

Minutes
(Note: includes edits voted at review of minutes at May 2 meeting)
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission
February 29, 2016
Dining Room
Claire Teague Senior Center
917 Main St.
Great Barrington, MA 01230

ATTENDING:

- *Members:* Malcolm Fick, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, David Rutstein

MINUTES OF JANUARY 11, 2016

- On a motion by Malcolm and second by David the Minutes of January 11, 2016 passed unanimously.

DEMOLITION DELAY BYLAW PROPOSAL

- Paul thanked Malcolm for his initiative and good work on this project.
- Malcolm reported that the Town Manager and Select Board chair are reviewing a revised version of the bylaw. The new draft replaces the review criteria of a 50-year-old cutoff date for all buildings with just those structures listed on various National Register and local inventories and contiguous to historic districts. He noted that such towns as Lexington, Acton and Hingham use the inventory as the official measure to determine if a structure is a "Significant Building."
- Generally, the procedure follows a prescribed sequence: owner files a demolition permit request to the Building Inspector; BI forwards copy to the HC; at least one HC member makes determination if building is significant; if not significant, BI can issue the permit; if significant, no issuance of the permit; HC holds public hearing and decides if building should be "preferably preserved" (in the public interest to be preserved); if the HC decides it shouldn't be *preferably preserved* the BI can issue the demo permit; if the building is declared *preferably preserved*, no demo permit can be issued for 12 months; owner, HC and other interested parties seek alternatives to demolition during the delay period; BI issues building permit or demo permit when HC notifies BI that the intent and purpose of the bylaw has been served.
- The initiative is still on the Town Hall table and there's still sufficient time to include the measure on the town meeting warrant.

DOCUMENTATION OF SEARLES HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

- The Select Board issued a permit to 79 Bridge St. Realty to develop a hotel on the Searles property and within the original building. The Annex and auditorium will be razed and the 1938 version of the hyphens in the 1898 structure will be demolished and rebuilt. The town's special permit specified that the owner will give access to the GBHC to document the building before work begins.
- The two principal means to preserve the memory of a structure are through documentary photography and rescuing artifacts for deposit in the town historical collection. The members, along with David Carpenter, representing 79 Bridge St Realty, discussed "Notes on Documentation of Searles H.S. Buildings Through Rescue of Artifacts [and] Photography," prepared by Paul to provide preliminary guidance for this initiative.
- Referring to some of the artifacts on the list, David Carpenter stated that they haven't thought about the bronze lettering on the upper front facade of the gym nor have they decided about the disposition of the scoreboard, which may be installed in the Conference Center. He also stated that there is no lettering on the gym floor.
- Bill Nappo has been hired by the owner to help remove building parts that are to be saved and/or reinstalled. He is checking with the state Ethics Commission about the propriety of this employment.
- David Carpenter said that the detailed timeline for the project is not known at this time.
- The steps for the documentation are:
 - David e-mails Paul to notify when the owner is ready
 - Paul sets date convenient with owner and HC members
 - Photography should include images of representative spaces and key features; not every square inch.
- Gary reported that the Wikipedia entry for Searles H.S. contains lots of misinformation. David will fact check and insert corrections.

COLLECTIONS

- Ramsdell NEH/NEDCC Initiative: Gary and archivist Margaret Cherin have been focusing on the crucial need to stabilize the environment in the Ramsdell second floor as a principal means to preserve the collections stored there. Margaret has prepared a plan with measures that contribute to this end. A major part of her proposal is the completion of a "preservation needs assessment" by the Northeast Document Conservation Center (Andover, MA). Their report includes an evaluation of existing conditions and practical measures to improve the environment and care of the collections. In addition to the practical advantages of the assessment, it also serves as a certified documentation for proposals for government grants and private foundations to implement the recommendations. Specifically, Margaret plans to apply to NEH for a grant to fund the NEDCC visit. The deadline is in May 2016. The application would be a joint proposal of the HC, GBHS and Ramsdell Library. Amanda has been very supportive of our plans and initiatives.

Malcolm recommended application to the CPC for project funds. The next round starts in September. He felt that a bona fide assurance that the Commission and Society will be allowed long term use of the second floor would be crucial to a successful application. He reminded the Commission that over the recent past some members of the library board have not been supportive of use of the space for museum operations.. He also noted that any plans or recommendations should be ADA compliant.

- Loan Request from Sheffield Historical Society SHS has requested the loan of section(s) of trolley rails, the GBHC rescued during the Main Street reconstruction project last year, for inclusion in their exhibition about the Berkshire Street Railway, to be mounted in the Old Stone Store. On a motion by Malcolm and second by Paul the motion to approve of the loan for an approximate one month duration passed unanimously.

NEWSBOY PROJECT PLANNING AND TIMELINE

- Members reviewed the "Newsboy Conservation Project Timeline and Tasks" outline sheet. Paul reported that to date all tasks have been completed on schedule. Important next steps are:
 - Completing the preparation and signing of the contract with Daedalus and clarifying their schedule.
 - The preliminary meeting with the conservators to coordinate their work with the town, Gilmore Heating and Plumbing and the media. We also need to ask about their need for a power source.
 - The writing and publication of the brochure about the Newsboy's history and illustrated with period images and details of its features. Gary is completing this project component.
 - Holding a public event to introduce the newly treated statue and working fountain and Gary's brochure. A specific date for this event needs to be set, probably a Saturday during September or October. If the latter, Columbus Day weekend would be a good possibility. The event should be a joint meeting with the GBHS and include a short talk about the fountain's history and details and the distribution of the brochure. Bill is working on this part of the project.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION SURVEY AND PLANNING GRANT

- Paul reported that we are scheduled to be notified of the result on March 19.
- If approved, MHC scheduling provides for a September start date. They also prescribe a protocol of phases, meetings and deadlines.

GREAT BARRINGTON MANUFACTURING CO. SMOKESTACK AND WHISTLE

- Smokestack: Over the past few years the GBHC has been encouraging the CDC to preserve the smokestack, the only extant construction of the Great Barrington Manufacturing Co. factory and office building, as an historic ruin and a means to interpret an important component of the town's industrial past and the "Brooklyn" neighborhood. For budgetary reasons and safety concerns the CDC saved only the lower section of the stack and part of its base structure. Paul expressed concern that the CDC will dismantle all or a majority of the ruin in favor of some kind of commemorative plaque. He felt that its presence should be maintained as the focus of a small park and accompanied by an interpretive sign that explains what it is and how it connects to local history. It would be a unique feature that could add to the historic texture of the CDC's mixed use development plans for the site. The

Commission agreed that Paul should maintain contact with the CDC to encourage its preservation *in situ* and integration into the landscaping as an interpretive feature.

- Whistle: Dr. Hassett possessed the whistle from the Great Barrington Manufacturing Co. that would be broadcast to indicate start and finish of work hours. Paul had talked to him about depositing it in the town museum collection, a proposal to which he had seemed amenable. Since Dr. Hassett has died, it would be important to locate its whereabouts and seek its donation to the town. His son, Pat Hassett, who Paul believes lives in Pittsburgh, should be contacted about this matter. David will ask Dr. Hassett's daughter, Mimi, who works at the Senior Center, of her knowledge of the whistle's whereabouts.

CITIZENS' SPEAK

- No participants

OTHER BUSINESS

- Main Street Tagging: Gary reported that the Lee Bank and another building have been tagged.

NEXT MEETING

- Monday May 2 at a place to be announced

ADJOURN

- Motion made, seconded and passed unanimously.