chimney, indicative of the times and four (4) working fireplaces throughout the house. Further a WWII photo shows a post in the backyard, which was used as an observation tower. He told members that he and his wife love the house and in renovating it they have tried to retain its history and in doing so they worked on exposing the interior beams. They also appreciate antiques, antique architecture - adding, for himself the house has an emotional attachment as it was his grandparent's house. He said that he and Donna were thrilled when the opportunity came about for them to purchase it.

Mr. Jacobs told members in his research he was not sure which Warren Bates owned the house, as there were about 4-5 Bates families in Weymouth with that name around that time.

Mr. Walker told Mr. Jacobs that he had some history with the house, stating that he knew that Lois Bates had lived there - and he had a tour of the house about 10 years ago.

When speaking about the date the house was built, it was estimated to be around 1718, with Mr. Jacobs stating he could only trace it back with records to 1805. He said during his research he came to the conclusion that the Bates family that had the (11) children was most likely Warren Bates family - as he found information that said he had as many as (11) children in 1759.

Mr. Jacobs went on to say that his cousin Sarah was pretty knowledgeable about the history of the house, but when she died its history died with her. He noted that there was also a barn on the property when the Peterson family owned it (they were the owners of the property prior to his uncle owning it). He then spoke about to a Tom Henshaw (writer for the Weymouth News who wrote about a 1920 article that spoke about a tornado that hit South Weymouth at that time and killed 300 chickens - and he thinks they might have been housed on his property as it was previously a farm. He also speculated that the lumber used on the property originated from the tornado.

Mr. Smith commended the Jacobs on their goal to restore/maintain the integrity of this historical house, commenting that too many disappear.

Mr. Jacobs further informed members that those that oversee the nearby cemetery were interested in purchasing the property. He expected their purpose was to enlarge the cemetery and take the house down, fortunately this did not happen.

Mr. Walker moved to approve a historical house plaque for 237 Pine Street.

Mr. Smith seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Mr. Walker noted that around 1793-1795 Weymouth became part of Norfolk County and before that time there were no official records of property/property owners.

Mr. Jacobs informed members that portions of the property were sold off in the past - referring to Longmeadow Road, adding he felt that at one point he believed the property extended all the way down to the Fairgrounds - but he did know for sure that it definitely extended down to the cemetery.

Mrs. Jacobs added that where the addition is, is originally where the animals slept.

It was also noted that Mr. Jacobs' uncle owned the local pharmacy and in clearing parts of the property they found old medicine/prescription bottles.

When asked if they found arrowheads, the Bates said there could have been some, but he didn't know for sure.

Before leaving, Tom Jacobs offered members a tour of the property if they wanted to give him a call.

Rte. 53 widening

Members were told that Jim Clarke confirmed that the area of concern would be protected, that includes the brick monument/King Philip and the site of the first Town Hall.

Ms. Lehrer further addressed the widening of Rt. 53, noting that the language included in the '25% plans' - and again it specifically addresses sites such as the brick monument/King Philip and the site of the first Town Hall that would be protected. She explained that the first set of plans are called the "25% plans" and the next set of plans will be referred to as the '75%-90% plans' (the closer that they get to finalization of the project) the more specific the information/plans becomes - per Jim Clarke.

Chairman Clarke wanted to convey his thanks to Jody and Jim Clarke for their efforts.

Lovell's Grove funds

Ms. Lehrer informed members that the Edgar Power plant would be paying for the printing of the map (this was agreed to when the power plant was approved), but would need more specifics on what they wanted printed - to pass on to the printer.

Mr. Matheson wanted the map to be in 'pamphlet' form, with the Technicolor map on one side and information on the other.

Chairman Clarke suggested having 100 copies printed.

Mr. Walker moved to approve the request of 100 copies of the map as part of the first printing.

Mr. Smith seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Ms. Lehrer will pursue this with the appropriate people, with the intent of having the smaller map in the corner of the first page in color.

Cemetery Committee Designee

Ms. Rotundo, the Commission's designee on the Cemetery Committee, said they have received a proposal for work re. Reed's Cemetery (repair/rehab of headstones). At this point she was not sure if it had been accepted. Once it is approved it will go back to the vendor for a price. She commented that there was a lot of work to be done, adding that the Boy Scouts volunteered to help out and have done some work there.

To date, Ms. Rotundo said at the beginning of January she attended her second meeting and at that meeting they read proposals and discussed the vendor.

Mr. Walker interjected that he attended a meeting re. the Old Colony Civil War Roundtable, noting they repaired Jim Bates' headstone at Highland Cemetery - the work was done by a Braintree company (members and Mr. Walker thought the name was Monti),

Mr. Walker went on to say that Mr. Bates was actually Brigadier General James L. Bates who served in the Massachusetts regiment during the Civil War.

Mr. Smith referred to the Tirrell family plot, stating that he thought Mr. Bates second wife was a Tirrell.

Ms. Lehrer informed members that Jim Clarke told her that the application is being reviewed and LLC Company from Connecticut has been selected. Bob O'Connor/DPW Director will be responsible for the contract negotiations.

Fogg Reuse Committee Update

Ms. Lehrer reported that the Fogg Reuse Committee will be meeting again on January 19th at 7 PM in the South Shore Bank building and at that time options will be presented.

At this point some of the Commission members indicated they would attend, including Ed Walker.

Re. the exterior of the Fogg Library, all of the contractors have been pre-qualified and bids will be accepted through January, with work expected to begin in April.

Re. Fulton School - Ms. Lehrer said that the developer would be responsible for the historical plaque, with the language to be drafted by Jim Clarke and Ted Clarke.

Legion Field Update

Re. the memorial wall/gate rehab

The CPC has voted that Phase I would include the work and the post - Phase II would include the fence and Phase III the concrete work on the wall. Re. the funding for Phase I - the CPC voted to fund \$260,000.

Mr. Walker asked if they could get the plaque replaced (which dates back to 1925) - and also he asked about the wording.

Chairman Clarke thought that the Town Clerk would have that info.

Ms. Lehrer commented that she wasn't sure if it was eligible for funding, but she would check.

Chairman Clarke felt that it should qualify because they are doing it through a historical portal.

Ms. Dorey thought the plaque was originally located on the inside.

Ms. Lehrer said she would check further with reference to the plaque being replaced/restored/missing.

Completion of the State Ethics Test

At this point the members reviewed the State Ethics form distributed by Ms. Lehrer and she explained that each member would need to take the test on line.

January 28, 2010 Meeting with Mayor Kay

Ms. Lehrer told members that Mayor Kay would be holding a meeting with all Board/Commission /Committee members on January 28th. The meeting would begin with a 'welcome' from the Mayor. Additionally Town Solicitor George Lane would be speaking with them about the State Ethics Law along with an overview. Included in his presentation would be discussion of the Open Meeting Law, Mullen Rule and others.

Museum cases

Mr. Smith updated the members re. his research on museum cases, stating that he spoke with Heritage and was told they had nothing available at this time, but suggested he check back.

Ms. Lehrer then distributed handouts on the Memorial Wall and Fogg Library for the members review.

Great Hill preservation

Chairman Clarke noted that the request regarding the preservation of Great Hill came from John Peruzzi, President of the North Weymouth Civic Association, who expressed his strong concern about the need to preserve/maintain it.

Mr. Walker noted that Chief Justice Taft was sworn in there - adding that it was also a missal test site.

Mr. Matheson spoke about the Hill during WWII when it housed two (2) barracks/gate - about 20 x 40 in size which stood side by side. He said his grandfather owned a house there in the back which he rented to the government at that time.

Mr. Walker noted that there had also been anti-aircraft guns located there, adding that the barracks were there for that purpose.

Mr. Smith referred members to Jim Fahey from Braintree who would have additional information on this subject.

Chairman Clarke told Mr. Matheson that they need to bring this issue before the CPC (Community Preservation Comm.).

It was noted that Jim Clarke/Director of Planning and Community Development, didn't think the maintenance of Great Hill would meet the required criteria for funding approval re. the CPC grant.

It was pointed out that the plaque and stone re. Chief Justice Taft/WWII was on the Hill and based on that should qualify it under CPC guidelines.

John Peruzzi has said he would like to see the Hill all cleaned up if possible.

