

Gloucester Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
24 April 2017

Present: Mary Ellen Lepionka, Bob Whitmarsh, Sandy Barry, Jude Seminara, Bill Remsen, Holly Clay

Vistors: Zenas Seppala

1. Public Business not on Agenda

a. Jude Seminara's up-to-date address, 2 Middle Street, is noted and will be shared.

b. Mary Ellen will place an advertisement in the newspaper for **positions open on GHC**. Jude and Holly will now be regular members, rather than alternate members. Mary Ellen will request that Bill be brought on board as a regular member, although she originally filed for his addition to the Commission as an alternate. Sandy and David will be alternates. Jeff will stay on the Commission for the present.

c. The letters to Rocky Neck residents soliciting comment and/or objections to the **Rocky Neck nomination to the National Register** have been mailed. A final meeting with Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) representatives is scheduled for 7:30 pm on May 19 at the Rocky Neck Cultural Center.

d. Announcements about the May 6, 2017 Preservation Awards ceremony have been placed with local and regional media outlets.

e. Dogtown: Mary Ellen met with representatives from Greenbelt, Mass Audubon, Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team, Friends of Dogtown, and the Cape Ann Trail Stewards. Stakeholders are working with Counselor Val Gilman (Ward 4) to reignite the Dogtown Advisory Committee.

Val, in her capacity as Ward Councilor, has submitted a request for the establishment of a Dogtown Oversight task force that will include representatives from local government and relevant citizen organizations. The group's authority would stem directly from a Council Order. A multi-factional task force, it will develop management and maintenance plans and resolve conflicting interests. Some stakeholders suggest designating publically owned spaces like Dogtown and the North Gloucester Woods as *public parks*.

Bylaws are being drawn up for this committee and Val is requesting permission to work with the Auditor's Department to determine who owns five apparently abandoned lots. The City's taking these lots by eminent

domain will be considered. Without buying the five, the area in which to work and map could be gerrymandered. The group will also consider how to treat government-owned property, like reservoirs and railroads.

Holly brought a copy of the “Odum” map, a 1971 Gloucester Engineering Department map that was copied for members of the then-active Dogtown Advisory Committee. Jude mentioned he has a number of maps of Dogtown, and a large version of the “Odum” map.

f. Stage Fort Park: Bill reported he could find no modern maps and brought a copy of an 1897 map. The land comprising Stage Fort Park was taken by eminent domain.

Jude got pictures from Cape Ann Museum (CAM) photo archivist Fred Buck that portray the Park prior to changes we see today. The photos show the cannons that were in place before 1906. (Two reproduction cannons were given to the City in 1906 and installed; these reproductions do not authentically represent the type of cannon that would have been in place in preceding historic periods.) In the photos the “Parrott gun,” can be seen to have Civil War markings on it.

GHC members agreed to share the photos with the Stage Fort revitalization committee; Jude will secure permission from CAM before sharing or printing images.

2. **Minutes:** Members agreed to enter the Minutes of the March and April 10 (special) meetings into the record, as edited.

3. **Status Report on Grants**

a. American Legion/Town House/old Town Hall: Mary Ellen and all commission members extend thanks to Bill. Mary Ellen said, “He saved the day on the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) application for capital improvements to the exterior of the Legion Building. The MPPF grants committee requires photographs in digital format, all of which Bill prepared and submitted. Bill took new photos and he used many he had previously digitized. He also created an index to the digitized photos and annotated and numbered them. The MPPF grant application is now officially complete. We should hear June 15. MPPF has approx. \$2.5 million to give this year

In a related matter, Bill alerted city officials and Legion Commander Mark Nestor to structural issues that raise safety and health concerns. He has not received a reply from the City nor Mark Nestor.

b. FY 2017 Survey & Planning Grant. Dogtown: Meetings to launch Survey & Planning are scheduled, including 16 May at MHC in Boston. GHC has received the City’s permission to apply for the grant.

4. Preservation Awards:

The Mayor or the City's Chief Administrative Officer will attend the ceremony and make opening remarks.

Holly will circulate the Award certificates she has created for proofreading. Mary Ellen will follow up with *Good Morning Gloucester* about announcing the event.

Sandy plans to do a CATV (Cape Ann Television) Video and Editing training (\$30), so she can film the Ceremony for airing. The GHC will file with the City for reimbursement along with Holly's expenses.

5. Landmarks publication.

The Gloucester Development Team, the non-profit enterprise which published the original *Landmarks*, had expressed interest in funding publication of a new edition. Funds were not immediately available, however, and the GHC has received no updates on the availability of funds. To make headway, the GHC will need to decide who will author the revision. To do our own revision, we will need copyright permission. Members discussed the possibility of creating a film edition. A special meeting will be scheduled to review the new *Landmarks* edition, as currently laid out.

6. Meeting House Green Signage: Placement and Size

If the sign is erected on the north side of Ashland Place, the "You are Here" on the sign will be off by a few yards. Given the size of the sign, 8'X4' by DPW accounts, placing it in front of the founder's rock (south side of Ashland) will obscure street-side views of the rock. We will inquire whether the sign can be adjusted; "you are here" arrow will be correctly placed on map and large size considered. MaryEllen will contact.

7. Website: We need to decide what documents to put up, and GHC would benefit from feedback to the material on the site. Jude suggests adding a "ticker" to the website to count viewers' visits.

Further discussion revolved around creating a blog with links to other blogs and news sites. We want to post information that will encourage public interest in historic preservation. A slide show or a link to the award ceremony film would work well. Jude will investigate setting up a blog spot with a news feed; an intra-GHC committee might decide content for whatever platform we choose.

We also discussed setting up a Facebook page. Bob prompted all attending to consider the pros and cons of interactive versus controlled content web pages.

8. Certified Local Government (CLG) Requirements

a. Joint annual GHC/HDC meeting is scheduled for May 22. From the HDC, only Steve Miller replied, saying he's no longer on the HDC. Mary Ellen will send another reminder to all HDC members; Bob suggested inviting HDC to all our meetings.

b. CLG Annual Report. The Report covers July 1 – June 30. Five sets of minutes/reports from HDC are published for that period of time, Sandy said. She will cull pertinent information from those to be assembled for inclusion in the Report. Holly will use the 12+ monthly sets of GHC minutes as a basis for compiling information for the GHC section of the report. Material from these two sources will be fit into the format required by the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS).

9. House Plaques. These are still within Pru Fish's purview. GHC will consider putting information about obtaining plaques on our website.

10. Preservation Plan: A list of municipal properties should be developed for drawing up a preservation plan. The GHC will work on this with the Gloucester archivist in the future.

Adjournment

Next Meeting: 22 May 2017