

WEYMOUTH HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
March 8th, 2011 Meeting  
Francis Kelly Room/Weymouth Town Hall

RECEIVED  
2011 JUN -9 P 2:49  
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK  
WEYMOUTH, MASS

PRESENT: Chairman Ted Clarke, Phil Smith, Don Matheson and  
Cathy Torrey

ABSENT: Phil Smith and Jody Purdy-Quinlan

ALSO PRESENT: Jody Leherer/Community Development Coordinator, Office of Planning  
and Community Development  
Robert MacLean, Director of Library Services

Call to Order 7 p.m.

Chairman  
Chairman Clarke called the March 8th, 2011 meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Minutes

Mr. Walker moved to approve the minutes of the February 8th, 2011 meeting as amended (with one change: i. e., Page 4 - change the name from Barbara Donahue to Lynne Spencer).  
Ms. Torrey seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

REPORTS

Ms. Leherer informed members that Jim Clarke would not be present this evening, as his presence was required at another meeting.

Legion Field Update

Ms. Leherer reported that the request for \$250,000 to fund Phase 2 of the Legion Field Project (including the completed plans; i. e., iron railing fence and concrete repairs) was on the Town Council's agenda yesterday (3/7/2011) for their approval.

Meeting House Lane and Front Street

Per Jim Clarke - the Mass. Historical Commission has generated 13 hand-typed notification cards (8 1/2" x 11" with logo) with the Town Clerk's signature to go to the homeowners in the Meeting House Lane and Front Street Historical Districts. These high quality cards would be appropriate for display/framing.

Ms. Leherer noted that the MHC provides this service for all communities re. their approved historical districts.

Announcements

Next Civil War Meeting

The next Civil War meeting will be held at Weymouth Town Hall/Conference Room on Thursday March 10<sup>th</sup> at 7PM.

New Business

Mr. Mathewson reported that he would be conducting a historical type tour of North Weymouth when the weather breaks. This evening he was soliciting members' input on their interpretation of 'democracy', which he would incorporate into his tour. He said that back in the Colonial days, people looked to implement democracy with separation of church and state. At that time in an effort to get around it they chose to remove the church's input from the government in an effort to get away from the monarchy. He explained that back in England people were viewed as just people in relation to the 'kingdom' (monarchy) - but when they left England and arrived here in Massachusetts/America, the British said they would accept the people's choice of a democracy if they also retained the hierarchy of a king and a Queen.

Mr. Mathewson went on to refer to a navigator by the name of 'Smith' who had affection for Plymouth and Weymouth. He owned the quite a bit of land in North Weymouth from where Weymouthport is presently located up to Great Hill - and transported people here from Weymouth, England. He told members that he would like to take people on a tour of the area and in his talk about the area he would like to touch on the people's goal of creating a democracy here - with the Commission's approval. He would also like to include the words 'a government for the people by the people' - or in other words a democracy. He closed with saying if you are not in favor of this I won't do it.

Chairman Clarke asked if it would be a bus tour and Mr. Mathewson replied 'yes', adding he's done them in the past. He explained that they begin the tour at Town Hall then progress to the Adams house, then onto North Weymouth.

Members were asked if they had any comments.

Mr. Walker commented, in regard to the term democracy, that it was his understanding that the church played a big role right up to the revolution, adding that the people were essentially puppets for the king and that the break came with the wording of the Constitution, which called for separation of church and state. He then asked if anyone knew if there were Selectmen serving Weymouth back then.

Chairman Clarke replied that Weymouth's form of government at that time was 'town meetings'.

Mr. Walker emphasized that the minister played a big role in the community; which included passing on information to the townspeople - reiterating that it was his belief that the church played a major role in government right up to the revolution.

Chairman Clarke agreed, commenting that from 1620 to 1650 the church was pretty much the boss.

Mr. Walker told Mr. Mathewson that his idea to speak about democracy 'sounds good'.

Mr. Mathewson confirmed his premise that democracy played an important role, explaining on his tour he takes the people through the years.

Mr. Walker felt that the people/settlements were more democratic when they first settled here, but then things began to change because England became more involved.

Chairman Clarke told Mr. Mathewson that he felt it was an important subject. He then suggested he include the subject of John Smith and Mr. Mathewson agreed.

Chairman Clarke noted that John Smith was a mapmaker. Next he referred to John Adams pointing out that he wrote the Massachusetts Constitution, which the U.S. Constitution is predicated. He said that at that time people felt they had certain rights given to them by God and not by Parliament or the King (of England). He suggested that Mr. Mathewson give a lot of detail on John Smith and his background, a well-known mapmaker.

Robert Maclean, Director of Library Services, Town of Weymouth  
At this point Mr. Walker introduced Rob Maclean, Director of Library Services.

The first question presented to Mr. Maclean was about the status of the Fog Library.

Mr. Maclean began his meeting with the members by telling them a little about his background. He stated that he was born and raised in Weymouth, and based partly on that he had a pretty good understanding of the library's historical significance. He assured the Commission that the Fog Library building has protections in place - and that any reuse plan would take that into consideration. In addition to the library's historical significance being protected, so was the furniture as well as other items of this era.

It was noted that the Fog Library was built in 1898 and for 105 years it has been enjoyed by Weymouth's residents.

