

Gloucester Historical Commission

Minutes of 19 December

1. **Cemetery Advisory Committee Meeting recap.**

Discussion turned to how to use Gloucester Fund. A letter of support for the Cemetery Committee's application for the grant was signed. Sandy will investigate obtaining an accounting of what is in the Cemetery account from previous incarnation of Cemetery Committee.

2. **Minutes of November 28 meeting** approved with addition of Sandra Kee's (Legion representative) name.

3. **Update on FY 2016 Survey and Planning Grant.** The Phase 1 Meeting occurred at the MHC (Massachusetts Historical Society). Historic Preservationists Wendy Frontiero and Kathleen Broomer, consultants to Gloucester on this year's grant met with our Chairs and Michael Steinitz and Peter Stott. The issue at hand was having too many properties. To reduce the number of properties, the commission decided to exclude properties already listed in MACRIS, i.e. not update them. WE will request an emphasis on older, more significant properties and including a representative sampling of properties from as many neighborhoods of the entire city as possible: Magnolia, West Gloucester, East Gloucester (Brier Neck), Bass Rocks, Lanesville, etc. Wendy and Kathleen have been able to pare it down and embark on Phase 2 which is due Jan 15.

FY 2015. Final Report was accepted. The reimbursement check (Grant) to the City of Gloucester is in the mail (after another inquiry from Kenny Costa about city's reimbursement). FY 2015 is now officially a "close-out."

4. **Update on FY 2017 Survey and Planning Grant for Dogtown survey for listing on National Register.** Mary Ellen, Bob and Holly met with the Rockport Historical Commission which is combined with Historic District Commission to request a letter supporting the grant application for funds for an expert survey of Dogtown. An archeological survey will determine the acreage of Dogtown that will be proposed for MACRIS and the National Register.

The Commission will supply us with a letter. Eric Hutchins and Jamie Theophanis (Chair of the Rockport Commission) did receive a copy of the support letter from the Rockport Board of Selectmen. One selectwoman didn't sign it.

Bob will try to contact her and take letter around to her.

A letter will be sent to the Mayor from members of the former Dogtown Advisory Commission. The letter will request reinstalling the Dogtown Commission. Sib Wright and Linzee Coolidge (Dusky Foundation) stepped down. It is expected that new appointees will revive the Commission. Currently acting as an ad hoc Dogtown Commission, Mary Ellen attends their meetings. Nick Hollard of CATS made maps of Dogtown having culled information from other members of the ad hoc group. Others who are involved include Ed Becker and Chris Lahey (Mass Audubon), Jim McDougall (I nature website), Eric Hutchins, and Noel Mann who met

preparatory to applying for the survey grant via the GHC. A strategy plan will be written, and the group has asked Mark Carlotto (author of Dogtown maps and books on Dogtown) to make two new maps: quarries and other boulders of interest with cellar holes. Photos of boulders will be collected in one place and Sandy will upload on our Google Drive.

The GHC will attain the Mayor's and City Council's permission to apply for the Dogtown Grant; at the time of this writing the GHC plans on applying for \$20,000. We have asked Rockport if they will go to their CPC for administrative, off-cycle funds as a match. Linzee Coolidge will sign to commit the \$5,000 grant he promises.

GHC members noted input from Dan Smith, Community Development Director. He explained the number of overlapping commissions and committees in Gloucester can prevent forward momentum on issues and actions of import.

5. Report and Discussion of developments on the proposed rehabilitation of the Legion Memorial Building, the former "Town House" and first Town Hall.

In order to obtain a MCC (Massachusetts Cultural Council) grant we will demonstrate an arts and culture orientation. Plans for a tourist bureau fit well with such planning and an application will discuss art exhibitions, theatre, musical performances, etc. The Legion Building is home to a number of oil paintings that will be viewed by a wider audience, as the public knows it is accessible. The building could be a cultural center, a gateway into artists and crafts. The mayor seems to be incorporating such a vision in her thinking about the Visitors' center. She and City Council need to approve the application (GHC has to procure permission to apply for grants over \$10,000).

