

**Gloucester Historical Commission**  
**Monthly Meeting at City Hall**  
**June 29, 2015**

**Members Present:**

Mary Ellen Lepionka, David Rhineland, Thomas O'Keefe III, Robert Whitmarsh, Jeff Crawford, Michelle Bader-Mustone

**Minutes:** Minutes of the May 26 meeting were accepted and have been posted on the City web site.

**Budget:** Members voted to send a request to the mayor for a \$500 annual operating budget for the GHC. The members will reimburse Tom O'Keefe for his expenses in preparing this year's Preservation Awards. The budget request will include next year's Preservation Awards as a line item. Mary Ellen will circulate to the members a draft letter to the mayor to be discussed at the next meeting. David Rhineland pointed out the need for proper timing for sending the letter in light of the City's budget process and the upcoming mayoral elections.

**Cemeteries:** Members voted to approve Rachel Meyer's cemetery maintenance invoice for June, to be paid from the Gloucester Fund. Mary Ellen will see to it. The Cemetery Committee has been doing a good job and posting its work on Facebook.

**MOA:** Mary Ellen and Bob Whitmarsh attended the June meeting of the HDC, at which time Mary Ellen requested to be added to the agenda for their July meeting. She was directed to contact their clerk Marie Demick and ask to be added to the agenda. Mary Ellen will present the case for the memorandum of agreement to create a certified local government to improve eligibility for state and local funding of historical preservation efforts for the City. Mary Ellen suggested that members share responsibility for getting to know the members of the HDC. Both commissions must file one joint annual report with the state, and this is the main piece of the MOA that we need to be concerned with. David Porper distributed the draft MOA to members of the HDC and reported a lack of enthusiasm for participating.

**CPC:** David Rhineland circulated a report on Community Preservation Commission-funded projects to date and his input as the GHC delegate to the CPC. David is a voting member. He reports to GHC regarding any historical issues on CPC applications. For example Action Inc.'s Woolworth Building, Ocean Alliance, Unitarian Universalist Church, and Project Adventure applied for CPC funds this year. The GHC will get a list from the CPC each spring stating who applied for the grants and the GHC will identify projects with historical significance and vote whether to support the applications. David reminded us that the GHC is supposed to be the eyes of the CPC in regard to historic grants given out. David will track and report on properties that receive money from the CPC.

**Publicity:** Another ad will be placed in the Gloucester Daily Times to try to attract potential new members and alternates with appropriate backgrounds. There have been few responses and no newcomers or members of the public at meetings. Suggestions were made to write a description of the role of a GHC member and the benefits of membership and to think about ways of getting more news and television coverage. Mary Ellen circulated a link to the Cable television coverage of the 2015 Preservation Awards.

**Archives:** The group approved David's suggestion that we write a letter in support of maintaining the City's Archives and hiring a professional archivist. David and Mary Ellen will draft a letter of support and will circulate it to members before sending it to the Mayor.

**Survey and Planning Grant:** Mary Ellen guided Michael Steinitz of the Mass. Historical Commission on a reconnaissance tour of Gloucester for the purpose of clarifying the scope of work for this inventory update grant. The goal was to focus first on areas and properties that were started but not completed in the past and then on areas that are not yet represented in the survey. Mary Ellen met with the purchasing Agent Donna Compton. The Request for Proposals and solicitation list will go out on July 3 and bidding will be complete on August 7. The RFP goes to the newspapers, to the MassHistPres listserv, and to a specific solicitation list of about 30 prospective consultants who do historical surveys. During July the GHC and the City will sign a contract with the MHC, and during August the GHC selects and signs a contract with the consultant who will do the work. Jeff pointed out that other towns requesting the same work at the same time could pose a lot of competition.

**Demolition Delay:** Mary Ellen requested feedback from the City Councilors on the question of demolition delay and received 6 noncommittal responses requesting more information. General concerns were that provisions should not be too restrictive or burdensome to owners and contractors and that the delay should not be too long. Any delay is based on a finding that a property is both historically significant and preferably preserved, upon which the GHC meets with owners to discuss possible solutions or mitigation. Mary Ellen sent respondents the draft ordinance and will follow up to learn more about their reactions. She will forward responses to the group via email. B

**Report on Demo Delay in Other Towns:** Bob and Tom reported on how surrounding cities and towns have fared with their demo delay by-laws or ordinances. They have established contacts who will help us in our efforts, such as Richard Stevens of Essex ([stecwood@gmail.com](mailto:stecwood@gmail.com)) and Jim Howard of Wenham. Peabody, Essex, Concord, Ipswich, Wenham, Newbury, and Newburyport all have demo delay. Rockport and Hamilton do not. Jeff suggested we follow Ipswich's model. We decided we must educate the councilors about what demolition delay

really is. We will plan a regional workshop for the City Council and Chamber to hear how it works. Peter Stott of the MHC come and help present.

**Inventory of Historic Properties:** We discussed the building inspector's suggestion that demolition delays be based on a list—the Architectural Survey on file—which the Massachusetts Historical Commission discourages, because such lists are always incomplete or inaccurate. Jeff will get more information about how houses are added to the MHC's MACRIS database. Citizens can research properties and apply. The list in Gloucester is larger than most local towns, but it is by no means as complete as it would need to be for the building inspector to use as a criterion for delaying demolition. 150 properties will be added under the 2015 Survey & Planning grant.

**Meetinghouse Green:** Jeff and Leon will form a subcommittee for developing the images and text for the sign. Jeff has been experimenting with overlays of maps of the site. Leon has offered to develop a design.

**GHC Web site:** Jeff and Mary Ellen will form a subcommittee for developing web site content. Mary Ellen pointed out that Wendy Frontiero made specific suggestions for this in her 2012 survey update plan.

**GHC clipping file:** Michelle will archive news and information for a GHC Year in Review.

**Next Meeting Date:** Monday, July 27, 6:30PM, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, City Hall