

Minutes
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission
May 2, 2016, 7:00pm
Great Barrington Historical Society
Wheeler House
817 South Main Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230

ATTENDING:

- *Members:* Malcolm Fick, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, Bill Nappo, David Rutstein

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 29, 2016

- Documentation of Searles High School Building (para. 1): David noted that the hyphens are not "original," rather a 1938 modification to the design which removed the inset configuration of the exterior wall planes. The sentence should read: ". . . and the 1938 version of the hyphens . . ."
- Great Barrington Manufacturing Co. Smokestack and Whistle: The following sentence should be added to the end of the paragraph: "David will ask Dr. Hassett's daughter, Mimi, who works at the Senior Center, of her knowledge of the whistle's whereabouts."
- Other Business: Main Street Tagging should read: "Gary reported that the Lee Bank and another building have been tagged."
- Paul will insert these edits.
- On a motion by Gary and a second by Malcolm, the Minutes of February 29, 2016, with the edits, passed unanimously.

DEMOLITION DELAY BYLAW PROPOSAL

- Malcolm reported that he was invited to a Selectboard meeting at which they unanimously approved the warrant article. Passage requires a simple majority at the Town Meeting.
- The draft had been sent to Town Counsel David Doneski and Chris Rembold. The conclusion was that the bylaw would be triggered by a structure's inclusion in the Town's Historic Resources Inventory. A public hearing would be held and the Commission would make a determination if the structure should be "Preferably Preserved." A positive vote would initiate a 12 month demo delay period during which efforts would be made to find a use that would preserve the building. Violators would pay a fine of \$300 per violation per day until the Building Inspector or the Historical Commission judge the matter to be resolved. Too, no building permit can be issued for two years. The preliminary step to determine whether or not to hold a public hearing was removed and replaced receipt of a request for a demolition permit which is forwarded to the Historical Commission. A hearing must be held within 30 days followed by a 15 day deadline to issue a written determination if the preferably preserved declaration should be imposed.
- On a motion by Malcolm and a second by Paul the Commission voted unanimously to use the term "Historic Resources Inventory" when referring to the single source comprehensive inventory in the bylaw.
- According to Chris Rembold, the Historical Commission would levy the fines.
- The demolition delay can be considered a preservation tactic that can be invoked in lieu of creating and listing the building in an historic district. On the other hand, the delay period may be used to seek local historic district designation which affords protection of the building.
- The Selectboard asked Malcolm to make a five point PowerPoint presentation at the Town Meeting. Malcolm will include MACRIS entries of the Methodist manse, Searles High School and the Hurlburt house to make the point that these sites could have been saved as a result of the delay with its public discussion and actions to find new and compatible uses.
- Malcolm has written a letter to the editor of the Record citing the need and advantages and encouraging public support for the project.
- MACRIS on Town Website: Malcolm reported that he has inserted a link to the entire MACRIS list on the town website.

- On behalf of the Commission, Paul thanked Malcolm for his brilliant work in bringing this program before the town.

DOCUMENTATION OF SEARLES HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

- Bill and Paul have walked through the building with David Carpenter. David agreed to the list of requested architectural fragments submitted to which a basketball hoop from the gym has been added. Bill reported that the present gym floor is not original. Perhaps the original floor is beneath and a small section could be rescued. The keystone will be removed from the first floor, not the oculus window. The Commission needs to assess the move of the cornerstone. Does the weight preclude ease of transport (Richard Atwood is the best choice for this sort of move). Too, what is its final location: the Historical Society or the Ramsdell or some other site?
- Paul has taken photographs to document the interior of the gym and attendant rooms on the first floor, balcony and basement. When the hazmat project is completed in the rest of the original building, especially the hyphens which will be razed, David will contact Paul to photograph these sections.

COLLECTIONS

- Ramsdell NEH/NEDCC Initiative: the demands of Margaret's responsibilities at her full time job and the amount of time required requirements to coordinate the Commission, Society and Library does allow sufficient time for preparation of a grant to the NEH for a preservation needs assessment by the Northeast Document Conservation Center. This project will be deferred and Margaret will focus on cataloguing.

In addressing the environmental challenges at the Ramsdell, Paul and Gary will meet with Margaret to figure out the next steps. Don suggested installing a ductless A/C unit (it still requires a hose outletting to the exterior). Although this could ameliorate the fluctuations it has to be considered a temporary measure. Don will get information on this option and also check with Joe Sokul.

Paul stressed the importance of Margaret's use of the time and funds budgeted for her. Too, she play an important role in the research efforts by the architectural historian(s) completing the Historic Resources Survey. Paul will e-mail Margaret about these matters.

