

Gloucester Historical Commission 30 July 2018 Meeting Minutes

Present: Mary Ellen Lepionka, Sandy Barry, Bill Remsen, Jude Seminara, Peter Lawrence, Bob Whitmarsh, Holly Clay. Guests: J.D. McEachern, Susan Morreale

1. Public or New Business not on the Agenda.

- Citizens have voiced concern over the proposed development of the **Riggs Pasture**, a previously undeveloped landscape likely to contain prehistoric sites because of its location in relation to Mill River and Riverview. Barbara Lambert contacted the GHC but asked us to hold off communicating with the developer until locals have had a chance to respond to potential development there. Mary Ellen encouraged Ms. Lambert to request an archaeological survey before work commences or site monitoring by professional archaeologists during the work.
- Citizens have also expressed concern about new residential development in **West Gloucester** in the vicinity of Bray St. and Concord Ave. There is a proposal for a 60 family-tract development on 21 acres, which has raised local concern about access and traffic. The project also entails conservation issues because a large proportion is wetlands. The planning Board will vote its approval/disapproval this week.
- Lanesville resident Valerie Nelson has requested greater GHC involvement with historic preservation issues in **Lanesville**. Mary Ellen suggests, if we are invited to apply for the 2019 Survey and Planning Grant, the GHC might use the funds for Lanesville. A study might focus on Cape Ann's granite quarries and Finnish history. An historical survey could be initiated as a prelude to developing a National Register nomination for Lanesville Center and Lane's Cove and/or for the granite industry theme as a separate distinct focus. Such a project would provide another opportunity to collaborate with Rockport.
- Other suggestions for using an **FY2019 Survey & Planning grant**:
Jude: look at West Gloucester
Mary Ellen: Yes, look at neighborhoods rather than specific buildings.
Sandy: The Fisherman's Rest in Beechbrook Cemetery would be a good candidate to add to MACRIS and nominate to the National Register. The monument, the work of John Hays Hammond, was erected in 1919. Hammond donated concrete slabs so that destitute and itinerant fishermen could have a place to be buried. Howard Blackburn is buried there. Someone has to do the paperwork. Edith Spurling initiated the project years ago. The GHC voted to write in-house our own NR nomination for Fisherman's Rest as a test case. As a Certified Local Government we are supposed to be able to make nominations ourselves and need to learn how to do the paperwork.

2. Acceptance of **Minutes** of June 25, 2018. Mary Ellen moves, Jude seconds.

3. Finalization of **Demo Delay** Package for submission to the City Council.

Wide-ranging discussion and edits of the current documents (cover letter, proposal, timeline):

- Cover Letter to Mayor and City Council should directly address objections to demolition delay expressed in past attempts.
- Include the fact that more than a third of towns and cities in MA have an ordinance or by-law.
- Point out that it's less expensive to preserve than to demolish and replace.
- Add to the Definitions and Procedures section a definition of "reasonable effort." Describe what will happen during the delay period, e.g., the owner and developer will meet with Historical Commission to review alternatives and will share information about the property from assessor file, deed, land plot, building plan.
- Provide links to published guidelines, standards, and materials relating to sustainable historic preservation to aid in considering alternatives.
- Document the property and research its history in case it ends up getting demolished anyway, with the owner contributing information and copies of relevant documents.
- Clarify the Timeline: One year clock is clicking when application for demolition permission is submitted.
- Peter and Bill will meet with City Council Ken Hecht, who has expressed an interest in sponsoring the proposal. They will explore different ways of presenting it.
- Clarify that delay will be triggered only by qualifying properties that are truly significant by the criteria stated; i.e., just because a place is old will not warrant a delay.
- Keep the proposal simple, adaptable, and flexible, so that the City Council can tweak it as needed before it is finalized as a legal ordinance.

4. Brief Status Updates

A. **Dogtown** Archaeological Survey:

- Bill received an invoice from PAL (Public Archaeology Lab) and is waiting to sign off on payment until the Commissions agree that the report is complete and final. Maps need work; Bill would like a locator map. New information in the report shows that the reconnaissance was conducted to a high standard. Project is winding down. One more public meeting will be scheduled for the Fall. PAL will create a slide show and National Register presentation for the City which will also be used for the State Review Board next Spring 2019.
- Chip Payson of Gloucester's Legal Dept instructed Mary Ellen to forward to him any and all further inquiries from Jeff Brown about Dogtown or the National Register. Brown has continued to make redundant public records requests and to contact me, the DAC, the MHC, and PAL, and they all have also been advised to not respond but forward them to the Legal Dept.

B. UMass Archaeological Survey of **Stage Fort Park**:

- Being conducted under the auspices of Eric Johnson of UMass Archaeological Services. In progress. Mary Ellen, Bill, Jude, and Bob met on site with Julie Woods who is conducting a field survey and taking core samples. They shared pictures and information. She showed data accumulated so far in the study. Jude spent about 3 and a half hours with Julie walking and studying the various sites in Stage Fort Park. Scott

Lesch has a blog about Gloucester Forts, and GHC will forward his name to Julie Woods. She will be on site for one more week.

- David Dow of the SFP Restoration Committee also came on site and expressed concern that the survey would delay their work on restoring the cannons and the park in time for the 400th anniversary. He was assured that the project will be over in a couple of months. The GHC is to draft a letter to the CPC about provisions for the grant to restore the cannons. Jude will supply an accurate photograph of how the gun should be restored for historical authenticity and a contact for an expert. For one thing the carriage should be made of wood, which can be maintained with minimal yearly varnishing, rather than aluminum which will corrode with exposure to wind-blown salt water and sand.

C. **History Shorts** series with 1623 Studios.

- On July 16 Bob, Bill, and Mary Ellen taped a podcast on the history of the Legion Memorial building in Washington Square. Photographs will be edited into it once we have permission from the Cape Ann Museum.
- We will do one podcast a month and will invite knowledgeable guests to chat with us about historic sites and properties. The next podcast will be on August 16 on the history of Stage Fort Park, with Jude, Bill, Bob, and Mary Ellen.
- Other topics for podcasts are demolition delay, Save the Hopper houses, the fate of the Boulevard houses (with Pru Fish), and the historic cemeteries (with Sandy Barry). Sandy has done a lot of research and the Cemetery Advisory Committee has done a lot of restoration. We will tell people what the historic cemeteries are, their dates, who's buried there, etc.

D. **Annisquam** Village National Register nomination.

- The public informational meeting is scheduled for August 22. Betsy Friedberg and Ann Forbes and Ben Haley will present. If half or more of residents object and send notarized letters of objection to the MHC, the nomination will not go through.

E. Dogtown Advisory Committee report.

- The **DAC** did not meet in July.

F. Cemetery Advisory Committee report.

- The **CAC** will have a Training on headstone restoration on August 3 and 4. The National Park Service is returning to train people and get restoration work done on headstones in First Parish Burial Ground.

5. **Tabled** until a future meeting: Establishment of a Sub-Committee for Gloucester's 400th anniversary:

A. Publications (Land Marks etc)

B. Web site

Next meeting: August 20, 3rd floor conference room, City Hall, 6:30pm