

Aug 31st 2015 GHC Meeting Minutes

Present: David Rhinelander, Tom O'Keefe, Mary Ellen Lepionka, Leon Doucette, Michelle Mustone, and members of the public, including Craig Anderson Jr., Craig Anderson Sr., Adam Curcuru of the Veterans' Affairs Dept., Pru Fish, Lois McNulty of *Enduring Gloucester*, and Susan Pollack.

- 1) Motion to accept Minutes of the July 27, 2015, meeting were approved.
- 2) Craig Anderson of Scout Troop 56, supported by his father and the director of the Veterans' Affairs Dept., Adam Curcuru, presented his proposed Eagle Scout project, in which he plans to install QR-code signs on posts at ten war memorials throughout the City. The Commission voted unanimously to support Craig's proposal, and Mary Ellen will write a letter of support for his project to the Planning and Development Committee in time for their Sept. 2 meeting. Craig will notify the GHC when the project is complete so it can be documented.
- 3) Strategies for Threatened Properties were discussed, prompted by the issue of the pending demolition of the Inn at Babson Court on Stacy Boulevard at 53 Western Ave. Mary Ellen sent a Letter to the Editor to the Gloucester Times protesting the demolition and learned that the paper is planning to do an article on the subject. The Commission has no power to prevent demolition other than to publicize threats to the City's historic resources. Speaking to this issue were Pru Fish, Lois McNulty of *Enduring Gloucester*, and Susan Pollack. An abutter, Louise Pallazola, was unable to attend. Pru reported on her research into deeds and historical accounts, suggesting that the 53 Western Ave. was one of three houses at that location at the time of the Revolutionary War. The building has been redone many times but still has a few 18th century features remaining in the interior. Its significance lies mainly in its location in the streetscape directly behind the Fisherman's Memorial. Mary Ellen spoke with the owner of the Inn at Babson Court to learn the circumstances of the sale, and David will follow up with a visit. The owners, unable to get their mortgage refinanced, lowered their selling price three times over three years but were only able to interest a buyer on the condition that the inn would be razed and replaced with new construction of a structure containing 8 condos.

Mary Ellen will forward the letter to the editor to *Enduring Gloucester* and *Good Morning Gloucester*. Possible actions in the future include asking owners of historically significant properties to place preservation restriction covenants on their deeds, promoting tax credits as an incentive for preservation restriction, asking the Historic District Commission to seek to expand the area of the local historic district, and using the example of the Inn at Babson Court to win passage of a Demolition Delay Ordinance. Michelle will send a version of the letter to the editor to the mayor and City Council expressing the GHC's concerns. Bob will attempt to schedule a Special Meeting on September 14th to discuss the demolition of the Inn and the preservation of Stacy Blvd as a neighborhood. He informed us of Julia H. Miller's article on National Trust Historic Preservation law to protect landmarks in

the absence of a demolition delay and will send us the document to review as a possible solution.

4) A budget request for a \$1000 GHC annual operating budget was sent to the Mayor and City Councilors, with some encouraging replies, although the request is too late to be included in the 2016 budget.

5) The revised Memorandum of Agreement with the Historic District Commission to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) has been reviewed by the Legal Dept. and is now in the hands of the HDC. They will discuss and vote on the MOA in their next meetings. If it is approved the GHC will have to plan to provide CLG coordinators to manage collaborations and prepare annual reports.

6) The Survey and Planning Grant contracts have been signed and paperwork done except for Wendy Frontiero's forthcoming contract with the City to be the lead consultant. The project will begin in October.

7) Update on Demo Delay- Mary Ellen met with Peter Webber and Ken Rhiel of the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce. They expressed support for GHC's process of informing people, getting feedback, and working to get a balanced proposal. They suggested areas of the proposal to clarify further and plan to circulate the draft among their members. They will get back to us in a couple of weeks on the response. Bob volunteered to talk with Ken further about the matter. Mary Ellen also met with

Tom Daniel, Greg Cademartori, and an associate in the Community Development Department. They expressed support for a Demo Delay Ordinance and had suggestions for modifying the proposal. They feel the age restriction should be structures 50 years old or older and the delay period should be 6 months rather than 12 months. They suggested that we find a sponsor among the City Councilors (they gave some suggestions) and submit the proposal by October 16th for consideration. They also pointed out that we must be prepared to pay newspaper fees for legal notices for demo delay hearings.

In light of this new time frame, the GHC should plan to have the Demo Delay workshops now rather than next spring. A regional workshop on demolition delay will be conducted by the Mass. Historical Commission and Historic New England in Gloucester and is tentatively planned for September 30 in the Kyrouz Auditorium. Mary Ellen will ask the MHC to come then, and David will ask Sally Zimmerman of Historic New England once the date and place are set. Bob will ask Chris Patano about scheduling the date and place for the workshop. We will invite the historical commissions of Rockport, Hamilton, and Manchester to attend as well as the Mayor, City Councilors, and members of the public. We will ask CATV to film the workshop and post it on their channel.

8. Village Green Signage – Leon reported that he has been in touch with Jeff, who has two maps and some text for Leon to lay out. Further discussion was deferred to the next meeting as Jeff was absent.

9. GHC Web Site – Mary Ellen reported that she and Jeff have worked on a list of resources to give to Kathleen Valentine for the creation of a GHC web site. Further discussion was deferred to the next meeting as Jeff was absent.

10. Scenic Roads – The GHC will follow up on Jackie Jamieson’s tour of roads for possible historic designation as Scenic Roads. This topic will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

11. GHC Clipping File – Michelle will start scanning articles and documents to preserve them as a digital scrapbook of GHC activities and related information. Also, Michelle will make an appointment with James Pope in the IT department to learn how to post minutes to the GHC page on the City’s web site.

The next regular meeting is September 28 in the 3rd floor conference room but it is being waived for a Demolition Delay Workshop on September 30, to be confirmed. There will be a special meeting on September 14 in the Kyrouz Auditorium for issues relating to the Inn at Babson Court and the demo delay workshop. These events will need to be publicized.