Mr. Walker told Mr. Maclean that he heard the building would be gutted and converted into office space.

Mr. Maclean assured the members that no one involved in the process would consider doing that, adding that the value was significant.

Mr. Walker informed those present that recently he had a meeting with Mayor Kay and at that time showed her pictures taken of the Fog Library in 1897 that showed the stacks in place confirming its historical significance. He told Mr. Maclean that hopefully with his help as well as Mayor Kay's and Jim Clarke's the library will be protected and preserved.

Mr. Maclean told the Commission that as of this date no reuse plan has been approved.

Mr. Walker said looking at the older pictures of the library - that included use of the tables and chairs was like stepping back in time. He felt that it could remain the same as pictured, but still be modernized; i. e., including the use of computers.

Mr. MacLean told the members that today most users bring in their own computer/wireless; i. e., laptops - using the library's wireless, adding this is the trend now. He said the plan would be to place the tables near the electrical outlets to allow for use of laptops, commenting he saw it as a great example of using today's technology within a historical structure.

Mr. Walker asked about handicapped access for users for the future and Mr. MacLean replied that at this point he was not sure.

Ms. Lehrer said they would need to discuss that further with Jim Clarke. If the cost is prohibitive it would need to be addressed in re. being compliant. She said they would need to sit down and review the plan and discuss it further with Jim Clarke.

Next Mr. Walker addressed the Jefferson School (built in 1888), noting it was never forced to become handicapped accessible.

In reference to Mr. Walker's comment, Ms. Torrey clarified that the need is based on public use versus private use. She said she knew about this because of her involvement with the Schools, noting you are not required to do the work all at once. She said that they would be looking at this need when they do Abigail Adams.

Chairman Clarke asked Mr. MacLean how close they were to opening the Fog Library to the public and he replied that it would not happen in 2011. He added that they are now looking at the building's water damage and identifying that money. He informed the members that they recently installed a new boiler at Fog.

Ms. Dorey asked if they had any fundraisers planned.

Mr. MacLean said he has been thinking about doing that, adding they have one they're doing right now that will go through mid-April. Presently he's considering private fund raising and re-engaging South Weymouth/Weymouth businesses for that purpose - in specific reference to Fog, using the team approach. He felt it would be beneficial to go door-to-door to create support, because he felt it helps to create a supportive network - and he wanted to make sure that the Fog Library doesn't deteriorate like that a second time.

Mr. MacLean went on to say that Mayor Kay and Jim Clarke are also involved in the fund raising process. He said that he has recommendations for the Fog Library Reuse Committee, adding that he will be reviewing them and coming up with a plan.

Chairman Clarke said he viewed the Reuse Committee's role as being and 'advisory' board - to him.

Mr. Mathewson told Mr. Maclean that he admired him taking on such a big job.

Mr. Maclean informed the Commission that the Columbian merchants held an event at the Fog Library during the Christmas holiday season and he found that people who attended were amazed by the history and architecture of the building.

Chairman Clarke felt that getting people interested was very important; pointing out that one of the objectives of the Historical Commission is the same - to get people interested in Weymouth's history.

Ms. Dorey asked if the Historical Commission could have access to a copy of the Library Reuse Committee's report.

Mr. Maclean replied that he didn't see a problem with that as it is a public document, adding that he or Jim Clarke could get that to them.

Chairman Clarke suggested to Mr. Maclean - that he possibly give some thought to have the Historical Commission report on it.

Mr. Walker commented that he didn't think Mayor Kay has made a decision on their report as yet. He then asked Mr. Maclean if the report has gone to the Town Council yet.

Mr. Maclean replied that he didn't think so because it was Mayor Kay's committee.

Chairman Clarke felt there would be a lot of interest in it when it comes out.

Mr. Maclean commented that the Columbian Square merchants were fantastic - and very supportive.

Chairman Clarke asked Mr. Maclean if he knew the status of Joe Merten's historical donations and he responded no, but he thought they were waiting until they had the final plan.

Chairman Clarke stated that he thought Joe Merten itemized his donations, adding it was mostly paperwork - then asked about storing it.

Ms. Torrey suggested they might send it to the Mass. Historical Commission.

Mr. Maclean told members that the painting of General Bates by Hunt has gone out to a Back Bay company for art restoration. He said that Jim Clarke has suggested it be hung in the Town Council chambers in observance of the Civil War's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Ms. Lehrer asked about funds for this.

Mr. Maclean said that the cost was being funded by private donors - adding that they are doing an analysis of the cost of the restoration. At this point he was anxious to see the final figure.

The meeting with Mr. MacLean concluded.

Old/New Business

Canoe Update

Mr. Walker reminded members that he had been concerned about the humidity level (should be 55%) at the museum in the Tufts Library - in reference to the preservation of the canoe. In further checking he discovered that the reason the humidifier was not on was because the humidity level in the building was lower than what is called for - so it just wasn't needed. Based on that information no action is needed at this time.

Adjournment

Mr. Walker moved to adjourn at 7:55 PM and to meet again on Tuesday, April 12th, 2011.

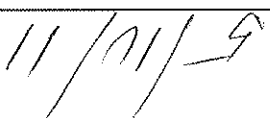
Ms. Torrey seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

  
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Ted Clarke, Chair

Respectfully submitted,

Susan DeChristoforo  
Recording Secretary

  
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Date