

Meeting Minutes

Gloucester Historical Commission

Monday, August 20, 2018, 6:30 PM

3rd Floor Conference Room

City Hall

9 Dale Ave. Gloucester, MA

Present: Mary Ellen Lepionka, Robert Whitmarsh, William Remsen, Jude Seminara, Sandy Barry, Peter Lawrence

Absent: David Rhineland, Holly Clay-Smith

Guests: None

Meeting called to order: 6:40 PM

I. Acceptance of Minutes of July 30, 2018, Gloucester Historical Commission meeting.

Mary Ellen motioned to accept the minutes of the July 30 GHC meeting, as amended. Bob seconded. All in favor; minutes accepted as amended.

II. Report on meeting with Historic District Commission re: Sawyer Free Library.

Members of the GHC and HDC met to draft a letter to Mr. Brennan and the Trustees of the SFL to discuss plans. Mr. Nazarian of the HDC drafted a letter. The goal of the meeting and the letter was to persuade the Trustees not to tear down the Monell Wing, but rather to consider an adaptive reuse of that part of the building; also, to keep the Saunders House connected to, and a functional part of, the SFL. A meeting will be held with all concerned parties in the function room of the Cape Ann Savings Bank, time and date to be determined.

III. Finalization of Demolition Delay Ordinance package for submission to Mayor and City Manager.

Peter and Bill recently met with City Councillor Ken Hecht and developed a list of next steps for the Demolition Delay Ordinance. Peter also met informally with City Councillor Paul Lundberg. Peter and Bill shared their notes with the Commission. The DDO will go before the Ordinances and Administration Committee and the Planning and Development Committee, then to the City Council. Gloucester needs a long term Community Development Plan -- a proposed plan was produced in 2001. In that plan (specifically Sec. IV.C.3), several objectives were outlined with regard to historic preservation, included here verbatim from a document Peter circulated:

- "Expand the stewardship responsibilities and capacity of Gloucester's Historical Commission and Historic District Commission."
- "Preserve historic buildings and places."
- "Assist residents and City Administration to understand and appreciate the importance of preserving historic buildings and places, including cemeteries and archaeological sites."

- “Secure funding for historic acquisitions and preservation.”
- “Explore the benefits of enacting Community Preservation Act to help preserve historic places and structures in Gloucester.”
- “Support programs and policies to create new venues for historic interpretation.”

Commission members should compile a list, by ward, of the number of buildings the proposed DDO would affect. Peter will go to the Assessor’s office and look into this. Bill suggested this should have as narrow a scope as possible; Jude agreed that this should be as less burdensome as possible so as not to unreasonably encumber property owners. The Commission members agree that the purpose of the DDO should be to preserve the character of Gloucester. The example of the Birdseye Building tower having not been incorporated in the Beauport Hotel construction was given as an example. Peter will send to the Commission a list of City Council members to speak with. Mary Ellen will update the documents for the DDO with Bill’s assistance. Since demolition is final and irreparable, the Commission wants to ensure due diligence is done via a formal review before a historic structure is torn down. Members of the Commission should explore meeting with Building Inspector Bill Sandborn.

IV. Brief Status Updates

a. MHC National Register Nomination for Annisquam.

There was significant opposition to the NRHP nomination for Annisquam at the public meeting held on August 16. Another meeting will be held on August 22 at 7:00 PM with the MHC to answer residents’ questions and clarify resistant residents’ misconceptions and misunderstandings of a NRHP nomination. Several vocal opponents of the nomination are spearheading a campaign to have the nomination withdrawn based on the misinformation being disseminated. On September 12, 2018, the State Review Board will meet in Boston. The MHC is aware of the difficulties faced in Annisquam.

b. UMass Archaeological Survey of Stage Fort Park.

The GHC has not received a status update on the archaeological survey conducted in July at Stage Fort Park. Jude will contact Julie Wood for an update.

c. History Podcasts.

Mary Ellen, Bill, and Bob recorded a podcast with 1623 Studios on August 16. Part ii will be recorded on September 14 at 3:00 so that Jude can attend.

d. PAL Dogtown Survey.

Bill commented on the PAL report. He expressed concerns with some material, particularly the map. He would like to see edits made. The Commission would like to see Bill’s concerns addressed. There is a need for more clarification of property bounds in Dogtown. Mary Ellen would like to see the Dogtown NRHP nomination move forward.

e. Dogtown Advisory Committee.

The DAC did not have a quorum at their last meeting. Members who were present paid out of pocket to have graffiti removed from some rocks that have been defaced. The DAC has not had much activity or interest as of late.

f. Cemetery Advisory Committee.

Sandy reported on the August CAC meeting. The August 3 and 4 workshop sponsored by the National Park Service went well. Many stones were cleaned and repaired at the First Parish

Burying Ground and Clark's Cemetery. The CAC got its own tripod lift for stone repair. A remote camera was used to photograph the interior of a tomb or receiving vault. Additionally, CAC members may have discovered a previously unknown tomb or receiving vault. Sandy will share the images taken by Russell Hobbs.

V. Public Business not on the Agenda.

a. Certified Local Government Meeting

Mary Ellen and David Porper (of the HDC) will be attending the Certified Local Government meeting on September 24 in Boston.

b. Community Preservation Committee

Jude drafted a letter to the CPC on behalf of the GHC in conditional support of the Stage Fort Park Advisory Committee's desire to fabricate replica ordnance carriages for the cannons at Stage Fort Park. Mention was made by David Dow of the SFPAC that indicated the carriages would be fabricated from aluminum. The GHC's conditional support was given with the caveat that the carriages are to be constructed of period-appropriate materials, both to maintain their historical integrity and to prevent damage from galvanic corrosion.

Peter motioned to adjourn the meeting. Bill seconded. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM

The next meeting of the Gloucester Historical Commission will be held on Monday, September 24, 2018 in the third floor conference room of City Hall at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jude Seminara