

Heritage Commission

May 19, 2020

Final Minutes

Members Present: John Merkle, Chairman, Julie Gilman, Select Board, Pam Gjetlum, Jay Myers, Maura Fay

Call Meeting To Order: John Merkle, Chairman, called meeting to order at 7:00 pm via Zoom. John stated that an emergency exists and he is invoking the provisions of RSA 91-82, paragraph 3b. Federal, State and local officials have determined that gatherings of 10 or more people pose a substantial risk to the community in its continued efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. In concurring with this determination, he finds this meeting to be imperative to the continued operation of the town government services which are vital to public safety and competence during this emergency. Such as, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of its body physically present in the same location. All members introduced themselves.

First Business is the approval of the February 18, 2020 minutes. After discussion amongst the members and some corrections, John asked for a motion to accept the minutes. Pam made the motion to accept minutes as amended. Jay seconded. Julie stated that the commission needed to do a roll call vote. Each member was in agreement (Julie abstained as she was not at the meeting) and minutes were approved.

Next on the agenda is the discussion of Park/Cass Streets Heritage District. John stated that the commission had some momentum on this going forward several months ago and then kind of hit a wall. John replaced his laptop and it does not have a CD slot and he cannot load his software on for his scanning. He has materials with him that he needs to get to the members, but he is going to figure a way out to do it. He then stated that he did have some contact with Jennifer Goodman from NH Preservation Alliance Nadine Miller and they had some suggestions. John had a document that he showed the members and asked if they all had seen it. He stated it is a pretty nice document. He has other materials and some are descriptions of Heritage Districts. Liz Hengen who is the one of the authors and Jennifer Goodman of the Neighborhood, said that we may want to call it a Heritage Area instead of a Heritage District. Julie then asked if they could call it a Heritage Neighborhood. She stated this is how she mentions it at Select Board Meetings. John said he thinks this would be acceptable. The comments that they received back were it sounds too much like a Historic District and caused a lot of confusion. John stated again that he is going to get the material to the members. There is also a very good description of what the Heritage District and Historic District Commissions are. National Register Districts vs locally designated Historic Districts. He has a lot of this material that he is going to get to the commission members. He would then like some thoughts on how to proceed with this. He thought by this time, they might have been able to do some solicitation

and knock on neighbors doors again. Also, having some materials put together explaining what the commission was trying to do and trying to get some public support started. John said that they have lost at least two months of this process. He is looking for suggestions of how to revitalize it. Pam said they were thinking of going door to door and telling the residents that there was going to be a meeting on this, but now it cannot be done. Maura stated that she feels it is worthwhile to reach out to the people in the neighborhood even though there cannot be a meeting. She suggested perhaps drafting up a letter and sending one to everyone in the neighborhood saying here is something under consideration and are they interested in and have some contact information. John thinks this is a good idea and they could physically distribute them door to door like before. He said it has to be something the people can read and understand. Maura also stated that there is always e-mailing and she has addresses for some of the people in the neighborhood. Julie stated that there is no legal issue with using e-mails because it is just a distribution of information. She thinks the only issue would be that the information would have to be posted somewhere so everyone could get it. She feels that as long as everyone in the neighborhood feels included, it should work. Another thing the commission can decide is how we want to make a presentation. Perhaps door hangings or have something on our webpage telling why the commission is interested in their comments and questions. Then a virtual presentation can be done on the tv. Bob from IT added a comment. He mentioned this to Parks and Rec as well because IT often helps with broadcasting those public input sessions that would usually take place in the town hall. With this same web platform, if there was a way to contact the people and set something up, they could register. He then suggested perhaps a meeting with the residents and then do a powerpoint presentation and talk about it. It could also be recorded and put on line for the people who could not come to the meeting. Jay thanked Bob and said that he was going to voice his support for a meeting like this. He thinks it might be convenient for a lot of people to join in on the discussion and the media could be used to do the presentation. John asked Bob how the Planning Board and others have been handling the graphic presentations. Bob stated they use the chair screen function. He said it can be seen at the HDC Meeting this Thursday. With the shared screens, both the board and applicants and members of the public, if the board wishes, be allowed to share their screen.

Maura suggested they start with a draft explanatory letter and she also likes the idea of a door hanger referring people to a website so they would not have to necessarily have to mail out the whole letter and from there, developing a presentation. John said ok and how do we do this. Julie then asked which comes first, the door hanger or the presentation. John stated that he would think the door hanger. Maura also said the door hanger and a description on the website of what a Heritage Neighborhood is or could be. Then give some reference materials and announce there will be a presentation. Pam suggested that the material that John showed could be copied so the people would know what the commission is thinking about. Pam does not think they should e-mail. She stated that she does not open any unless she knows who it is from and she thinks there are a lot of people who are as paranoid. Maura said that she can e-mail people she knows directly in her neighborhood. John said that the last time they solicited the neighborhood, they tried to find out which ones were owned and occupied and which ones were rentals. He asked Jay if they were able to do this. Jay stated that they did not come to