- Don Victor Collection:
 - Gary, Bernie and Donna Drew, Jim Mercer, Robert Tepper and Paul and Carolyn Ivory worked over three days in Don Victor's house to pack and label 180 boxes of prints from his collection. The boxes were transferred to a POD storage unit that was moved to the Historical Society grounds. Sadly, the firm hired by Don's son had thrown out all the negatives before involvement by the local history representatives.
 - Gary expressed concern at the ad hoc way the disposal of the photos unfolded. The SBCC web site had evidently announced that local citizens, a large number of which had been photographed by Don, were welcome to come by and retrieve their images as a gift from Don. This drew a large number of people who removed many of Don's files. Gary expressed dismay over this dissipation of a valuable historical record. Fortunately, the bulk of the photographs were saved. The Commission acknowledged the leadership and efforts of Jim Mercer who made arrangements for the storage boxes and POD.
 - The next step is to determine the short and long-term disposition of the collection to include ownership (GBHC or GBHS), storage location and accessioning and cataloguing. All of this needs to be formally agreed and documented with Don and his son.

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. Key steps and plans that have been completed and scheduled include:
 - Daedalus to start work on May 4. According to Tim Drumm, there is a power source under the recirculating pump.
 - The Town installed the mandatory Community Preservation Project sign between the monument and Maple Ave.
 - Paul will schedule a specific date/time for the monument annual maintenance training session. Don stated that the procedures for the *Newsboy* should also apply to *Winged Victory*.

- Bill has sent a media alert to Heather at the *Edge*.
- Newsboy Brochure Component and Timeline
 - ✓ *Scope*: history of statue, historical context representative of the national trend of a proliferation in public monuments during the period; description of the statue, fountain and landscaping; period photos of statue and site and contemporary photos of details
 - ✓ *Size/Length*: booklet length; need to determine exact number of pages
 - ✓ *Date to Designer*: August 3
 - ✓ *Date to Printer*: September 3
 - ✓ *Date Completed*: October 3
 - ✓ *Distributed at Event*: October 10
- Event
 - ✓ *Date/Time*: Columbus Day Monday, October 10 at 10:00am
 - ✓ *Program*: informal; short talk by Gary about history of statue; distribution of booklet; Gary invites and introduces Barry Hughes, who first brought public attention to the significance and plight of the statue to the public.
 - ✓ *Contact GBHS*: Bill will talk to Robert Kroll about making the event a joint meeting with the Historical Society.
 - ✓ *Media Plan*: needs to be completed and should include e-mails to media outlets, GBHS group e-mail list and insertion in Commission Facebook and Town website pages. Need to determine who will draft and coordinate distribution.
- Landscaping: The goal of restoring the landscaping as close as possible and practicable to its original appearance allows interpretation of the park as an example of the picturesque landscape tradition and, with the removal the juniper bushes (historically inaccurate and installed within the last 15 years), eliminates a cause of the biostaining of the lower parts of the statue and the decay of the lower parts of the dolomite from the moisture they trap. The HC needs to meet with Joe Sokul about implementing the removal and its affect on the disruption on the original cobblestones which need to be stabilized in place. Treatment of the remainder of the park needs to include the identification of the original tree and shrub plantings (Paul will consult with Don Ward), preparation of a planting plan and attendant budget and coordination with the DPW about installation.

HOUSATONIC SCHOOL

- In response to the town's request for a National Register eligibility opinion, MHC responded that it is "quite likely" that the building is individually eligible. However, before a final decision can be made, they requested more photograph documentation of the exterior and interior and also of the Housatonic community Center (the "Housy Dome"). Bill has taken some of these images but still needs to complete the Housy Dome. He will complete these and forward to Paul for inclusion in the response letter he will draft for the Town Manager.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION SURVEY AND PLANNING GRANT

- Paul reported that our application for \$15,000 was approved. He will attend a meeting of all Local Project Coordinators to be held in May at MHC.
- As this grant, along with the partially approved CPA grant of \$15,000, gives the Town \$30,000 to undertake the first of a projected three phase project to update the 30 year-old Historic Resources Survey, passage of the CPA component at the Town Meeting is extremely important.

REPORT ON WIKIPEDIA UPDATE OF SEARLES HIGH SCHOOL ENTRY

- David reported that he read the entry and determined that most of the information is true but he still needs to continue his review.

CITIZENS' SPEAK

- No participants

OTHER BUSINESS

- None

NEXT MEETING

- Monday July 11 at a place to be announced

ADJOURN

- Motion made, seconded and passed unanimously.