

**Webster Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes, March 23, 2021**

A meeting of the Webster Historical Commission was held on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 via remote participation / Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's emergency order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A, §20 due to the public health emergency relating to the Corona virus pandemic.

Present: Chairman Ted Avlas, Clerk Elaine Davies, and Members Curtis Cleaves, Olivia Mason, and Kelly Baldarelli (joined the meeting at 12:22 p.m.)

Also Present: Ann Morgan - Director of Planning & Economic Development.

1. Chairman Avlas called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and read the Governor's Orders regarding Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A § 20. He noted that the meeting was being recorded for the purposes of note taking. Anyone seeking to record the meeting for personal use must notify the Chairman in advance. The Chairman took attendance of the Board by roll call vote: Ms. Davies – Present; Mr. Cleaves – Present; Ms. Mason - Present; Mr. Avlas – Present.

2. Action Items

a. **Draft Meeting Minutes – February 23, 2021.** One minor edit was made. Ms. Davies note that the Samuel Slater Museum is now referred to as the Samuel Slater Experience. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any additional changes or edits to be made to the draft meeting minutes. There were none. Motion to approve the minutes of February 23, 2021 as edited made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Davies. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0 by roll call vote: Cleaves - YES; Davies - YES; Mason - YES; Avlas - YES.

3. Old Business

a. **Tercentenary Marker – Site Visit / Memorial Beach:** Mr. Avlas noted that he, Ms. Davies and Mr. Cleaves met with Carole Marchand, Recreation Director, at Memorial Beach on February 24th to discuss potential locations for the marker. The Beach is undergoing renovations and improvements with construction well underway. They looked at three spots for consideration including near the concession stand which would provide greater visibility and likely to best showcase the marker. He noted that the when the sign was originally placed on Thompson Road, the speed limit was much lower and people could view and read the sign safely. This is not the case today as the rates of speed are much higher and the volume of traffic is greater. A location at the Beach could be landscaped and people can view the marker safely. He suggested that the Nipmucs might also like the location and Ms. Davies agreed.

Mr. Cleaves spoke with Mary Hafferty at MassDOT about relocating the sign. She didn't think it would be a problem indicating that many markers around the State are not site specific. The Commission would need to check with the MassDOT Cultural Resources Unit. Ms. Hafferty had asked if the Commission would like to move the marker prior to repairs. Mr. Avlas suggested that this would probably be a good time to move the marker, in advance of repairs, so that it can coincide with current construction efforts at the Beach.

Mr. Avlas noted that he spoke with a member of the Nipmuc Nation who agreed to speak with the Nipmucs about the project. Ms. Davies asked if this person would be the Commission's primary point of contact. Mr. Avlas stated that he would ask.

- b. **Membership Update:** Mr. Avlas noted that Ms. Balderelli has been sworn in and is now a member of the Commission. Two more openings remain. The Commission will continue to reach out to the community through media outlets and the website.
- c. **FY22 Budget Update:** Mr. Avlas noted there was no new information since the last meeting. Town Meeting will vote on the FY22 budget on May 10th. There is a new line item for the Commission for \$5,000.

4. New Business

- a. **Webster Master Plan – Action Items:** Mr. Cleaves reviewed the action items specific to the Historical Commission in the 2018 Open Space Master Plan. One of the items, identify candidate buildings for preservation, is especially important towards saving certain buildings from demolition such as the Filmer School which has since been demolished. The Commission should take some time to review those action items in the future.

Ms. Balderelli joined the meeting.

- b. **Three Steps to Historic Preservation Planning:** Mr. Cleaves reviewed the information he received from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) about creating a preservation plan. One of the steps is to have a current inventory of historical buildings. Webster's last inventory was in 1979 and needs to be updated. This would provide information to owners and the Town alike to help inform decisions on demotion. Mr. Cleaves noted that the Webster Dudley Historical Society has a copy of the 1979 inventory. Unfortunately the quality of the images on those inventory sheets is poor. He's going to contact MHC to see if they can provide him with a full data set for all of Webster including the inventory survey sheets. There should be a copy of the inventory sheets in the Local History Room in the Library. You can also search the MHC database on line through MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System).

Ms. Davies asked if Main Street / downtown was in an historic district. Should it be? How to go about creating such a district? More information was needed and the Commission should make a plan. The Commission discussed a number of projects and issues that can and should be addressed including an updated inventory, Main Street revitalization, by-laws, repurposing historic buildings instead of demolition, public outreach and education. It was agreed that there was a need to address the whole range of issues, outline action items and brainstorm plans for developing a historic preservation plan for Webster. The Commission agreed to schedule a workshop and Mr. Avlas requested that this be an agenda item for the next meeting.


5. Staff Update

- a. **Historical Commission Official Email Account:** Ms. Morgan noted that Ms. Balderelli has been added to the group distribution list.
- b. **Roles of Historical Commission vs. Historical Society:** Ms. Morgan stated that she was working on drafting language for the Historical Commission webpage to help people better understand their resources.

6. Next Meeting Date: April 27, 2021 at noon via remote participation.

7. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Davies. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0 by roll call vote: Cleaves - Yes; Davies - Yes; Baldarelli - Yes; Avlas - Yes. The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

 5/24/21

Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary

EXHIBITS

- None.