any conclusion with that. Julie asked if any of the members went to the Tax Assessors Office. You can get the name and numbers of the properties. You can also look it up on the town website. John reminded the commission that when they solicited the neighborhood the first time, it was based on a smaller district. Now it includes Locust Street and parts of Main Street so there is more out there now. John said that he would be happy to put together a draft for the door hanger and distribute it to everyone for comments. He then asked if the commission could use the ZOOM venue to be like a committee instead of holding a public meeting to discuss things. Julie replied, yes and no. There can be a Heritage Commission Workshop where there is no decisions on anything, just working on a project. This would still have to be a public meeting and televised. The other option is to have sub-committees. Someone would still have to take minutes, but you would not have to be broadcast. John asked if he was to draft something up, could he e-mail it to the members for review. Julie stated that if the commission discusses something now and decide on an action, you can move forward with that action and then bring it back to the next meeting. Julie then said if they take a vote and all agree that you should work on the door hanger and this is an action the commission is asking you to do, then you can do it. Come back at the next meeting or call a special meeting so they do not have to wait a month. John suggested there could be three people on two different committees and they would be able to work together more quickly and then bring it to the monthly meeting for the whole board to look at. Julie said that would be less than a quorum so you would be free to meet and not just vote on the finished product. She suggested it could be broken up into who is going to present why this neighborhood. Who is going to present why this is different from a Historic District and who will do the part of what does a Heritage Neighborhood mean. They could each work on a different part and then at a regular meeting like this, see if it can all be put together. John then asked if they could put together a couple of sub-committees to do this and Julie stated they could. John said as far as the door hanger is concerned, they will have to look forward just to what they can expect will be coming. Julie said one of the things on the door hanger is they can create the link to DHRs document or download it to the town's website. Maura said that she does not have the time to decide what actually goes into the powerpoint, but once the outline is set and some information is put together, she will arrange it. She is volunteering for this part, if we tell her what to write. She will arrange it and make it look pretty and have it presented. John said this is a committee. Julie then said that this is one of the things the commission needs to vote on that they directed Maura to do this and this is just in case a cost occurs. John asked if he could make a suggestion that Jay, Pam and himself be the door hanger committee. Julie said that would be ok. John said this way they can talk freely without a quorum and bring it back to the full court for public approval. Julie wanted to remind people too that because they are dealing in this format, it is actually easier to meet for a special meeting rather than wait a month. Julie then moved to establish a sub-committee for Heritage Neighborhood door hanger populating it with Jay Myers, Pam Gjettum and John Merkle. Pam seconded. All were in favor after the roll call. John said they have to authorize Maura who really won't be doing too much now. Julie said they do not have this now. The reason she wanted it for the door hangers because that will have a cost. Right now as a volunteer, Maura will not be paid and there may not be a cost, so right now it is just an assignment that she has volunteered to do. John asked if anyone had anything else they wanted to add relative to the

Heritage District. John asked if they could add a link onto the town's website called The Heritage Area or The Heritage District telling what is going on and having that posted there where people can go to it. Julie thinks this is a good idea. John will send out an e-mail regarding the door hanger committee to keep everyone on track as to what they want to do with that. This can be done without a public meeting. He said it will be brought back to the full board and to the public. Julie thinks that even doing these small steps in these meetings, will bring some good attention. Julie will get the information about the cost for the door hangers. She will get this from Public Works. John again asked if there was anything else they wanted to talk about relative to the Heritage District. There was no more discussion.

Next is discussion on the American Independence Museum. John asked Julie if the event was going to be held this year. Julie said at this time, it has not been decided, but there will be something or things to replace it if it is cancelled. This changes the question that the museum was going to ask this body. At the time, they were interested in us helping pay for the militia on the parkway because that is the most expensive part of the festival. Julie said she wanted to bring the question here because she felt this was the appropriate body if the town is going to support a non-profit, the Heritage Commission was the right place to go because the museum is promoting our heritage. There is a Heritage Fund and right now it is just over \$5,000 and that is what the museum was asking for. She is not sure if they will still be asking for it yet. She wanted to get the members feelings on whether this was an appropriate thing to do. John asked where the commission wants to go with this. Julie said she thinks they need to wait on the decision to spend money because they don't know what the museum will be doing. It is a big revenue loss for them not to have the festival. Jay said that if there is a request, he will support it. The malissa is a big part of the festival in terms of the atmosphere and the enjoyment of bringing history to life. Pam was wondering how much they would be spending on the door hangers or anything else. She said the \$5,000 would wipe the commission out and Julie agreed. Julie thinks they have regular town budget money for the door hangers. Pam would love to support the festival because it is great. Maura thinks it makes sense for this body to support them. She suggested committing perhaps \$3,000 or \$4,000. John asked if one of the members wanted to make a recommendation about the intent of the Heritage Commission to financially support the Independence Museum. Julie stated that the commission does not have to do that yet until there is an application for it.

Next is the election of officers. Julie said the way this works is someone makes a nomination for an office and then everyone votes on it, if those people accept the position. Julie said that she cannot be chair, but thinks she could be vice chair and she cannot be Treasurer. Pam asked John how he feels about being chairman again. He said that he would like to see it spread around a little bit. Jay was asked, but he is chairing another committee in town with the church. He would like to maintain a supportive role here as vice chair. He thinks John is doing a fine job. John will take being chairman for another year if that helps. Julie said that when they do the Heritage Neighborhood presentation, hopefully more people will see what is done and why it is good and maybe get some volunteers for the commission. Maura is the Treasurer and is happy to continue this role. Pam will be the clerk. Julie made motion to appoint John Merkle as Chair of the commission, Jay Myers as Vice Chair of the commission, Pam Gjetum as Clerk of

the commission and Maura Fay as Treasurer of the commission for the year. All were in favor via roll call and officers were elected.

John asked if there was any other business and Julie said to come to the Ioka Meeting on Thursday. It is the HDC Meeting. Julie said that Bob said the drawings will be on display and they are already on the website. John asked if this has gone through any town processes yet. Julie said they are going to the Planning Board, but she does not know when.

With no further business, Julie made a motion to adjourn. Maura seconded. All were in favor and meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary