

Heritage Commission

April 20, 2021

Draft Minutes

Members Present: John Merkle, Chairman, Bill Campbell, Jay Myers, Vice Chair, Pam Gjettem, Maura Fay, Treasurer, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep

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

Business: Approval of March 16, 2021 meeting minutes. John asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the minutes of March 16<sup>th</sup>. Bill had one correction. With no other corrections, John entertained a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Bill said so moved. Pam seconded. All were in favor except for Julie and Pam who abstained.

Next on the agenda is the Black Heritage Pocket Park. Maura said there were no updates at this time. She said Renee has been speaking with the select board and she is still working on some time line stuff around Swasey Park's decision to allow vehicles or not and PEA's plan with the DTC Building that may impact what the park ends up looking like.

Next is the continued discussion of Park/Cass Streets Neighborhood Heritage Area. John said that Maura has been actively trying to get things moving. John said he thinks it has been encouraging, but there are still a lot of concerns and confusion.

Maura said they have had a couple of meetings now with the folks who said they were interested in being part of the committee to pull together some guidelines. She thinks they are making some progress. She feels like they have taken a couple of good steps. As a group, they decided to look at the draft guidelines that are provided in the DHR Handbook. There are two sections mainly that deal with the actual guidelines. The whole model proposal includes opening information about the neighborhood. Why it is important, what the history of the neighborhood is. There are two main parts that deal directly with the guidelines that she suggested they all discuss as a group. What they decided to do as of their meeting last week was to put together a survey with eight potential regulations that could be included.

Bill asked if there was any thought of having a group going out and talking to other people to get some sort of idea of what kind of document you want to come up with. Sometimes going face to face is better than just going email.

Maura said that was brought up and it did sound like people were interested in just checking in with their neighbors that they know very well and saying this is what it is about.

Pam said last October, or whenever it was, there were two or three people who seemed to be definitely against it. Do you think we could go to them specifically and say here are the eight things and how do you feel about this.

Maura said she thinks this is a great idea. A couple of the folks who were really concerned about it are actually on the sub-committee and that is a help. She thinks Pam is right. Of the handful of folks that have serious concerns, she thinks it would be great to approach them specifically and say, here is what we are thinking about. How does this feel to you.

John said he thinks that some of the people who have had strong objections are actually now thinking about how this might work.

Jay asked Maura who are the people you have been meeting with. Maura said the people who are interested in being involved are Janelle and Joel Schander, Carol Waters, Esther Olson Murphy who lives off of Oak Street and Ann Kenny who lives on Walnut Street. She said they both sides of the neighborhood represented which she thinks is nice. She said basically everyone who said they wanted to be involved, is involved.

Julie said she has a question about the communication and she thinks it was from Janelle with all the questions about the Planning Board interaction and the scheduling of things. She said she can see the concern in them and timing wise it is a layer that the folks in the neighborhood are not used to. The Planning Board can give us a certain amount of leeway, but it all still has to go back to them for approval. She thinks it is going to be a struggle to get used to the first couple of times somebody tries to do something. Julie then asked if the commission has actually talked to the Planning Board yet because she cannot remember.

Maura said she knows that John Grueter who is the Planning Board Rep., has been involved in many of these discussions, but she does not know if they have talked to the Planning Board as a whole.

John said that they have not. Julie said they should do this sooner, rather than later. It might be that they just don't want to take this on and what if that happens.

Pam said they need John Grueter to talk to the Planning Board about this and maybe some of the commission members go at that time too.

Maura said what makes sense for a timeline is to try and get this neighborhood survey out and done and tabulated so they do know whether people are interested in it and then at that point, try and get on the schedule for the Planning Board a few months later.

John said that he would welcome some representation from Cass Street. Maura said she thinks that would be wonderful.

John then said that he has a question about the demolition part of it. Is there a conflict of what we have already in our Zoning Ordinance that the Heritage Commission already does this demo piece? Maura said she is not sure. She thinks this might supersede the Heritage Commission review, but she honestly does not know.

Maura said this is the part that she is not sure John was there for or not. One of the things they were talking about that would be helpful is getting a legal review on how this would duck tail with Zoning Board, Planning Board, Heritage so that they can all understand which powers this group could have and which powers it would not have. This is a question that would be good to know.

Julie said this could be something that is written into the plan of what the powers or issues that the neighborhood area is part of and just refer from there to the Heritage Commission. The Heritage Commission has a very short time frame to react to things so it should not hold up the process of other things that are going along. She thinks this is the easiest thing to do rather than have demolition reviews. Julie said she will also see about getting legal representation.

Eileen Flockhart spoke. She had a question about the demolition situation. The Heritage Commission is charged with noticing that and alerting somebody. Whether it is the Heritage Commission or the neighborhood group, what kind of muscle or power would either group have? Once they are notified that something is going to be torn down and the neighborhood does not like it, who can do anything about it.

Julie said the advisory. The biggest thing the Heritage Commission can do is call a public hearing if we feel a demolition is out of place or how it effects the heritage of the town. Then we can hold a public hearing and get the input from the neighbors. We have thirty days to act on that but it does not have to take thirty days. The Heritage Commission just advises the Planning Board or the Zoning Board and the neighborhood area committee would also be advisory.

John asked if there were any more questions from the visitors and there were not.

John said at 110 High Street, it looks like there is a lot of progress on it now. Bill said they are doing well.

Julie said there is a piece of legislation that has made it through the House and Senate now that she worked with Pat O'brany on. Municipalized owned property if the Select Board wants to in any way get rid of, sell, or demolish, they would get advice from the Planning Board, Heritage Commission, Conservation Commission and the Heritage District Commission if necessary. There have been a couple of cases, one in Stratham and one in Rye where town buildings were just demolished. Having these boards and commissions making a decision about how to treat a property or building, lets them get some advice.

With no further business, Pam made a motion to adjourn. Bill seconded. All were in favor and meeting adjourned at 1:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick

Recording Secretary