

Heritage Commission

December 15, 2020

Final Minutes

Members Present; John Merkle, Chairman, Jay Myers, Vice Chair, Maura Fay, Treasurer, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep., Pam Gjettum, HDC Rep., Bill Campbell, John Grueter, Planning Board Rep.

John Merkle, Chairman, called meeting to order at 12:30 pm via ZOOM.

John asked the members if they all had an opportunity to read the minutes of November 17th and they did and had a few corrections. Julie made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Pam seconded. All were in favor and minutes approved.

Next on the agenda is the Black Heritage Pocket Park. John asked Maura if there has been any development on this. Maura said they met on November 30th. They are going through the idea of a public presentation with some initial ideas of what the focus of the park should be. They had a pretty extensive conversation about what exactly they are trying to say with this park and how they are trying to say it. Also, how much of the black history of Exeter can they hope to represent. Out of this discussion, they thought it would be good to try and get in touch with the fellow Renee knows by the name of Richard Haynes who is a local artist and maybe have a conversation with him about some potentials for creating some sort of art work. This could sort of go hand in hand maybe with a historical explanatory panel. With that said, they were hoping to have that sometime around the end January. Maybe have a little public presentation and allow for some public comments and share what they have talked about as a group so far. There was also a discussion about there being three basic themes or eras. The initial settlement era was when there were enslaved people living in Exeter. Once slavery was abolished in New Hampshire after the Revolutionary War, there was a little bit of a flourishing of a black community. What activities and employment they were able to access was still quite limited. There was more opportunity for them up until about maybe the mid 1800s. They talked about those three time periods and how to represent that and talk about that in an informational way as well as an artistic way as well. Pam asked if they talked anymore about where this is going to be. Maura said she thinks Renee is still talking with the Swasey Trustees because they are also in the process of deciding when to do a master plan for the entire park. She said it is looking more and more like it will be ok to have it in that initial section of the park where the commission has been talking about it. There are no final decisions at this point. Julie asked if anyone has thought about the blue plaque they did for the dam mediation. Maura said that definitely has been talked about and they have also talked about this not just being one location. Maybe having several blue plaques in places around town potentially that have some connection to the black history of Exeter. John thanked Maura for the nice update.

John then thanked Maura for preparing the questions, suggestions and answers. She said she did not get very far, but made a small start. John said he also appreciates the comments from Bill and Jay and wanted to know if they could talk about it for a little bit. Maura said that would be great and she could do some editing while they are talking. She shared her screen for the members to see and follow along. She showed the document so far. Jay had just added a few additional questions to respond to at the bottom. They started at the top of the document. How is this different from a Historic District? John said he thinks it is a pretty concise response rather than getting into a technical, lengthy explanation. He thinks this does it the right way. Maura said she did not think they needed to get into too much detail. Bill said he thought that was good too. John Grueter asked if there was a one sentence definition for each of those, Historic and Heritage. He said he thinks a little more detail would be helpful. Julie said it might be as simple as instead of using specifics, using regulatory. Pam said she thought that would be good. Maura asked how everyone felt about adding a definition of Historic District and Heritage District or do we do that in a separate section. Pam said she likes it the way Maura has it. When you start to define a Historic District, you will have a whole paragraph and that will be too much. Julie agreed and John Grueter said someone is going to ask though. Maura said that is why maybe they would put it somewhere else and not in that question. Jay said that he likes the definition somewhere. Maura will put it under Jay's question so they can add to that. Julie said it might be under the next paragraph where it talks about boundaries because the Historic District boundaries are voted on by the whole town. Bill asked if you put the definitions in, do you need the first question and he likes the first question the way it was. Perhaps if they were at the bottom it would be ok. Maura suggested a little chart, a compare and contrast, like Historic District this, Heritage District so that people can see line by line. Jay said he likes that and it is an interesting idea. John Merkle said they have what was part of the materials provided by The Preservation Alliance and they could refer to that because it says it very precisely. Maura said they should probably call it a Heritage Neighborhood. All agreed. John Merkle said they may want to introduce something like it as a handout at some point. Bill asked if the committee membership was limited to people in the district or can anybody be on it. Maura said that her understanding is that anyone can be on it, but she thinks they had said there would be a preference obviously for people from within the neighborhood on it. Jay said Maura changed it to Heritage Neighborhood and he wanted to ask if they should be cautious because in the earlier publication it was referred to as The Neighborhood Heritage District. All agreed that they would leave it as The Neighborhood Heritage District to stay consistent. Bill said calling it a neighborhood makes it even more distinctive than from a district in the first paragraph. Jay asked if they should try to separate language here so there is less confusion. He thinks they would agree to a name change. Maura said she knows they talked a few months ago about trying to use the language of Heritage Neighborhood rather than Heritage District to hopefully alleviate some of the confusion, but in the end, we ended up calling it this. Do we keep that or do we change it now? Julie said she would like to change it to Heritage Neighborhood. John Merkle said that was actually a recommendation from the author of some of the documents to change it to a Heritage Neighborhood to avoid confusion. Maura said, then let's do that now rather than later. Julie said when they do the public meeting are they going to be sharing a screen or doing something like this. Pam said they would have to. Julie also said that they could do another mailer because they have money for that. It would just show the

boundary and the chart they wanted to talk about. She is just throwing this out as an idea so that people know they are referring to. Bill said that he thinks it should be short, like one page. Jay and others agreed. John Merkle asked if they were planning on distributing this exactly. Maura said she thinks that was the intent, that they could have a mailer that would go out to the same households that received the postcards. John Merkle said it could be a mailer or another postcard and then do a little bit more extensive stuff on a site on the town website that you could direct them to and they could see things and read things. Maybe two or three pages long. Maura said why don't we get through some more questions and answers and then decide how best to structure whatever will be sent out and what they save for another presentation. John Merkle said yes and the other members all agreed. Julie said in the end, the neighborhood is adopted by the Planning Board, correct and the regulations are also approved by the Planning Board? John Merkle said yes and there is a two phase process that very early on there is a meeting of the neighborhood to engage the Planning Board but it is not until the actual Planning Board accepts the preliminary plan and it goes to the town to be voted on. Afterwards the Neighborhood Advisory Committee presents the final plan, rules and regulations to the Planning Board for approval. Julie said so the regulations will be determined by the neighborhood committee and will present it to the Planning Board. They then moved on to Jay's questions. Jay said these were questions that he had in his notes that some of the property owners had asked during the public hearing. Maura said she only has five or six minutes left before she needs to leave and she asked if they should pause on finishing this up and asked John if he wanted to move on to some other agenda items.

John Merkle said he did not have the budget written down. He asked Julie if they were ok with that. Julie said the budget is pretty much set and she can still add or subtract from it, but they did not get a Letter Of Intent in on time to the Division Of Historical Resources so there will not be any grants coming to this commission or the HDC. John said that was his second question. He would like Maura to participate in the demolition question under Other Business. Now, let's make a way to proceed in the next step of this before they get out of it. Maura said the last couple of questions are around financial incentives. She asked Julie, John or Pam if they had any information about this, to send her an email and she can add it. John asked Maura to forward Jay's questions to everyone so they can put a comment on the ones they have not addressed yet.

Other Business: John Merkle said it was noted by Maura that the barn on 20 Cass Street was removed. There is an excavation for something to replace it. He went back in his records and all he had was a draft letter that was never sent out. In talking with Doug Eastman, apparently he had two other computers prior to the new laptop and some things did not get translated or saved. He said they did respond back to Doug in May of 2015 that we agreed to allow them to remove the front porch and the two bay windows. We did tell them we wanted 30 days to document the barn and have a public hearing, which we never did. Julie said that they represented to the commission that they were going to keep the barn, but move it back so that they would have more room in the driveway. John said he remembers talking with the woman after he wrote the letter and did not send it. Apparently, Doug has a letter from us in his file that we agreed to demolish what was in the front of the house and even the connecting piece. The

barn we said was contributing historically to the neighborhood. To make a long story short, about a year ago in 2019 during a windstorm, a large pine tree blew down and crushed a part of the barn and Doug got in touch with the owner and asked what they were going to do. Repair it or take it down. She never got back to him. His recommendation would have been to demolish it because it was so severely damaged. There is nothing to be done about this at this point.

Julie wanted to speak to John and Bill about 110 High Street. She said the HDC is considering this property on Thursday. There is a purchase and sales agreement between the hospital and Exeter Med Realty and a business that is fairly new. It is two men who have each restored properties on their own before. The paperwork she got looks like the only thing they want to demolish is the porch that is on the backside that you cannot see. Bill said he has seen the paperwork too. They want to replace everything in kind and they are going to be dealing with the interior. They want to renovate the whole thing. The one question Julie had was that they are keeping the bay window that is hanging off the front. She does not think it is original to the house and she thinks it might be something she speaks about at the HDC meeting. Bill said it would be worth raising the question because he wondered about that too.

With no further business, John made a motion to adjourn. Julie said so moved. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary