

WEYMOUTH HISTORICAL COMMISSION

MARCH 13TH, 2007 MEETING
Weymouth Town Hall - Kelly Room

PRESENT: Ted Clarke/Chairman, Tom Curtis, Mary Dorey, Steve Puleo, Richard Pattison, and Jody Purdy-Quinlan

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

Chairman Clarke called the March 13th, 2007 meeting of the Weymouth Historical Commission to order at 7:00 PM.

Minutes

Mr. Puleo moved to approve the minutes of the January 9th, 2007 minutes as written.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Reports:

Associate Member provision

Ms. Lehrer reported that she didn't have an update on the Associate Member at this time.

Intern

Ms. Lehrer informed members that she has contacted the Weymouth Scholarship recipient, Alma McDermott (who was pursuing a career as an archival librarian) at which time Ms. McDermott expressed an interest in helping out the Commission, but said she would not have any time until the Summer. Ms. Lehrer planned on following up with her in a couple of months.

Chairman Clarke commented that he sent the members an inquiry on tasks they thought Ms. McDermott could perform for them, but to date had not heard back. He suggested her talents could be used in securing grants.

Unfinished Business - Mitigation funds, use of - Weymouth Landing?

Ms. Lehrer told members that they were pursuing the designation of the Landing as an Historic District, possibly doing it in two (2) parts - similar to what they did with Sea Street. She went on to say that Jim Clarke would like to schedule a meeting with the Mass. Historical Commission to discuss the reason they denied the Commission's grant.

Chairman Clarke asked 'is the Landing the place we should be spending our money?'

Mr. Pattison said he viewed the Landing as their first priority and Weymouth Heights as their second priority.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan recommended they move forward with the Landing, possibly to coincide with the Weymouth Landing Train Station.

With regard to the denial of the Landing Grant, Mr. Pattison felt that the Ma. Historical Comm. receives so many grant applications and many don't realize that they have limited funds and limited personnel to review the grant requests. He added that usually there is a second period of funding.

Chairman Clarke agreed, commenting they put their oar into the water and we don't feel we were treated fairly in accordance with the rules they set forth.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan felt they were very bureaucratic.

Chairman Clarke commented that once they have their meeting, they should take the information and move forward.

Mr. Pattison stated that they can't just hire Wendy for this work only.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan noted that during the Greenbush meeting a lot of work was done with reference to the historical significance of the Landing, so she felt there would be a lot of backup available.

Mr. Pattison said that Jim Clarke needs to look into what historical signs they will be using for the train platform, adding he would be speaking to him about this. He noted that they were presently doing (3) North Weymouth historical signs by Fore River and they would include the Edison Plan, Lovell's Grove and the King Cove Walkway. He described them as 2'L X 3'W in size and would include pictures as well as historical information.

Signs

Chairman Clarke informed members they received an email re. the Abigail Adams missing sign, adding that Michelle Delorey is looking into it. He felt that because they put them up, the Commission should be responsible for replacing them.

Mr. Pattison reminded members that the signs were put up back in the 60's.

It was agreed that Mary Dorey would pursue contact with the Abigail Adams members on the status of the missing sign.

(Mr. Curtis arrived)

Mr. Curtis asked about the status of the Associate Member and Ms. Lehrer told him that she didn't have an update at this time.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said she would like to know where they stand by the end of this fiscal year (6/30/07), because if they want an appointment in effect for FY2008 the year starts 7/1/07. She reminded members that once approved by the Mayor it would next have to go before the Town Council.

At this point Mary Dorey presented a rough sample of a sign done by the Schools, along with a handout on her findings. She said in speaking with Joe Canova at Weymouth Voch Tech., who recommended the material for the signs be Fir or Mahogany as that type of wood is more durable. She also went to Jack Knight's Sign shop in North Weymouth and he told if she brings him the finished wood product (with paint/stain) he would do the finish work. He further stated that he has worked with the School Dept. in the past. He also spoke about using 'number' decals, which he said were very 'real' looking. He said they could use the decals or if they prefer they could hand paint the numbers.

Mr. Pattison commented that the numbers couldn't be engraved - there was not enough room.

Ms. Dorey told members that Jack Knight told her the signs must come to him either painted/stained and sealed before he could do his work - but first the members would need to decide the shape of the signs.

Mr. Pattison commented that they couldn't expect people to pay \$49.95 - he felt the most should be \$15 to \$20 with the balance coming out of their fund.

Mr. Puleo felt the School could do the engraving re. WHC logo (Weymouth Historical Commission).

Ms. Dorey replied - that's a lot of words (letters).

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan suggested they put the decal and the date on the top half, and the WHC seal on the bottom (similar to the Town's seal).

Members agreed that all signs should be in the same shape.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said that some may want to include the family's name on the plaque, members agreed they should have this option.

Ms. Dorey felt that all signs should include the Town's seal or WHC.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan discussed the possibility of a brass plaque, but members didn't think this was practical.

Mr. Pattison said he would like to see one style for everyone. He wanted to point out that they don't have the information on the year 'all' houses were built in the Town.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan agreed that the applications would require some homework/research, adding if they don't have access to the exact date, then some could have: CIRCA (*year*).

Chairman Clarke asked 'what happens if you have the original Bicknell House - which is now owned by another family; i.e., Jones - which name would go on the plaque - and all agreed it would be "Bicknell" (the name with historical significance).

Mr. Pattison felt that all house signs should have the word "Circa" on them.

It was agreed that Ms. Dorey would obtain a better, more finished sample for the members' review/approval. She told members that she had also spoken to the Manager of Lowe's in North Weymouth about a donation and they have asked the request be made in writing.

Mr. Pattison thought Lowe's might be able to donate the fir or mahogany wood for the plaque.

At this point Ms. Lehrer passed out a 4-page handout that included:

- 1) "Process for Applying for an Historical Marker"
- 2) "An Agreement Between Homeowner and Weymouth Historical Commission For Preparation of Historical Marker"
- 3) Weymouth Historical Commission - Certificate of Receipt - Historic Home Marker
- 4) Sample Letter seeking contributions

Ms. Lehrer asked members to review the handout and to get back to her with any comments they may have. She would like to review them before she and Jim Clarke meet with the Mayor on the program. She would also like to have a nice sample to bring to the meeting, and lastly, she wanted to know if the Schools or an outside company would be doing them.

Additionally, members still needed to agree on the sign language/format and the cost.

Chairman Clarke didn't want the sign to be too crowded.

It was agreed that all signs would have "Circa/Date" and the WHC seal. The only difference would most likely be if the family name; i. e., if it was to be included.

Ms. Dorey will see if the School's Graphic Arts Dept. could supply a photograph of the design.

Members agreed they wanted to see one official sample first before making a final decision. Mary will handle this.

43 Bicknell Road Update

Mr. Curtis updated the members on the action taken by the Community Preservation Committee. He informed members that the CPC has met on the different proposals before them and had a number of suggestions. With some proposals they have decided to move ahead, some are on 'back-up', while others were just about accepted outright. Then there were some that required a lot more work such as their proposal for 43 Bicknell Street. He told members that there were two issues, the first was the fate of the home from the current occupants, the second - the property's historical and archaeological benefit to the Town. At this point he said the Historical Commission should concern itself with the second issue. He said at this point he didn't believe it would pass. The CPC recognized that at one time this property (not with improvements) was part of the Wessagusset Memorial Land (the 5.2 acres was one piece of property).

Mr. Curtis went on to say that CPC members discussed taking just the historical portion of the land and move it to the Wessagusset Memorial Garden, a place of hallowed ground. Once transferred to this location they would erect a brass plaque explaining its historical background - outlining the seven- (7) lives that were lost in conflict and buried there. They would re-inter anything of an archaeological nature in this location, under the sign. He confirmed that the historical relevance of the site has been accepted. He further spoke about the financial aspect - that the Town didn't want to get rid of revenue producing property or to pay the expense to maintain it, as it didn't appear it could be self-sustaining. They felt the loss of future tax revenue of potentially two homes (2 homes at 25,000 sq. ft each = 50,000 sq. ft.) was also a strong consideration.

At this point Mr. Curtis suggested they come up with a compromise measure if they wanted the CPC to accept it. He suggested just focusing on the portion of land that has been cleared and recognized as sacred land, the burial ground. He said "I frankly think we should re-propose it and keep this in mind".

Mr. Puleo asked about the distance between the two locations and Mr. Curtis replied, possibly 100 feet, but quickly added that the two sites abut each other. He noted that the entrance from Fore River Avenue is used for the Park, pointing out the site has legal access from two roads. He told members that he would be glad to entertain any other proposal that is different from what he is suggesting.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan spoke. She questioned the idea of moving a burial place. She noted that the site itself is more significant to the Town of Weymouth than the Wessagusset Memorial Garden, which was the site of the Indian village. She said the only reason it was preserved was because it was Open Space. She then proceeded to present a variety of historical documents validating the importance of 43 Bicknell Street. She presented a copy of a document created by Charles Francis Adam (the grandson of President John Adams and son of Pres. John Quincy Adams). Additionally, she said this site was the location of where the largest 4-masted schooner in New England was launched. Other paperwork presented documented the fort that was once located there. She said she didn't know what else was buried at that site besides graves, but she said the historical value is much more than the tomb.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan went on to say that in 1947 Town Meeting voted not to save the Abigail Adams house, but the citizens pursued it and the house was cut in half and then moved to the present site. She emphasized that the Community Preservation Act is all about this property. She did not see this property as becoming a financial burden to the Town, but one that had the ability to produce revenue.

Mary Clarke (in the audience) asked 'what do you do with houses in that area?'

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan replied that the houses would stay where they are, adding that the residents in that area signed a petition in favor of this.

Mr. Curtis responded that he was trying to preserve as much of the proposal as possible, stressing 'members shouldn't take the stand, all or nothing'. He believed it had to be done through compromise, but unfortunately he didn't see that coming. He commented that possibly the CPC doesn't see the historical value. He felt an official printed document/study to validate the site and its historical value would benefit the cause - or possibly the Mass. Historical Commission would know something about it.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan replied to Mr. Curtis' comments. She began by stating she has studied the history of this site and the area for 20 years.

Mr. Curtis wanted to clarify that he has received nothing, archaeological or historical, that indicates the significance of the site. He reminded Ms. Purdy-Quinlan that he has offered to help her with the proposal at least twice, but received no response. At this point, he was suggesting an appraisal of the property, noting \$525,000 was the asking price, but he commented, nothing goes for the asking price. Additionally, he said, there is nothing supporting the \$525,000 or the \$20,000 per year requested for maintenance, etc. He said he needed something substantial for the CPC with regard to the museum, admissions, etc. like a cash flow analysis re. funds and expenses. He felt the plan proposed was very grandiose and without adequate information to back it up. He noted that the CPC allotted money for the Fogg Library, because in part the application was accompanied by a detailed plan from the construction engineers that included inflationary figures. He noted that all "43 Bicknell" had was a blank number.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan told Mr. Curtis that the WHC voted to leave the amount of money empty and that Mr. Pattison was the person who suggested \$20,000 a year as a maintenance figure. She pointed out that all the members were together when they decided on doing this. She further stated that when she presented it to the CPC she was told that her application was incomplete, but noted that J. Clarke recommended leaving the amount open at their meeting.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan commented that the amount was just an asking price and that it was not the WHC's job to negotiate the price for them, adding that she is not involved with the negotiations. She told members that Jim Wilson told her to resubmit the

application with the amount in there. She went on to say that you can't compare this application to Fogg Library, which people have been working on for years and was put together by LNR. As a volunteer, she said, she can't completely fill out all that information - and that the Town's Financial Dept. should assist us. She stated it may be grandiose to the Town of Weymouth, but for others who understand - it is Henry Adams house and it's made to be a historical research center. She felt it was an opportunity for the WHC to do something. She told members that she has have raised over \$1 million since 1995 as a volunteer and felt as though she was having to prove myself - commenting "it's outrageous".

Chairman Clarke replied if what Tom says is true, we should have a fall back position - but since Jody Purdy-Quinlan feels so strongly about the proposal then it should go forward.

Mr. Puleo pointed out that Tom, as the WHC's member on the CPC committee is counting the votes and he doesn't see it going forward. Based on that, he agreed with the Chairman to go along with Ms. Purdy-Quinlan, but then to have a fallback position,

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan replied that she realized the WHC had no control over the CPC vote, but felt it was at least out there.

Mr. Pattison commented to Mr. Curtis that it looked like it would not be approved - then asked about discussing the financial aspect.

Mr. Puleo asked Mr. Curtis what the status of the proposal was presently.

Mr. Curtis responded that it was on 'hold', but added the details with regard to the money would be good to have. He said next he expected they would be voting on some issues/proposals - and at that time 43 Bicknell would probably go down. That is why he recommended they have an alternative - or, he said, if they chose they could resubmit the current proposal a second time. He stated that he didn't realize Mr. J. Clarke recommended they leave the amount open. He felt an actual appraisal of the property was important, as well as backup for the expenses, adding that was one of the reasons he volunteered to help Ms. Purdy-Quinlan.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan told members that she was told at the CPC meeting that she would need a dollar amount. She felt at that point it would be up to the CPC to negotiate a dollar value with the property owner.

Mr. Curtis stated that CPC repeatedly said it was up to the Dorsey's to get an appraisal or Fair Market Value (which includes comps) for the property.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan wanted to clarify that they needed to come up with a dollar value and Mr. Curtis replied 'right', adding the CPC realizes the number is negotiable.

Chairman Clarke asked if the CPC understood that and Mr. Curtis responded 'yes'.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan said CPC told her the application was not complete. At that point she asked to speak with Jim Wilson and then it was OK'd. She reminded members the last time they did Sea Street the price went from \$690,000 to \$485,000.

Mr. Pattison wanted to point out the CPC is in its first year, its infancy, and they are not sure where they are going.

Mr. Curtis said he sees the CPC as being brought around to think a minimized version is a possibility, but he added Ms. Purdy-Quinlan has indicated there is no room for compromise.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan quickly responded 'No' (re. the suggestion for a compromise). She affirmed 'this is my proposal'. If it is turned down we can go back again and resubmit it or submit a compromise.

Mr. Puleo interjected 'unless they sell the property'.

Ms. Dorey stated that she didn't understand how historically important the property was. She felt they should all be passionate about it. She felt that first of all the CPC should accept/acknowledge its historical value, then at that point they could discuss the finances. Most importantly, she asked "do people know how important the property is". She commented if it gets sold, then it's gone.

Chairman Clarke said they might have to go to the National Park Service at some point.

Mary Clarke asked if anyone had gone to Washington, D C to document it and the response was 'no'.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan discussed her handout, which included:

- 1) A 2/21 story written by Mr. Baker who was at the CPC meeting and found the story fascinating.
- 2) A Weymouth News article entitled "Wessagusset Should Belong To The People".
- 3) A copy of Linda MacDonald's Letter to the Editor (3/6/07)
- 4) Boston Sunday Globe article about 'doings in Weymouth' - Subject: Historic Site Envisioned

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan went on to say that Linda MacDonald also sent a letter to the CPC and when she spoke to J. Clarke about it, he suggested she send a rebuttal to her story and to clarify the misinformation, explaining the WHC dates, etc. At this point members were given a copy of her response, which she proposed would come from the WHC.

Next Chairman Clarke distributed a copy of his letter, which he gave to Ms. Purdy-Quinlan. The letter addressed the manner he felt would be the best way to handle Ms. MacDonald's comments, plus his reason for not wanting the letter to come from the WHC.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan told members that she has no problem sending the letter with her signature, but she said Jim Clarke recommended it comes from the committee. She told members that Jody Lehrer had volunteered to re-write the draft.

Again, Chairman Clarke encouraged Ms. Purdy-Quinlan to go speak in person to meet with Ms. MacDonald and speak with her.

Mr. Puleo agreed with the Chairman and encouraged Ms. Purdy-Quinlan to meet with Ms. MacDonald one-on-one, as Ms. Purdy-Quinlan's proposed letter could end up in total or in part - in the Weymouth News and it could also jeopardize the project.

Ms. Dorey felt Ms. MacDonald's comments didn't warrant a response.

Ms. Lehrer stated that she had spoken with Jim Clarke about the letter and they had discussed that only one aspect of Ms. MacDonald's letter related to the Weymouth Historical Commission. The new letter reduces Ms. Purdy-Quinlan's 21-paragraph letter to 2 paragraphs. She said the letter as re-written clarified the role of the Weymouth Historic Commission.

Mr. Pattison moved to send the newest simplified letter to Linda MacDonald.

Seconded

Discussion: Mr. Pattison interjected that he would like the three March 14, 2007 letters being discussed included as part of the minutes:

- 1) Ms. Purdy-Quinlan's (21 paragraphs) to Ms. MacDonald
- 2) The Chairman's letter to Ms. Purdy-Quinlan
- 3) The new letter drafted by Jody Lehrer/Jim Clarke from the Weymouth Historical Comm. to Linda MacDonald

Mr. Puleo commented that he thought the letter was good, although a little bureaucratic - he felt what was missing was what the money is used for and what you get. He would like to see included "the amount of money received is used for the following purpose, etc."

Ms. Lehrer recommended including a portion of Ms. Purdy-Quinlan's letter, and Mr. Puleo agreed but wanted to see them 'civilianize' it.

Members agreed to have Jody Lehrer reword it as discussed.

Mr. Puleo moved to send the letter drafted by Jody Lehrer as amended this evening by the members to the Weymouth News from the committee.

Seconded.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Chester Kevitt Award

Mr. Pattison stated that his nominees for the Chester Kevitt Award were Barbara and Bill Johnson, but in speaking with Barbara Johnson she asked that it be held off until October, as she is still in mourning over the loss of her husband last Fall.

It as noted that both the Johnsons were well known civic volunteers in the Town, involved with many committees and causes over the years.

Mr. Pattison moved to nominate Barbara and Bill Johnson for the Chester Kevitt Award.

Ms. Purdy-Quinlan seconded.

Discussion: Chairman Clarke will interview Barbara Johnson.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Next meeting 4/10/07

Adjournment

Mr. Pattison moved to adjourn at 8:49 PM.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED

Respectfully submitted,

Susan DeChristoforo
Recording Secretary

Enclosure: 3 Letters as noted above

Ted Clarke, Chairman