

WEYMOUTH HISTORICAL COMMISSION
November 10TH, 2010 Meeting
Francis Kelly Room/Weymouth Town Hall

PRESENT: Ted Clarke/Chairman, Ed Walker, Mary Dorey, Jody Purdy-Quinlan, Phil Smith and new member Cathy Torrey.

ABSENT: Don Matheson

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

I. Chairman

Chairman Clarke called the November 11th, 2010 meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Minutes

Mr. Walker moved to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2010 meeting.

Ms. Dorey seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Mr. Walker moved to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2010 meeting.

Mr. Smith seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

III. Reports

Update re. Canoe Room/Water Problems

Mr. Walker informed members that he visited the Canoe Room at Tufts Library and could report that it was all set and all was working well.

Town Liaison

Ms. Lehrer informed members that she received a letter from PES Associates that addressed the division of property on Main Street that included 664, 660, 670, 672 Main Street. She described the property as being located near Rooney Gas. The letter was seeking comments from the Commission. She told members that there would be no impact from their proposal at all; adding this property was 'not' on the Demo Delay List. She noted that their proposal was for construction of an Alzheimer's facility at this location. She further described the site as only having a garage and shed on the property, which would eventually be removed. She offered to draft a response for the Commission stating that there was no opposition to the project.

Mr. Clarke interjected that the property was located behind Rooney's with the entrance to be located north of the gas station, adding it was where a house had burned down.

Chairman Clarke proposed that Ms. Lehrer send a letter for the Commission stating the members found no impact and had no opposition to the development of the three lots on Main Street for an Alzheimer's facility.

Members were in agreement.

Next Ms. Lehrer reported that she received a letter from the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions requesting that the Weymouth Historical Commission become a member at a cost of \$85.00 per year (as a group).

Introduction of New Member - Cathy Torrey

At this point Chairman Clarke took a moment to welcome new member Cathy Torrey, who was taking the place of Joan Rotundo. He asked that she tell a little about herself.

Ms. Torrey informed members that she has been a member of the Abigail Adams Historical Society for 14-15 years and has also served as their President. Further, she has been a Weymouth resident for 30 years and grew up on the North Shore. She said she enjoyed serving the community and is very interested in Weymouth's history. Lastly she stated that her husband is actually related to the well-known Torrey's of Weymouth.

CDC

Chairman Clarke noted that member Don Matheson (not present this evening) wanted the members to know that he was presently preparing a map of North Cemetery, which will include the streets and roads.

Mr. Clarke then took a moment to explain that Don Matheson served as the 'At Large' member on the Cemetery Commission and that presently there is a vacancy due to Joan Rotundo's resignation (Ms. Rotundo served as the Historical Commission's designee). He wanted to suggest that Mr. Matheson now become the Historical Commission's designee, which would leave an opening for the "At Large" member, explaining that then the CDC would like to fill the 'At Large' vacancy with Mike Crowley of the Fire Dept. (who would like to serve on this Commission).

Chairman Clarke said that would be fine going along with that idea as long as Mr. Matheson agreed.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan moved to have Don Matheson replace Joan Rotundo on the Historical Commission's designee on the CDC.

Mr. Smith seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

At this point Jim Clarke had some updates for the members, which are as follows:

Legion Field

Mr. Clarke reported that on Monday Town Council approved \$10,000 for the Legion Field project. Present plans are to replace all (66) brick piers - originally the plan was to partially repair (19). Now with the completion of the project the piers will be much better prepared to withstand weather conditions. Then with the balance of the monies they will obtain a price to restore the sign and gate, which they hope to have done by a local contractor.

Mr. Clarke went on to say that they took one iron fence and performed a test using a powder coat and it came out very nice - then they painted it Gold. They will also be replacing the missing letters. At this point it is expected that the work will be completed within a month.

Fogg Library

Next Mr. Clarke informed members that the work at the Fogg Library was almost complete. Plans are to replace the basement doors this week. The South Weymouth Businessmen's Association plans on using the building for the holidays. Plans are to do additional display work. Lastly they will be meeting with Rob McLean, the new Director of Library Services, about the library system. Over the winter months they will be having more discussions.

Abigail Adams Society - Preservation Report Update

The Abigail Adams Society has requested additional funds from the Community Preservation Committee for the purpose of moving forward with the recommendations in the Preservation Study report.

National Historic Districts Update

The National Districts (Meeting House District and the Front Street District) have been approved and they are presently looking into signage. He hopes to have recommendations ready for the Commission's December meeting. He commented that Central Square would be easy as it only involves (4) roads. Signage for the Meeting House Historic District is up for discussion.

Clapp Memorial Property

Jim Clarke informed members that the Clapp Memorial property falls under Chapter 40R and will include 38 units of housing and office space. At the December 6th meeting discussion will continue on development of the property.

Chairman Clarke asked about the historical aspects of the property.

Jim Clarke responded that they are restoring the exterior of the building with the goal of bringing back its original look including the windows. Plans are to have parking in front along with seating area and a flagpole.

Jim Clarke further reported that state funds are available (up to \$177,000) for Central Square if they meet the required guidelines and can obtain the necessary permits/approvals.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan wanted to know about researching the original deed. She was inquiring because of articles she read and the pictures she has seen on the property - especially because of having Chief Justice Taft here. She was very concerned about preserving the integrity of the building. She commented that the proposed plan seemed pretty good. She was fearful that they were going to change the back of the building, but quickly added 'now it doesn't seem so bad'.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan went on to say that as a neighbor and realizing the building is in the Historic District, she took the time to look into the assessed value of the property, which was \$1,695,000. Then she looked at the McCulloch School and its assessed value was \$4,267,100 - which she acknowledged was a much larger property. She then thought 'what if the Town sold McCulloch and refurbished Clapp Memorial moving the Senior Center/offices there' - she felt it was something for them to think about. She wanted to applaud Mr. Barry for hanging in there for (3) years. She noted that in the past they talked about needing a library. She then asked Jim Clarke, as the Town Planner, if he had any comments on her thoughts.

Discussion took place about preserving the historical value of the Clapp Memorial as opposed to the McCulloch. It was expected that they could get about (13) house lots there.

Chairman Clarke commented 'there are usually consequences'.

Jim Clarke pointed out that Mr. Barry has a Purchase & Sale on the property, so he is in control. He explained that they would have to make a commitment to sell McCulloch and get the money - and then there would be concerns over the feedback from the residents in the area.

Ms. Dorey commented 'but then Weymouth Elder Services would be more centrally located.

Mr. Walker noted that Clapp has both a gymnasium and a bowling alley.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan stated that in the past Central Jr. High sold for \$150,000. She asked if the Town could act as the developer if it was to benefit the community and Mr. Clarke replied 'yes, if the use is not restricted'.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan estimated the value of a house lot at \$150,000, and if they got 10 lots She realized the idea was a little farfetched.

Mr. Clarke interjected that they would also need utilities and roads, but noted that they had the Redevelopment Authority to help with that. He stated that the Redevelopment Authority did something similar with Pine Grove in South Weymouth and made money for the Town.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said that at this point she didn't know where to take the idea. She told members that she saw a lot of angry people there at the meeting, adding that her big concern was someone else might come along and want to tear the building down.

Mr. Clarke acknowledged that something like that could happen - or another use could be introduced, adding we don't have control over it.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said she was bringing the subject up as a member of the Historical Commission in an effort to try and preserve it.

Mr. Clarke reminded members that Bill Barry has a P&S.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan interjected that Ken Ryder did too.

Mr. Clarke told the Commission that Mayor Kay would have to look at it.

Ms. Dorey asked if Mr. Barry would be interested in developing a Senior Center, with Jim Clarke replying "I don't know".

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan commented that there was a trust issue now, adding she was concerned down the line re. Open Space on Middle Street - asking, "Will he do what he says he'll do?"

Mr. Clarke stated that next Monday (11/15/10) Village Center Zoning will be coming before Town Council in reference to a request to rezone part of Weymouth Landing/B-2; specifically to rezone Broad Street back to single family - and also to move R-2 along Commercial Street in the area by Sacred Heart Church.

North Weymouth-Kibby Parcel

Next Jim Clarke reported that the Kibby parcel is a teardown site, and they have a local contractor who has offered to donate his time to do the work.

Landing Street Improvements/Weston Park

Mr. Clarke told members that this project is at the 25% Design stage and a little over budget. Bids are expected January-February, with the 'shovel in the ground' anticipated in the Spring.

Wessagusset Wetland & Woodland

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan reported that there has been quite a bit of activity there. Last Summer she was approached by a filmmaker was looking for a wooded site and she took him to the Wessagusset Wetland & Woodland, which he felt was perfect. She obtained Mayor Kay's approval for the filming, which ended up taking place on 7/11/10. She also received an email from a production company in L.A. that was casting a Druid priest movie for the Historical channel. That person also looking for a similar site used the same area and filmed around the same time in July. The Druid priest movie aired a week before Halloween. Additionally in late Sept/early October she shot "Milkweed" there which involved 50 people from the neighborhood.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan went on to say that the Historical channel was so pleased with the outcome of their Halloween movie that they might be interested in the Wessagusset story. She is waiting to hear back from them.

Chairman Clarke asked if anything was happening in regard to the history of Weymouth film and Ms. Purdy-Quinlan replied that the credits at the end of the film were so small she couldn't read them, but she did note that they gave credit to So. Shore Casting (her company). She asked that credit also be given to the Town of Weymouth/Historical Commission, adding that they also shot the "Real Story of Thanksgiving" and the "Real Story of Christmas".

Mr. Clarke took a moment to inform members that the statue of the bear located in the Wessagusset Wetland & Woodland had its arm broken off and distributed a picture showing the damage. He also wanted to caution about having the light in this area shining into area homes. He noted that they have access to a 'closed circuit camera', which is used by the Health Dept. to catch illegal dumpers.