Mr. Matheson told members that when his grandfather bought the property it was mainly to have a clear view of the Wessagusset Yacht Club, but he commented, today you can no longer see it.

Ms. Dorey stated that she is also a member of the North Weymouth Civic Association and said they would like to see sidewalks located in the front of the Hill and to have the walk area improved all the way around.

Mr. Walker told her that in the past there were plans to do it all over, but it never came to fruition.

Chairman Clarke commented that maybe the Town (DPW) would do the work if the CPC says 'no'.

Ms. Lehrer stated that she was sure Jim Clarke had the information/plans they were looking for. She then clarified that in order to do Park work, what work is needed must be purchased with Park funds.

Chairman Clarke said he would update Mr. Peruzzi on his request and was hopeful with new taxes maybe the funding might become available for this work.

Unfinished Business

Discussion - Local Historic District

Chairman Clarke told members he got some pamphlets from the Massachusetts Historic Commission and reminded the Board that at the last meeting Mr. Walker spoke about the formation of a Local Architectural Commission. At this point he felt the Commission needs to decide if they want to spend the time and move forward with Mr. Walker's idea. He then distributed the pamphlet entitled "Architectural Preservation District' - and asked members to review the section entitled "How Does It Work'. He pointed to the part that addressed "what's protected" (taken from Preservation Through Bylaws and Ordinances - draft version").

Mr. Walker suggested members take a look at the National Preservation Bylaw (it was noted that the Chairman will send for it).

Chairman Clarke reminded members that they previously talked about speaking to the Mayor about it and felt the upcoming meeting on the 28th would be the perfect opportunity to do this.

Mr. Walker interjected that he felt a separate meeting on the topic would be better. He then commented on the legislation stating he found it open yet protective.

Chairman Clarke referred to the creation of a Historic District - pointing out it was very involved and takes 18 months to set up. He said the Commission's job would be to get the ball rolling and then the Town though the Council would make the appointments.

Ms. Lehrer noted that windows/siding/doors are exempt.

Chairman Clarke reminded members that this came about due to the developer's notification he would be demolishing the cottage on the property he purchased. He noted that when you form a District, you need to say what the district is.

Ms. Lehrer commented 'you can have several' and the Chairman agreed.

Chairman Clarke felt that the area between Main and Front Streets would make a nice district.

Ms. Dorey felt another plus would be that it would make the townspeople aware of the history of the area - as well as the need.

Chairman Clarke asked Mr. Walker to follow through with it and to meet with Mayor Kay - suggesting that he speak about a specific area(s) that he would like to see as a Historic District.

Mr. Smith volunteered to attend the meeting with Mr. Walker and the Mayor.

Chairman Clarke pointed out that many towns in Massachusetts have Local Historic Districts, probably as many as 200, adding these designations are very strict - but he felt by taking this route it would be more palatable to the Town/Town Officials.

Mr. Smith asked about the Grange Building.

Ms. Lehrer told him that the Weymouth Housing Authority was looking at it, noting it was owned by the Town. At this point she wasn't sure where it stood and recommended speaking with John Parnaby in the Planning Office for a more detailed update.

Chairman Clarke referred to the Landing, informing members that Jim Clarke has been meeting with the District Group with Weymouth and Braintree representatives.

Ms. Lehrer agreed to get an update for the members.

Mr. Smith told members that he saw a '3D' presentation on what was planned for the Landing.

Mr. Walker asked Ms. Lehrer where they stood with the Guard House at the Fore River Bridge/Edgar Station power plant.

Ms. Lehrer said that it as on 'hold' because of the proposed work for the bridge.

Chairman Clarke asked 'once we acquire it, what are we supposed to do?'

Mr. Walker said that getting it back was part of the agreement when Edgar Station was approved to build the power plant - but now the new 'temporary' bridge is over it. He viewed it as Unfinished Business. He wanted to make sure they don't forget about it. He noted that it was part of the first/original Edison plant.

Announcements

Next meeting will take place on 2/09/2010.

Adjournment

Mr. Walker moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Mr. Smith seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Ted Clarke, Chair

Date

Respectfully submitted, Susan DeChristoforo

Recording Secretary