

**Gloucester Historical Commission
Gloucester, Massachusetts**

A meeting of the Gloucester Historical Commission (GHC) was held after due notice on 29 April 2019 in the third floor meeting room of the Gloucester City Hall, 9 Dale Ave., Gloucester, MA 01930.

Attendees: Mary Ellen Lepionka, Bob Whitmarsh, Bill Remsen, Sandy Barry, and David Rhineland. Missing: Jude Seminara.
Also Present: Susan Morreale, J. D. MacEachern.

A quorum was present. The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm.

1. Acceptance of past minutes, prepared by Jude Seminara. The minutes were briefly discussed and Jude was thanked for his efforts.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the Commission VOTED to accept as presented to the Commission as amended to reflect such changes as specified at the meeting.

2. Presentation of the Friends of the Gloucester Council on Aging by Carla Grillo, seeking a letter of support Carla Grillo's presentation, entitled *The Past is a Present, Preservation of an Oral History of Gloucester*, was handed out as a carefully prepared three ring binder to each member of the Commission. Carla's own words best summarize her presentation:

Since June 2017, the Friends of the Gloucester Council on Aging have published a series, The Past Is A Present, which appears on the front page of its monthly newsletter, Coastline News, and profiles a beloved member of the Rose Baker Senior Center community. Each profile preserves an oral history of Gloucester as captured from the individual perspective of the senior profiled.

From inception, the intention of the Series has been twofold: 1) to honor the incredible lives of the seniors while they are still living and 2) to preserve for posterity each senior's unique recollection of Gloucester history (and a broader worldview), in some cases dating back to the 1920s and 1930s.

Wishing to share these significant life stories with a broader Gloucester audience (and beyond), the Friends intend to publish them in a book, which will also be used as a fundraising vehicle for the Senior Center.

The book, for which the Friends are seeking Community Preservation Act funding, will combine all 30 profiles, in addition to providing an expanded photo history supplied by each senior profiled. The majority of these photos are also valuable archival documents, providing unique historical footage of a bygone era.

The Friends believe the creation of such a document which preserves a unique oral and

photographic history of Gloucester will make a significant contribution to memorializing the city's rich cultural legacy.

After her presentation, Carla had a constructive discussion with Commission members, answering questions and listening to suggestions. Specific points mentioned included:

- The book has a \$60k budget.
- The book will be 8 1/2 x 11 glossy format with an estimated 150- 175 pages.
- The publisher has not yet been selected.
- The initial run is estimated to be 500 copies.
- There will be podcasts and Internet presentations of this material.
- This book will be part of the 400th anniversary of Gloucester's founding.

Commission members were impressed and all were vocally supportive of this important project to record and present the cultural history of Gloucester.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the Commission VOTED to authorize a letter of support for the Friends of the Gloucester Council on Aging's publication project. After discussion, Bob offered to write the letter of support.

3. Report from Bob Whitmarsh, liaison to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) re: their meeting of 23 April 2019. Bob briefly discussed his first meeting with the CPC. Upcoming applicants, including the Magnolia Historical Society, were initially considered, with further debate to be carried out at the subsequent CPC meeting. These included:

- **Hammond Castle** (Clearstory and roof)
- **Historic New England** for Beauport property (Masonry and roof)
- **Magnolia Historical Society** (Electrical work)
- **Ocean Alliance** [Paint factory] (Handicapped toilets)
- **Stage Fort Park Advisory Committee** (Improvements)
- **Cape Ann YMCA** (Camp Spindrift improvements and new building)

4. Finalization of the 2019 Awards, slide show, and certificates. Details about the final recipients were discussed and agreed upon. The 2019 award ceremony is to take place at the Granite Gallery Auditorium Cape Ann Museum, 27 Pleasant Street, Gloucester, Massachusetts between 2 and 4 pm on 19 May 2019. The 2019 awardees are as follows:

- **Bryan Melanson** - *Restoration & Rehabilitation*, for his cooperation and responsiveness as a developer to historic preservation on the back shore.
- **Ross Burton & Lanesville Community Center** - *Restoration & Rehabilitation*, for their reconstruction of Virginia Lee Burton's Little House.
- **Lillian Olmsted** - *Stewardship*, for her research and vigilance as a citizen seeking to preserve the historic character of her neighborhood.
- **Magnolia Historical Society** - *Adaptive Reuse*, for the rehabilitation of the Blynman School as their headquarters and local history museum.

- **Bernadette Fendrock & Alan D' Andrea**- *Restoration & Rehabilitation*, for restoration of an architecturally significant house at 24 Beach Rd.
- **1623 Studios** - *Education & Outreach*, for their programming on the history and historic preservation of Gloucester and Cape Ann.
- **Manship Artists Residency + Studios** - *Adaptive Reuse*, for their rehabilitation of the Paul Manship estate as working space for artists and sculptors.
- **James Ryan** - *Preserving Gloucester History*, for his annotated hand-drawn maps of Cape Ann's granite quarries and neighborhoods.
- **Richard & Kathy Clark** - *Stewardship*, for their faithful volunteer efforts on the restoration of the Civil War-era Clark Cemetery.
- **Josh Fenelossa & Lauren I. Norton** - *Restoration and Rehabilitation*, for their work on the restoration of the Annisquam Yacht Club.
- **Meetinghouse Foundation** - *Education and Outreach*, for its cultural programs and collaboration preservation of a historic church building.