Civil War Celebration Update

Mr. Clarke gave a handout entitled "Lecture Series-Weymouth in the Civil War" noting that April 2011 will be the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the start of the American Civil War - and he expected that many communities throughout the country would be recognizing this event. He was suggesting that Weymouth offer a series of lectures and how the Civil War impacted Weymouth. He was looking to begin recognition in April, adding that he felt there were many ways to make it happen.

Mr. Clarke then referred to the suggestions/lecture topics he had listed on his handout - and told members that today's Globe also contained a related article. He suggested that they could also speak about what happened once Weymouth's militia was called - citing Weymouth's 12th Regiment.

Mr. Clarke and the members continued to discuss topics of interest on the subject including the 'battles' Weymouth's 12th Regiment/soldiers were embroiled in. Other lecture topics included Thomas Hamilton, the

USS Cincinnati, Recipients of the Medal of Honor, information on General James Bates (Phil Smith could address this topic), home front's role and their reaction to the War, monuments/memorials (Jim Clarke will check into this further), and organizations/societies formed after the War.

In referring to his memo and lecture topics, Jim Clarke stated that those were just some suggestions. He said they would need the involvement of the members and other volunteers - and additional research.

Others topics and steps that would need to be taken as well as more research include:

- Co-Sponsors; i. e., Weymouth libraries
- Lecturers
- Venues
- Public relations
- Finalize schedule
- Media involvement (go on line?)
- Displays (Weymouth Historical Society?)
- Abigail Adams case/display
- Quality Control Group for Lectures

Mr. Clarke went on to say that if it is done right it could be great; acknowledging that it would involve a lot of work. He pointed out that Weymouth had a deep involvement in the War and referred to General Bates, Memorials.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan stated that the original painting is in the Institute of Art in Chicago, adding that in the past they have lent it out - this might be an idea for them.

Chairman Clarke commented that it was a lot to do in a short time and reconfirmed that April would be the starting line - with Jim Clarke responding it was.

Jim Clarke said he thought individuals would take part in the program, which would last about 1-1/2 hours - with the topics to be discussed.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt the Commission should form a subcommittee - with involvement by the Schools and Town.

Ms. Dorey felt there probably were a lot of Civil War buffs that they were not aware of.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said she had a letter dated 1865 from her great grandfather written in Philadelphia about the war.

Mr. Clarke said they would need to put things together - using February as a time frame, but first he would like to form a subcommittee.

Chairman Clarke asked Jim Clarke to Chair the committee and he agreed to do so. Members of the Commission would volunteer to serve.

The Chairman offered to prepare a press release.

Mr. Walker moved Jim Clarke head up the Civil War Anniversary Subcommittee.

Mr. Smith seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

New Business

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said she noticed an article in the Patriot Ledger which listed an incorrect name for the historical museum at Tufts Library; i.e., "Weymouth Historical Society Museum". She said the correct name should read: Weymouth Town Museum, which she noted was finally corrected. She said the reason she has become involved is because of the interest of deceased Historical Commission member Richard Pattison. She noted that it was a town-owned building and it being located at Tufts Library came about because past founder/Chairman of the Commission Chet Kevitt convinced the Town to put it there. She acknowledged that items stored/on display there were from the Weymouth Historical Society as well as the Historical Commission. She wanted to make sure it was officially noted that the name should be the Weymouth Town Museum - again on behalf of Richard Pattison.

Mr. Clarke said they should write a letter to the Patriot Ledger on the correct name and copy the Weymouth Historical Society as a courtesy.

Mr. Walker wanted to note that most of the collection was donated by the Weymouth Historical Society (WHS) - but he added it includes the Commission's canoe and diorama too. He said that the Commission might want to invite the WHS to a future meeting where it all could be sorted out.

Mr. Clarke suggested that maybe someone might feel comfortable in speaking with them personally about it.

Mr. Walker preferred they be invited to a future meeting.

Chairman Clarke agreed they would send a letter (Ms. Lehrer will draft the letter) and then, after celebration of the Civil War Anniversary, invite the WHS to a Commission meeting.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan spoke about the passing of Allan Emery and suggested the Commission might want to send something with their condolences. She said she would like the Commission members to demonstrate their appreciation for the family's historical efforts, adding she was also a bit concerned about what will happen with the property.

Cathy Torrey felt that discussing the property so soon would be inappropriate, adding that the will hasn't even been probated. She noted that he was religious so it was possible that the property could go to Billy Graham Foundation.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan pointed out that the property was listed on the 'Demo Delay' list and she was concerned with it being split up into lots. She was wondering if in the future there would be an opportunity for the town to purchase it and if that was feasible.

Chairman Clarke felt that was beyond the members' scope.

Mr. Clarke commented that since he began working for the Town that issue was a concern for him. With regard to an Open Space Plan, they will soon have the Goals & Objectives - and at that time the Historical Commission might make their interest known. He realizes that at this point it was all speculative.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan noted that he passed in September.

Mr. Walker pointed out that his home was a replica of Mount Vernon house and additionally the builder was a Civil War veteran.

Adjournment

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

Mr. Smith seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Ted Clarke, Chair

Date

Respectfully submitted,

Susan DeChristoforo
Recording Secretary