

**Webster Historical Commission  
Meeting Minutes, August 24, 2021**

A meeting of the Webster Historical Commission was held via remote participation / Zoom on August 24, 2021 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, and Members Judy Keegan and Reanna Kuzdzal.

Absent: Member Kelly Baldarelli.

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

**1. Call to Order.** Mr. Avlas called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and read the notice on the agenda regarding Governor Baker's Order. He took attendance by roll call.

Mr. Avlas welcomed new members Reanna Kuzdzal and Judy Keegan to the Commission. He noted that Member Olivia Mason had tendered her resignation citing a new job that prevented her from attending. Mr. Avlas stated that she would be missed.

**2. Action Items**

a. Reorganization

Motion to appoint Mr. Avlas as Chairman made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Davies. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Mr. Avlas closed the nominations. There was no further discussion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0 by roll call vote (Mr. Cleaves – AYE; Ms. Davies – AYE; Ms. Kuzdzal – AYE; Ms. Keegan – AYE; Mr. Avlas – AYE).

Motion to appoint Mr. Cleaves as Vice Chairman made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Ms. Keegan. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any other nominations. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Mr. Avlas closed the nominations. There was no further discussion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0 by roll call vote (Mr. Cleaves – AYE; Ms. Davies – AYE; Ms. Kuzdzal – AYE; Ms. Keegan – AYE; Mr. Avlas – AYE).

Motion to appoint Ms. Davies as Clerk made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Keegan. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any other nominations. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Mr. Avlas closed the nominations. There was no further discussion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0 by roll call vote (Mr. Cleaves – AYE; Ms. Davies – AYE; Ms. Kuzdzal – AYE; Ms. Keegan – AYE; Mr. Avlas – AYE).

b. Draft Meeting Minutes – June 26, 2021. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any edits. There were none. Motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 26, 2021 as drafted made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Davies. Motion passed unanimously 5-0 by roll call vote (Mr. Cleaves – AYE; Ms. Davies – AYE; Ms. Kuzdzal – AYE; Ms. Keegan – AYE; Mr. Avlas – AYE).

**3. Old Business**

a. Tercentenary Marker – Relocation Plans: Mr. Avlas provided an overview of the project to date noting the relocation efforts were approved by the Town and the State. Relocation to Memorial Beach is moving forward. The next step is to meet with Carole Marchand, Recreation Director to identify a location. Ms. Marchand has been administering a grant which provides funding for Beach improvements.

Mr. Cleaves reviewed why the Beach was the preferred location for the sign noting that these markers were typically installed in a historic site specific to the language on the sign. In addition the markers were used to direct people to specific sites. However, the Webster marker isn't site specific since the current location is a general location and that any number of locations around the Lake would have also been appropriate. The Webster marker doesn't lead people to an historic site. At the time the marker would have been visible to a people travelling along Thompson Road. Relocating the marker to the Beach, today, would be highly visible given the popularity of the Beach. It is also a better location in that people could view it without having to pull over to the side of busy road. Ms. Keegan asked for further clarification. Mr. Cleaves noted that at the time Thompson Road was a main thoroughfare as I-395 had not been built. The Praying Indian community, subject matter of the marker, moved around the Lake to various locations over time and that evidence suggests that the primary location was around and in the vicinity of the northern shores of the Lake.

Ms. Davies asked if anyone had reached out to Ms. Marchand. Mr. Avlas stated that he would contact her and that a field trip could be arranged after the Beach closes for the season. Ms. Keegan asked if the language on the sign would change as part of the relocation efforts to which the answer was no. Mr. Cleaves reviewed the process by which the sign could be restored noting that MassDOT has a program which restores these markers all over the State. He has spoken with MassDOT who approves the relocation efforts. The cost of restoring the sign is between \$13,000 to \$15,000 and possibly more if the current crack in the sign is problematic. Ms. Davies noted that the Commission would work to provide publicity for the project and that, once installed, several things could be done such as a rededication celebration and interpretive panels.

