



Town of Deerfield
Historical Commission
MUNICIPAL OFFICES
8 CONWAY STREET
SOUTH DEERFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 01373

Minutes of DHC Meeting

January 19, 2010

Members present: Henrietta Kocot, Chair; Edie Lipp, Clerk; Pat Potter, Jane Trigère

Guests: Shirley Majewski and Marilyn McArthur

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:37 P.M. by Chair, Henrietta Kocot who introduced the guests and DHC members. The minutes of the January 12, 2010 DHC meeting were reviewed and accepted by consensus.

2. Old Business

- **LETTER:** A thank you letter was approved to Mary Lou Fortier for her gift of news clippings and photos in memory of Gerald Fortier, her husband. How to accept and preserve such gifts needs to be discussed at a future DHC meeting.
- **PVMA:** Shirl cited the vast PVMA resources and expressed concerns about the ability of the town or DHC to evaluate and preserve items donated. Shirl also mentioned PVMA sources the DHC might look into: records from Les Thomas about houses in Deerfield, photos of houses taken by authors McGowen and Miller, and books available for loan to Deerfield residents through Historic Deerfield.
- **BUDGET:** The DHC 2010 budget request was reviewed and accepted by consensus. It will be submitted immediately to the Select Board via Bernie Kubiak.
- **TOWN CLOCK:** Edie reported the CPC asked the DHC to find out more information about the town clock in the South Deerfield Congregational Church. Edie will research preservation standards and see if the town or the church have any church records, including the Centennial History of the church. Jane will get contact information on the clock repair person and see if he has information on the date and maker of the clock. Pat will check books on New England clocks in the PVMA library to find information on the history of town clocks in Massachusetts towns. Shirl said she would check PVMA records for information about the Deerfield clock and email Edie if she finds pertinent references.
- **CPA APPLICATION HEARING:** In preparation for the February open hearing presenting CPA Applications for public discussion, the DHC brainstormed questions we might be asked, and we discussed presentation ideas.

One potential question is: Why spend money on the Sugarloaf Street Cemetery?
Potential answers include: (a) It's the oldest cemetery in South Deerfield and part of

an historically important area of town that is at risk. A Deerfield preservation study done in 1990 cited the area around the town common as an area of historical importance; we've already lost historic structures in that area. (b) It's a matter of preserving local heritage (c) As our town Memorial Day celebrations show, honoring our historic gravesites is a way we show respect (d) It's a place where classes visit, students learn. Jane emphasized that people will be drawn in best by keeping the presentation accessible, with a focus on preserving memories and culture rather than on more scholarly explanations. Marilyn said – in reference to the whole town common area - that the past shows us what happened there, and it also suggests what we WANT to happen there.

We discussed having one presenter and the rest of the DHC together to answer questions. We discussed a Power Point presentation, which Edie said she would be willing to work on. Photos could include the Memorial Day parade ceremonies, students at the cemetery, gravestone shots, perhaps a photo from another town where a cemetery and town common create a focus for the town.

Edie said the CPC has cautioned us that there will be hard questions, and some people will want financial facts, especially about matching funds. We agreed to immediately begin the matching fund search so we can report that funding research for the second phase of the Sugarloaf Street Cemetery Project is in progress. Edie said she'll find out from the CPC how much time we'll have for our presentation.

Henrietta agreed to find Michele Barker's recommendations of websites to search. She will assign each of us at least one site to explore for grant opportunities. Jane will email Edie photos she thinks would be good for a Power Point presentation. Everyone agreed to (a) search our assigned sites (b) read the CPA Application carefully so we speak in one voice (c) brainstorm any more tough questions we might be asked and email them to each other for discussion at our next meeting.

- **TIMING OF VOLUNTEER GRAVESTONE CLEANING AT SUGARLOAF STREET CEMETERY:** Edie raised the question of whether volunteer gravestone cleaning at the Sugarloaf Street Cemetery should be postponed until fall 2010, after we know if the CPA funding for restoration will come through. In seeking additional estimates on the gravestone restoration, she discovered differences of opinion about cleaning materials, and she thought it would be good to do student and volunteer trainings and workdays after the Selectboard chose the company that would do the restoration work. That company could guide our efforts.

Jane was concerned that time would be wasted if we didn't work in the spring, especially cleaning up cemetery grounds and protecting broken stones. Everyone agreed those were two important steps to take. Jane said she felt comfortable with the gravestone cleaning recommendations given by the Association of Gravestone Studies in Greenfield, a group with a national reputation. Edie said that Monument Conservation Collaborative - source of our second CPA Application estimate – also has a national reputation, but perhaps different methods. Ultimately – if the Sugarloaf Street Cemetery project is funded - the Selectboard must decide what approach (there may be others) to choose.

Edie moved that we postpone the training of students and volunteers, and that we conduct gravestone cleaning at the Sugarloaf Street Cemetery in the fall of 2010. Henrietta seconded the motion. Henrietta, Edie, and Pat voted in favor of postponement. Jane abstained.

- ORAL HISTORY PROJECT: Jane showed samples of a release form, a volunteer form, a donation form, a Story Corps question list, and a resource list – materials gleaned from oral history work she has done. She suggested that she conduct an oral history workshop for volunteers (e.g. high school students and their teachers). These are the points she outlined for the workshops
 - Establish the purpose/goals of the interviews (a family oral history will differ from an oral history pertaining to a town, a church, or a military history)
 - Discuss physical aspects of an interview: seating, equipment
 - Discuss the final product: audio, video, notes, photos and their care
 - Discuss process: how to start – set the scene so it's in the media
 - Discuss interview and listening skills: role play and mock interviews where the instructor makes mistakes to show the process; talk about making question lists and when to adhere to them, when to go with a good story thread
 - Discuss technical matters: electronics can trip you up; go with a second person who can handle the mechanics
 - Emphasize the importance of interviewers doing their homework: researching the historical period being discussed, doing a pre-interview where you get “the lay of the land” and get statistical questions done
 - Important question: What language was spoken at home? Any songs they sang? Evoke those memories.

Pat mentioned that Marty McGuane at the public TV station is eager for interviews. He would be interested too in interviewing the DHC about the work we are doing.

We clarified that the intent of the oral history project is to focus right now on older Deerfield residents, especially those who have lived long in the town. We discussed our hope to have adult volunteers as interviewers, as well as students who might interview elder family members.

Further discussion on the topic of the oral history initiative will come in future meetings where we will define the project's intent and outcomes as well as process and legal matters.

3. New Business

- We looked briefly at the draft of the DHC write-up for the town's Annual Report. Not everyone had had a chance to read the draft, so we postponed discussion until the next meeting. The write-up is due to Kayce around the third week in February.

4. At 9:05 PM, Edie made a motion and Henrietta seconded it that the meeting be adjourned. The next meeting of the DHC is February 9 at 6:30 in the Town Offices.

Respectfully submitted,

Edie Lipp, Clerk
Deerfield Historical Commission