

Webster Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2022

A meeting of the Webster Historical Commission was held on January 25, 2022 via remote participation / Zoom in accordance with Governor Baker's June 16, 2021 Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency.

Present: Chairman Ted Avlas, Vice Chairman Curtis Cleaves, Clerk Elaine Davies, Members Judith Keegan and Reanna Kuzdzal

Also Present: Ann Morgan, Director of Planning & Economic Development

1. Call to Order - Mr. Avlas called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and reads the notice on the agenda noting that the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of minute taking. Anyone wishing to record the meeting for their own purposes must notify the Chairman. There was no response. Mr. Avlas noted that the meeting was originally posted with a time of 12:00 p.m. and was later revised to 10:00 a.m. However, that revision was posted less than 48 hours. As such, today's meeting will be for informational and administrative purposes only.
2. Action Items:
 - a. Draft Meeting Minutes - November 23, 2021 - Mr. Avlas asked if there were any edits. Ms. Davies noted that her name was misspelled on page 2. Motion to approve the minutes of November 23, 2021 as edited made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Mr. Cleaves. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote: Mr. Cleaves - yes; Ms. Davies - yes; Ms. Keegan - yes; Ms. Kuzdzal - yes; Mr. Avlas - yes.
 - b. Membership - Mr. Avlas stated that there are new applicants to fill the two vacancies and nothing new to report. Mr. Cleaves noted that finding volunteers to serve on committees is a challenge everywhere.
3. Old Business
 - a. Tercentenary Sign Update - Mr. Avlas noted that the sign had been moved to its new location at Memorial Beach. Highway Superintendent Kenny Pizzetti and his crew completed the work. The next steps will include exploring options for dressing it up such as landscaping for approximately \$5,000. It would be good to get the work completed by June so that the funds would not have to be encumbered. Ms. Davies suggested an interpretive panel to explain the significance of the sign given the context of the time it was installed originally and provide a better understanding of the Town's relationship to the Nipmuc Nation. Mr. Avlas agreed that such a sign would be appropriate and a good idea. He stated that he would reach out to Carole Marchand to find out who developed the sign next to the walking track. Mr. Cleaves wanted to make sure that future maintenance be a consideration going forward. Ms. Keegan suggested that the sign be surrounded by small shrubs and pavers. Mr. Cleaves provided an update on the sign refurbishment. He hasn't had a chance to discuss the work required with his contact person in Millbury. He thought that blasting and repainting the sign would be part of the work program. Mr. Cleaves will present a further update at the February meeting.
 - b. WWII Observation Station Update - Mr. Avlas stated that he's been working with the Veterans Agent. The veterans are interested in restoring the existing structure. They are talking to several contractors and hope to have estimates within the week. A budget request for \$30,000 has been submitted to the Town. The likely source of funding would be free cash. Town Meeting would have to appropriate these funds. Once funding is secured, a contractor can be hired. Mr. Avlas noted that Norman Deptula would have been a wonderful resource in the restoration effort as he had actually staffed the observation station during the war. Don Wayman is familiar with the history as well and might be of some assistance going forward. Mr. Avlas was hoping to have the required quotes by March so that the Commission along with the

Veterans Agent could move forward with the project. Ms. Davies asked what work items were required beyond repairing the actual structure. Mr. Avlas responded that the scope of work would also include plumbing and electrical work.

- c. Massachusetts Historical Commission FY2022 Survey & Planning Grant - Mr. Avlas reported that he had met with Jenn Doherty of Massachusetts Historical Commission to discuss the grant application. He and Ms. Morgan were working on application packet which is due by February 7th. Ms. Doherty had explained that consultant costs for these projects have increased over the years and recommended that the Town increase the project budget from \$25,000 to \$30,000 of which \$15,000 would be reimbursed by the State. Mr. Avlas noted that Town Meeting had approved \$25,000 and the Commission will have to come up with the additional \$5,000 to cover the new cost projections. He noted that the Commission will receive a copy of the application once it's been submitted. Ms. Morgan asked if the Commission should submit a letter of support of the application. Mr. Avlas noted that the Commission's vote to proceed with the submission was sufficient evidence of the Commission's support. He asked this of Jenn Doherty who confirmed that the Commission's pre-application submission was sufficient. Ms. Davies asked about the timeline after the application is submitted to the State. Mr. Avlas noted stated that the applications are reviewed by a screening committee who then forwards their recommendations to the Massachusetts Historical Commission who will formally vote on March 9th. That meeting will be held via remote participation / Zoom and is open to the public.