GHC will go before the Council Budget and Finance committee about the MCC proposal on Thursday 5 January.

Mary Ellen spoke with Jay Paget of the MCC on the phone. She asked many questions and he was generally discouraging about our having success applying for a grant for restoration of the Legion Building envelope. Catherine Ryan who is the Arts Commission liaison to the Mayor met with us to brainstorm a plan for writing a grant with support from multiple Gloucester stakeholders.

Another viable option is to apply for an MPPF (Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund) grant, administered through the MHC. We will attend the workshop on Jan 10; Gloucester is now eligible to apply as we are again a Certified Local Government.

It is clear a maintenance plan and even a long term strategic plan, for the Legion Building, like all Gloucester historic structures, is necessary. Bob pointed out it should be on a list of city buildings for regular maintenance, as the City is responsible for its exterior. Mary Ellen's and Holly's meeting with Dan Smith was instructive in this regard. Smith explained the situation is better financed through grants for capital improvements. The meeting with Mark Cole, DPW Assistant Director, was similarly instructive.

Grants for repair and remediation of historic properties require bids from certified entities with credentials to do restoration work. If one receives an MHC grant, the contractor has to be on

their list of qualified firms; if it's an MCC grant, the we can chose any contractor but the ones on their exclusion list.

An MCC grant asks the applicant to outline a strategic plan for the enterprise, group, property that's the subject of the application. In light of this requirement, we will look to contracting expert architectural assessment of the Legion Building's features, finishes and contents. Bill Remsen notes that architectural drawings, specs and elevations that have been previously composed, and should be archived somewhere, would be valuable. Holly will investigate whether such renderings are in the City Archives or at the Cape Ann Museum. Bill also recommends the building be inspected twice a year. Looking at it every year to keep ahead of everything would be even better. He notes the city should be prepared to do a repaint every seven years ... David suggested an appraisal every three years, when the City renews the lease with the Legion.

GHC will write a grant proposal for an expert assessment to be carried out this winter, as soon as possible. WE can apply to CPA and MCC simultaneously, but we cannot do MHC and MCC at same time since both organizations draw on state funds. GHC members present at the meeting agree that Mary Ellen has the "go-ahead" to talk to Debbie Laurie, Head of Gloucester's CPC. She will inquire about applying for off-cycle money for an architectural assessment and possibly for a match for an MCC capital funds grant.

6. **Signage Meeting House Green.** Jeff and Sandy both looked at property to decide where to put the sign. Consensus is the sign ought to be where it is on the map, on Ashland Street, oriented to be seen from the street and from the White Ellery house. A cross walk is worth thinking about. A wooden support structure is planned, and we wonder whether it will deteriorate. We will ask DPW, Mark Cole, to show us what it will look like. Bob, MaryEllen, and Bill will talk with them tomorrow.
7. **2016 Preservation Awards to be presented in May 2017.**
 - Lanesville Post Office building. Holly and Bob visited and discussed with owner, Ron Wood. A lot of foundational work has been carried out. The porch and its balustrades have been restored. The post office entrance will be repaired (as necessary) and repainted this coming Spring. Other outside work including landscaping and a garden will occur in Spring and Summer. All agree building will be finished an polished for an award for 2017, given in 2018.
 - Essex Avenue property with restored windows. Inclusion is confirmed.
 - Lundberg house on the corner of Bridge and River in Annisquam. Holly and Bill investigating.
 - House in Lanesville. Via Jeff. Finished last year and Pru Fisch recommends. Will get a photo of it.

- House on end of Wheelers point. Redid the house. Jeff to get addresses and contact info. (David thinks may have been done previously) and has been kept exactly the same.
- Joe Nepalitano. Local preservationist builder. Has worked on numerous historic properties. Contractor for the House of Seven Gables in Salem.
- Book about shipwrecks written by Marblehead resident, Will Raymond Bates. It has piece on the *Rebecca Ann*. He is slated to speak at CAM in January.