- b. World War II Volunteer Air Observation Station – Memorial Athletic Field. Mr. Avlas provided an overview of the project noting that efforts to restore or replace the structure are under the purview of the Webster Veteran's. He's discussed this with the Selectmen that agree that small investment should be pursued and that possibly Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School could be approached for doing the work. Mr. Avlas noted that there is a new director at the High School and that he hasn't had any contact with him yet about this project. Presently there are no funds for the project and that it is now up to the Town to allocate funding for labor and materials. Mr. Cleaves suggested that the Commission could apply for a grant through the Janet Malser Humanities Trust fund and to seek out other local grants. Ms. Davies asked about the costs. Mr. Avlas noted that the Building Commissioner, Ted Tetreault, had estimated the costs to be between \$10,00 and \$15,000. It was noted that there may be grants available through some of the Veteran's organizations. Mr. Avlas noted that he would reach out to the Veteran's Agent for more information.

#### **4. New Business**

- a. Preservation Plan: Review material from 6/26/21 Workshop, Set New Workshop Date: Mr. Avlas stated that the MHPP FY23 Survey and Planning Grant cycle will be opening up in September. Presently there are not local Town funds to pay for updating the survey and/or developing a preservation plan which is estimated to cost between \$30,000 to \$35,000. It was proposed that a Town Meeting warrant article be submitted to fund the costs. The Commission or the Town Administrator can submit such an article. Mr. Cleaves noted that, if approved at Town Meeting, the funds would be available which is a requirement for the grant application since the Commission has to demonstrate that funds have been approved. Mr. Avlas stated that he would discuss the matter with the Town Administrator. Ms. Davies noted that a key point in applying for the grant would be impacts to economic development since many of the historic buildings are located in the historic downtown. Mr.

Cleaves added that so many historic buildings have been demolished or are in a state of disrepair. Raising awareness with the business and property owners would be a benefit to preservation and economic development efforts. Ms. Davies noted that the Commission should strategize key talking points for Town Meeting. The Commission should also be prepared to present amendments to the article if needed.

Motion to authorize the Chairman to author a Town Meeting Warrant article and potential amendments made by Mr. Cleaves, seconded by Ms. Davies. Mr. Avlas asked if there were any further comments. There was no further discussion. Motion passed unanimously 5-0 by roll call vote (Mr. Cleaves – AYE; Ms. Davies – AYE; Ms. Kuzdzal – AYE; Ms. Keegan – AYE; Mr. Avlas – AYE).

- b. Archive Intern / Workshop: Mr. Avlas stated that this was originally suggested by Olivia Mason, past member of the Commission. Ms. Davies suggested that the Commission could partner with the Library which has a collection in the Local History Room which is being archived by the librarians. Mr. Cleaves noted that the problem was money and how to pay for an intern. He noted that many interns are in college for whom time and school commitments may be an issue. He suggested that a retired person with an interest in history may be interested. Ms. Keegan asked what the intern would do. Mr. Avlas suggested reaching out to Ms. Mason to better define the job. Mr. Avlas recommended that this item be placed on the agenda for the upcoming workshop.

Mr. Avlas asked the Commission if they would like to schedule a workshop to which all agreed. Some topics to consider are developing a preservation plan scope and whether to update the current survey. Mr. Cleaves noted that demolition delay by-laws can only be successful with community support which may be difficult. The Commission agreed to schedule a workshop for October 23, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**5. Next Meeting Date:** Tuesday, September 28, 2021 at noon via remote participation.

**6. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Davies, seconded by Mr. Cleaves. Motion passed unanimously, 5-0 by roll call vote (Mr. Cleaves – AYE; Ms. Davies – AYE; Ms. Kuzdzal – AYE; Ms. Keegan – AYE; Mr. Avlas – AYE). The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary

**EXHIBITS**

- None.