4. New Business

- a. Cranston Print Works Historic Clock Tower - 2 Worcester Road: Mr. Cleaves stated that he would like to move forward with submitting an application to have the clock tower listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The tower has a long history in the Town. The current location was the site of the Town's post office. The tower was part of the Cranston Printworks mill facility which was originally on the site where the Price Chopper plaza is now located, at the corner of Worcester and Gore Roads. Ms. Morgan noted that the Commission would need the approval and permission of the property owner, Mike O'Brien, to proceed with an application. Mr. Avlas noted that he would reach out to Mr. O'Brien. Mr. Cleaves stated that the Commission could then prepare the application and could be assisted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) staff. The National Register of Historic Places is administered by the National Park Service (NPS). MHC approval of the application is a pre-requisite for submission to the NPS.
- b. Little Red School House - Webster Dudley Historical Society - 451 School Street: Mr. Cleaves provided an update. The lamp post has been delivered to the site and was installed on a footing that can withstand deep frost. This work was completed thanks to the help of Highway Superintendent Kenny Pizzetti and his crew. It has also been wired. The front stoop was rotting and the shutters were in disrepair. Both have been repaired. Mr. Cleaves noted that operations of the Society continues to be challenged in finding volunteers and fundraising. Ron Heroux has moved to New Hampshire and Mr. Cleaves has become the Society archivist. He has spent some time cleaning out the storage unit. Space in the building is very limited and there's not a lot of room to display a number of items that have been donated. They are out of room. He noted that he's had some conversations with Ed Bazinet of the Black Dog Tavern in Dudley about finding a way to bring all the local historic resources under one roof. He noted that many people have connections in both Dudley and Webster and that donations come in all the time that relate to both towns. The Society is hoping to digitize what it and get it onto the website. They continue to seek funding for various programs and content management.

Mr. Avlas asked if ongoing repairs to the structure were in the Town budget since the building is owned by the Town. Mr. Cleaves stated that he didn't know. Mr. Avlas said he would check and see. Mr. Cleaves noted that the Society came to be housed in that school back in the 1970's when it was no longer useful or needed as a school building. Parking along the street was eliminated when School Street was widened. Lack of parking is a problem.

Ms. Davies reviewed some of the other local resources that could be part of a network of resources such as the History Room in the Library. Mr. Cleaves noted that the Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and is not affiliated with the Town. Regarding funding, Mr. Avlas noted that a few local foundations that provide grants including banks that have community funds that they distribute. Mr. Cleaves stated that the Society is applying for a grant through the Janet Malser Foundation. If granted, the funds would be used for repairs. Ms. Davies suggested that he look into grants offered through the Cultural Council. Mr. Cleaves said he spoke with the Library regarding housing some of the Society's collection. He didn't have any luck as there is limited room.

- c. FY23 Budget - Mr. Avlas stated that the FY23 budget will be level funded. The Commission can reapply for a \$5,000 budget item to be included and said that he would take care of that if there were no objections. There were none.
 - d. Other: Ms. Kuzdzal noted that the Grand Opening of the Samuel Slater Experience was set for the March 4th through March 6th and coincides with the founding date of the Town of Webster. The organizers are looking for ideas and volunteers for activities for that weekend known as Webster Weekend. Mr. Avlas suggested that she contact Carole Marchand, Recreation Director and member of the Cultural Council. Mr. Cleaves stated that the Historical Society would like to help. Mr. Cleaves noted that there used to be a bicycle race years ago which was very popular. Mr. Avlas stated that it was a big event with a race down to Cranston Print Works and back to the center of Town. People used to bring out antique / period bike for viewing.
5. Next Meeting Date - February 22, 2022 via Remote Participation
6. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Keegan. Motion passed unanimously 5-0 by roll call vote: Mr. Cleaves - yes; Ms. Davies - yes; Ms. Keegan - yes; Ms. Kuzdzal - yes; Mr. Avlas - yes. The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

Submitted by:


Ann V. Morgan, Recording Secretary


Date

EXHIBITS - None.