8. **Maintaining plaques on historic properties.** A number around Gloucester need to be re-done. Helping to restore a few would be nice, if we can come up with money to repair and/or replace. \$75 a plaque. One example is the Legion Memorial Building sign that was removed the last time it was painted.

9. Chair Mary Ellen Lepionka will submit a letter to the Mayor from GHC that **requests inclusion in the City's budget a line item allowance** of up to \$1000. This allocation would pay for awards, certified mail, large expenses connected with writing grants, and file folders.

10. **Thank-you letter to Dusky Foundation** for their grant, a partial match, of \$5k for Dogtown Survey.

11. **New Business**

A. **Manship Artist Residence and Studios.** Rebecca Reynolds, an arts consultant and curator, Curator of the John and Margaret Manship Sculpture Collection joined GHC members at December's meeting. She and a committee of arts enthusiasts and scholars would like to develop the Manship estate in Lanesville, conserving it as an artists' residence and studios (MARS). They are applying for an MCC capital facilities grant (\$500,000) and would like a letter of support from GHC. Mary Ellen moved that the GHC draft a letter of support for MARS application for an MCC grant. The motion was unanimously approved and the letter is due Jan 15.

They will also apply for a CPA grant and will investigate the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF). The effort to restore and develop the Manship property for re-use is currently hampered by its ownership status. The sponsoring group hope to buy the property and are working on raising funds. The National Endowment for the Arts does have culture preservation arm and may also pay for acquisitions.

Rebecca encouraged GHC to collaborate with the Gloucester Committee for the Arts.

B. Jeff asked if members present had seen **plans for a new library building**. He suggests the GHC should look at it and have an opinion. He thinks the existing plan is horrible and doesn't fit architecturally with its surroundings. It also appears the new structure will not be connected to Saunders House, the home of Gloucester's original library and lyceum. GHC will be on top of developments, make sure Saunders House is saved, and architectural plans are changed to

maintain the integrity of the neighborhood. GHC members will attend the library board's public meeting on January 11 at 6:30. There is a link on homepage to drawings.

Sandy is involved with the library and has heard a beam in the Saunders House roof is rotten. Apparently questions about the viability of the Saunders house are circulating. The GHC sees this as an opportunity to restore Saunders. The Sawyer Free Library & Lyceum owns it.

- C. Bob reported on the **conversion to condos of the historic property on Pleasant Street**. He was happy to say the owner will be keeping the historic double doors.
- D. **Demolition Delay ordinance**. We will develop a folder and include photos that tell a story. Charles Olson was active in trying to save historic properties; in particular, he took a photo of a house that ended up disappearing. GHC would like to avoid demolition debacles like that of the Smith block in Magnolia and tear-downs on Stacey Blvd.
- E. **Landmarks**. We will meet on Jan 9 for a meeting about developing copy and adding material for a virtual rendition for Landmarks.
- F. **GHC Records and Files**. It is questionable that we will have a storage place for our files. It is agreed they need to be some place accessible. Can't be in Archives, PO or library. Sandy will look into developments and whether the City Clerk's office received a grant. If the grant was extended, has it been used and where?

In addition, we might investigate developing a finding aid that could be available digitally. Bill suggested we might digitize everything. The Minutes are already on the City website. We discussed building an action plan for digitizing our documents. To figure out how to do it, we will need a grant. It's done by linear feet. Bill explained there is a lot that goes into figuring how we organize records and assign accession numbers. All suggestions are welcome for how to organize the data.

We might be able to use the Library's digitizer. Sandy will check on this too. David said there must be some process the City has established to follow, with so many commissions; the City must have a protocol. WE will want to coordinate with the rest of the City departments. Sandy can show us how the city's collecting data. Bill says GHC can either use a data base, like EXCEL, or system of chronological folders.

Bill suggests Sandy develop a protocol for naming the files.

GHC should set a date for another Potluck records-organizing party.

The Next GHC meeting will be last Monday in February, February 27.