

Webster Historical Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 22, 2022

A meeting of the Webster Historical Commission was held on February 22, 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 12:03 p.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.
2. Action Items:
 - a. Draft Meeting Minutes - January 25, 2022; tabled to next meeting.
 - b. Membership: Mr. Avlas note that there was nothing new to report and that two vacancies remain. There were not additional comments or information from the Commission members.
3. Old Business
 - a. MHPP Preservation Grant Award: Mr. Avlas reported that the application packet had been submitted and received by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). A subcommittee of MHC will screen all applications received and make recommendations to the full Commission who will review and vote on March 9th. That meeting will be held via remote participation and open to the public. The link to the meeting will be on the MHC webpage. There was no further discussion.
 - b. Tercentenary Sign Update: Mr. Cleaves provided an update. He has consulted with a contact over in Millbury who can complete shop blast the sign to clean out all the rust. Two additional stages are required - powder coating and repainting. He's looking into shops who would be willing to do that work. Mr. Avlas noted that Highway Superintendent Kenny Pizzetti and his crew is assisting in taking the sign down and prepping it for transport. That should be completed next week. Mr. Cleaves said that Ron Bannister has a truck and is willing to transport the sign. Mr. Avlas and Mr. Cleaves will coordinate with Mr. Pizzetti. Mr. Avlas noted that he was seeking quotes and ideas for ways to dress up the new sign site at Memorial Beach. He would like to see the work completed this spring when the sign is returned. There was no further discussion.
 - c. WWII Observation Station Update: Mr. Avlas stated that he continues to coordinate with Veterans Agent Paul Brodeur to get quotes to complete the renovation of the Station. A rough estimate is required in order for him to put together a Town Meeting warrant article requesting funding for the project.
 - d. Cranston Print Works Historic Clock Tower - 2 Worcester Road: Mr. Cleaves has suggested that the Commission submit a nomination packet to have the Tower listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR). Mr. Avlas stated that he had reached out to the property owner, Mike O'Brien, and was waiting for a response as Mr. O'Brien was presently out of town. He noted that Mr. O'Brien will need additional information as to how an NR designation will impact his property and his rights as property owner. Mr. Cleaves noted that an NR designation shouldn't affect the property owner or rights too much. There would be restriction on altering the face of the structure. A NR designation could add value to the property. Mr. Cleaves stated his belief that the Commission has to try given the long

history of the structure and its relationship to the community over the years. Mr. Avlas noted that he had forwarded a copy of the MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System) listing for the structure which already provides an inventory of effects and benefits of the State listing. Mr. Cleaves said that Jenn Doherty of the Massachusetts Historical Commission may be able to assist with advice on how to prepare the application. Ms. Keegan asked what happens if the Tower gets the NR designation and then the property owner decides to tear it down. Would there be any recourse? Mr. Cleaves noted that it would still be considered private property and the owner has the rights to do as he pleases. The only time that there is any local authority in such matters is in a designated Local Historic District approved by Town Meeting and the State. There are no such districts in Webster. The NR designation is a recognition. Ms. Keegan asked what could be done to commemorate the structure in the event it no longer exists. Mr. Cleaves said that the Town could place a plaque on the site with the permission of the property owner or on Town property abutting the site if needed. Ms. Keegan asked what the benefits were realized with a NR designation. Ms. Morgan noted that in some cases structures would be eligible for historic tax credits and other benefits. Mr. Cleaves noted that until the Town takes steps to adopt measures such as demolition delay by-laws then historic resources will continue to be at risk.

4. New Business

- a. Demolition Delay By-law: Mr. Avlas noted that he would like to investigate adopting a demolition delay by-law. He believes that such a by-law would provide a layer of protection for buildings, structures and monuments. He referred to the recent demotion of the historic Filmer School on East Main Street. The by-law would require the owner a period of time to seek buyers interested in preserving the historic structure rather than demolish it. Mr. Avlas noted that proposed by-laws are typically presented at Fall Town Meeting and must be reviewed by the By-Law Committee in advance. Mr. Avlas asked if anyone on the Commission would like to work with him on this project. Ms. Keegan offered to assist. Mr. Cleaves recommended that they look at sample by-laws that require an eighteen month delay.
- b. Other: Ms. Kuzdzal provided information about the upcoming Grand Opening of the Samuel Slater Experience. There will be a reception and tours on March 3rd in the evening for local officials and dignitaries. The ribbon cutting will be held for all interested parties at 11:00 a.m. on March 4th.

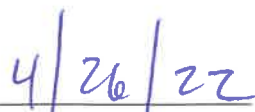
Ms. Davies noted that she was interested in investigating the possibility of the Town accepting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) which creates a funding sources for historic preservation projects, affordable housing projects and open space / recreation projects. A number of Massachusetts communities have adopted the CPA which needs to be adopted by Town Meeting.

5. Next Meeting Date - March 29, 2022 via Remote Participation

6. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Ms. Keegan. Motion passed unanimously 5-0 by roll call vote: Ms. Davies - yes; Mr. Cleaves - yes; Ms. Kuzdzal - yes; Ms. Keegan - yes; Mr. Avlas - yes. The meeting was adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

Submitted by:


Ann V. Morgan, Recording Secretary


Date

EXHIBITS - None.