

Heritage Commission

Draft Minutes

June 15, 2021

Members Present: Jay Myers, Chairman, Julie Gilman, Select Board Rep., Pam Gjettum, Bill Campbell, Maura Fay, Treasurer

Call Meeting To Order: Jay Myers, Chairman, called meeting to order at 12:30 pm in the Wheelwright Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

Jay mentioned that there is the opportunity to have a hybrid model. Julie said the Select Board is looking at that and trying it out next Monday. Julie said the other thing that can happen is if someone is traveling, they can call in electronically as long as there is a quorum of people present in a room wherever they do the public notice.

Jay asked if this would be hybrid or is there a live option too. Julie said it would be the live option where the public would zoom in.

Michael Dube came into the meeting and asked if it was open to the public. All the members said absolutely.

Business: Approval of May 18, 2021 meeting minutes. After everyone reviewing and 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 update. Maura said there is a little update. This Saturday at the Music Feast, Renay is pulling together a group to sit in the location, have a bit of a display and Parks and Recreation will help by putting temporary benches out. She thinks Renay has a couple of posters printed with some very rough draft stuff. The plan is to just be there and answer questions for folks.

Jay asked if there were any more questions or comments about the Black Heritage Park and there were none. He asked if there was anything as a representative of the Heritage Commission or anything the commission should consider thinking about as this moves forward? Maura said she thinks the biggest question right now is the issue of the DTC Building and the potential for access or lack of access through that side of the park. Also, the issue of what the plan is for Swasey moving forward and whether it stays closed to traffic or not.

Julie said, as to closing the parkway, that is a discussion the board is going to discuss. The way the trust was set up was that the parkway would be open for pleasure vehicles. The board is still checking into whether or not that means skateboards and if that applies and cars do not anymore.

The next topic is discussion on the Park/Cass Neighborhood Heritage Area. Maura said that over the last couple of months, we pulled together a group of people from the neighborhood who said they were interested in discussing what to do and whether to move forward with the project. She said they decided as a group they decided to survey the neighborhood and they met several times to develop the survey. It was sent out a couple of weeks ago. On the online survey, there is a paper option available. Group response as of last night, there are 78. Maura then read the questions they asked on the survey. Maura said what she did for the first question about requiring permission to demolish a house because this is kind of a major thing that we have all talked about, she broke it down street by street.

One of the things that the group had requested when they did the survey was to enlarge the survey area.

Maura said she thinks that if we narrow it down to people who did seem to be in favor it would look better and that is why she wanted to show the breakdown street by street. One of the areas that she did not get much response from was Cass and Green. Maybe this just gets dropped for now. She said it is a flexible document and if it does move forward, it could be a smaller area initially.

Bill said one of the comments that was striking to him was that the creation of this would allow for input and to be neighborly or something like that and to allow the homes to bring up discussion or whatnot rather than worrying about whether the windows are right. This might get the neighbors to discuss what they really wanted.

Jay said this was some really good work and very informative. He said the response rate was impressive. Maura said she was really pleased with the responses.

Pam said there is a person here from the public and she thinks this is what he came for. Mr. Dube said he certainly wanted to observe this portion of the meeting. He lives on 27 Park Street, although his house is not within the boundaries of the contemplated Heritage Area.

Jay said that Michael reached out to the Heritage Commission and I responded. He said they had a pleasant conversation about what we were doing and what was currently being done. Maura was talking about the boundaries and that was the main interest that Michael wanted to express in our conversation. He is on the border and likes it that way.

Jay said his thoughts and impressions on the comment, certainly there is a great deal of interest and passion for the residents of this area and why they live there. There is consensus as to why they live there. It has a neighborhood feel, it has small property sizes, it is affordable, the kids are playing in the street, little traffic, close to town. All the things people would look for to live in that particular area. He also got the impression that demolition is an issue, but let's not create a bunch of rules around the current structure of the property. From the Heritage Commission, this is what we are really talking about when we talk about demolition and not having oversight. We do not have a strong decision making process and it becomes public in this course, but in the end if somebody wanted to bring a property down that is about it right now.

Julie then said that this would get the Planning Board to listen to us. She said she likes a lot of the questions that were asked and the responses were informative but there are also things that come across sitting on the Historic District Commission. It makes her wonder if it would be good for the Heritage Commission to put together some more informational presentations about preserving windows. The return on investment of replacing old windows with new ones is quite small. She said looking at these responses, she is agreeing that the demolition part is the one that seems to be the most important to people.

Bill thinks to draft a not too detailed but a general philosophy of we like this neighborhood and we would like to keep it that way. Maybe having the demolition being one of the only things they would meet on and not worry about meeting on someone's windows.

Jay asked if the committee had a chance to evaluate the survey. Maura said she just finished tabulating things last night and sent it out to everyone and she doesn't know how much time they have had to review it.

Maura then said that the challenge of trying to build this plan is that the structure that is provided by DHR is very flexible. She thinks this is a good thing and also a drawback because it puts people at a point of this could be anything. It also means it is very flexible and it could just be demolition. All of the questions Maura took from the suggested subsections. The model plan that they have put together is good in its flexibility because they could submit a plan that has two things. She thinks one of the other elements of it is to create a little narrative of the neighborhood, which a lot can be taken from the survey that was done.

Joel Saunders joined the meeting. Maura said he has been working on the survey.

Maura said she thinks the next step would be just focusing on the demolition part. Coming up with some draft language and trying to structure the boundaries.

Jay just wanted to make note too that he is not aware that the Tavern property was on the original mailing list at the corner of Park and Cass. This property should be on the mailing list,

Next is Section 106 request for comment on Newsfields Road culvert replacement. Jay wanted to update everyone that he did contact the individual. It was relative to the letter John shared last time. Jay said he emailed him to let him know that he is now chair and they would talk about any necessary input related to this. Jay will share the letter with the members and they can decide what to do if anything.

Other Business:

Jay asked the members if meeting at 12:30 pm still works for them. Everyone agreed that it would work .

Jay then asked if they would go with a hybrid model.

Maura said if it can be hybrid, some are allowed to participate remotely. Even if she was not in town and out and about, she could still participate. Bill said they would just need to have a quorum here.

The members decided to still meet monthly. Some will be away part of July so the next meeting will be in August.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Herrick
Recording Secretary