The individual Commission members who had served as liaisons with specific awardees confirmed that the attendees would attend and that they were fully briefed about the ceremony schedule and expectations. The individual Commission members who would present the awards to particular awardees were confirmed. Bill Remsen noted that he would hand deliver the award certificate to awardee Lauren Norton, who regretted that she had to be out of town on business, when she returned.

Mary Ellen stated that the slide show was complete. The award certificates were examined by the Commission members, who all were impressed by the quality of the product. The importance of having extra blank certificates in hand for unexpected developments was repeated. Bob and Mary Ellen signed each certificate and these were arranged in proper order in preparation for the ceremony.

Sandy confirmed that the video equipment was ready to go for the ceremony.

5. Discussion about proposing a Local Landmark Ordinance. The Commission briefly discussed the pros and cons of a Local landmark Ordinance as a mechanism to protect local cultural heritage. While such an ordinance has worked successfully elsewhere as an alternative to listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the Commission felt that the political climate in Gloucester at this time would not be receptive to such an initiative.

Bob noted that the recent official turning down of the Dogtown National Register listing illustrated how far Gloucester has yet to go.

6. Review of suggestions prepared by Bill Remsen and Peter Lawrence for presenting the Demolition Review proposal to the Mayor and City Council. Mary Ellen reminded the Commission that the City Council had agreed to discuss the proposal, which would certainly need legal review and further refinement.

7. Dogtown National Register (NR) debriefing and Dogtown Management Plan outlook.

The Commission spent a considerable amount of time reviewing its importance, the current conditions in Dogtown, and the arguments in favor of NR listing and those raised against the NR listing at the last public hearing. (All of the comments in favor of NR listing here, and many more, were brought up at the public meeting.)

Comments on Dogtown's importance and conditions included:

- Dogtown's history is the history of America.
- Dogtown's archaeological record is particularly important because the site was abandoned and never built over. The original landscape features and house foundations survive.
- Much of the Dogtown land remains legally unprotected from development. The placing of permanent conservation easements on all Dogtown property should be a high priority goal for the City.
- Dogtown is showing considerable deterioration including vandalism, trash and physical damage. The DPW admits that it does not have the resources to properly maintain the Dogtown.
- Existing laws governing behavior in Dogtown are not adequately enforced. This further degrades the environment and can lead to anti-social and illegal activities.

Comments on arguments in favor of NR listing included:

- The GHC commended the brave minority of the City Council who supported the NR listing.
- The GHC praised the numerous speakers from Gloucester and Rockport who so articulately supported the NR listing.
- The NR listing does not change any uses or restrict activities in any way.
- NR listing does not have any requirements for land owners.
- NR listing is a tool to help with the stewardship of the land.
- NR listing would have given Gloucester the option of applying for various grants, none of which Gloucester would be obligated to accept if it did not like the grant requirements.

Comments on arguments against NR listing included:

- Most of the arguments against NR listing were based on fear and scare mongering, not on rational discussion and facts.
- The argument about "losing local control" due to grant requirements was specious since no grant needed to be accepted.

Comments on the proposed Dogtown Management Plan included:

- The GHC is in favor of a Dogtown Management Plan, as long as it is properly prepared with professional planners with the input of all stakeholders and as long as the planning recommendations are actually followed and regulations enforced.
- The Dogtown Advisory Committee will work with the DPW on the management plan.
- The possibility of a new Dogtown Board, with actual powers, in being considered by the City.
- NR listing does not conflict with a Management Plan.
- NR listing would have entitled Gloucester to apply for special grants specifically reserved for planning, including the preparation of a professional Management Plan.

8. Any new business or items not on the agenda.

- a. Sawyer Free Library Update Bill Remsen related that the most recent design proposals for the renovation of the Sawyer Free Library in Gloucester no longer envisioned the demolition of the iconic 1976 Monell addition nor the detachment and disassociation of the 1764 Saunders House. The new proposal adds a new addition onto the renovated Monell wing and keeps Saunders House connected with a new pedestrian hallway. Much of the design remains to be finalized as does funding.

The architects will be presenting this new semi-final design to the Gloucester Historic District Commission on 25 June at 7 pm in the third floor conference room. This is a public meeting and all are invited.

- b. Activities of the Cape Ann Museum (CAM) at its White Ellory and Barn property and the adjacent Babson-Alling House in Gloucester. A letter of concern was sent to the CAM from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) related to its recent massive re-grading, re-landscaping, and construction activity. This new work was most unfortunately carried out without any apparent attempt to survey, document, and protect the sub-surface cultural heritage of the site and without notifying the MHC, with which it had entered a perpetual preservation restriction agreement (M.G.L. c. 184, ss. 31-33). The now-destroyed archaeological record may have included un-marked graves, outbuilding foundations, and other early historic features and possibly Native American settlement remains. This is an inestimable loss to the site's authenticity and integrity and a real loss of Gloucester's history.

Like the MHC, the GHC was also not informed of CAM's plans in advance. When ground was first broken Mary Ellen, Bill Remsen, and colleague Pru Fish all attempted to raise the issue of a proper site survey and documentation with CAM officials before the historic record was destroyed. However, these efforts were in vain.

- c. Mary Ellen is giving two important public talks: "Empower Our Communities Through History" and "How to Un-Erase Native American History."
- d. Bill's letter to the editor concerning the need for permanent conservation easements for Dogtown was recently published in the Gloucester Daily Times.
- e. Mary Ellen was recognized at an event at the Beauport Hotel as one of Gloucester's "important personalities."

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:05pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Remsen
June 12, 2019

